

Emergency Forage Crops Can Reduce Drought Loss

NEWARK, Del. — The present drought has caused a shortage of available hay, grazing and greenchop on many Delmarva livestock and dairy farms. By August 1 it's too late to plant many of the traditional warm-season annual emergency hay crops such as millet, sorghum, sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. But University of Delaware extension agronomist Dr. Richard Taylor says several other crop groups—including the small grains, brassica or cole crops, and ryegrasses—have forage potential if adequate rainfall occurs for a successful seeding.

Among the small grains, for example, spring oats is an excellent choice for good fall yield, sown either broadcast or drilled in narrow rows in a weed-free, conventionally prepared seedbed. Taylor says oats should be sown at a rate of 2 to 3 bushels per acre, at a depth of 1 to 2 inches. Use either press wheels or a cultipacker to firm the soil over the seed.

"Spring oats should receive approximately 50 to 75 pounds of nitrogen preplant incorporated, along with phosphorus and potassium if needed," the specialist says. "Check the most recent soil test results on the field for its P and K status."

Other small grains with emergency forage potential are cereal rye (at a seeding rate of 2 to 2½ bushels per acre), barley (at 3 bushels per acre), wheat (at 2½ bushels per acre) and triticale (at 2 bushels per acre). Taylor warns that early plantings of barley and wheat may run the risk of Hessian fly infestations, but this shouldn't be a problem as long as the crop is only used for forage.

Growers who wish to use brassica or cole crops have a choice of either forage rape or a forage turnip called Tyfon. Sow brassicas broadcast or in narrow rows on a weed-free, conventionally prepared seedbed. Seed at a rate of 4 to 5 pounds per acre at a depth of ¼ to ½ inch on a firm seedbed, the agronomist says. Follow broadcast seedings with a cultipacker to ensure good soil/seed contact.

The fertility program for cole crops should include 50 to 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre preplant incorporated. Phosphorus and potash should also be applied preplant, according to soil test recommendations.

"Another possible choice for emergency hay would be the annual ryegrasses, or perhaps one of the tetraploid ryegrass varieties," Taylor says. "The annuals may

experience anywhere from no to severe damage during the winter. Tetraploid ryegrasses may grow slightly slower, but are more likely to survive the winter with little damage, if planted on well-drained soils." He recommends a seeding rate of 25 to 40 pounds per acre to ensure rapid fall establishment.

Plant any of these ryegrasses on a conventional seedbed, or seed by air into standing corn or soybeans. If planting into soybeans, seed at about 50 percent soybean leaf drop; for corn, wait until leaves begin to change color. Apply 50 to 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre, either preplant incorporated or shortly after establishment.

"Any of these crops should provide grazing for livestock from mid to late fall until the ground freezes," Taylor says.

While they make excellent forage, brassicas crops do require considerably more management than grasses, the agronomist says. They should be grazed only a few hours each day as a supplemental livestock feed, not as the sole feed. This is due both to their high water content and the fact that cole plants contain toxins which can injure animals if fed exclusively for four to six weeks. Animals may need a day or two to adapt to cole crops; so to speed acceptance; it's

best to put livestock into the field when they're hungry.

Brassicas must be rotationally grazed, because if cattle, sheep or other livestock are allowed to roam over a large block planting, they will soon trample much of the available forage. To reduce waste, Taylor advises allowing animals to feed for a short time each day on a limited area. Rotate back to that area in another few weeks.

In addition to grazing, any of the grasses mentioned above can be used for silage, if wilted first to reduce moisture content. They also offer an excellent opportunity for greenchopping, along with the possibility of regrowth if fall weather is favorable. Brassicas, because of their high water content, must be wilted and treated with a preservative before ensiling.

Milk Order Amendment Hearing Slated

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has scheduled a public hearing to consider proposals that would provide payments for market-wide services under seven southeastern federal milk marketing orders. The hearing will consider amendments to the Georgia, Tennessee Valley, Louisville-Lexington-Evansville, Alabama-West Florida, New Orleans-Mississippi, Greater Louisiana, and Nashville milk orders.

The Sept. 8 hearing will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Colony Square Hotel, Peachtree and 14th Street, N.E., Atlanta, Ga.

Edward T. Coughlin, a dairy official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the Food Security Act of 1985 amended the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 to permit

payments for market-wide services under federal milk marketing orders.

The proposed amendments would provide for the use of market-wide pool proceeds to cover certain costs of maintaining facilities for handling weekend and seasonal reserve milk supplies and the cost of transporting milk from one location to another for the purposes of fulfilling fluid milk requirements and providing a market outlet for reserve milk supplies.

Notice of the hearing was published in the Aug. 15 Federal Register. Copies may also be obtained from the Dairy Division, Room 2971-S, USDA, AMS, Washington, D.C. 20250, or from any of the market administrators for the affected orders.

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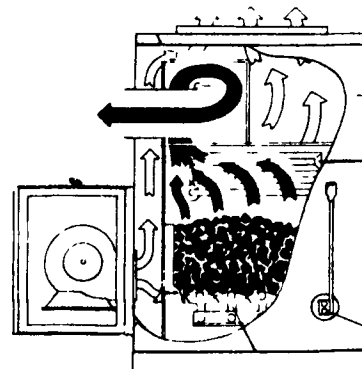
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