

## Foraging Around



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### Annual Forages - Another Look

After a wet, early spring in most areas of the Northeast much of May was exceedingly warm and dry. And while first cuttings of perennial hay crops came off early and generally in good shape, second cuttings could be affected by lack of moisture. Furthermore, several weather forecasters suggest a hotter and dryer than normal summer in many areas of the East. And this could affect the corn crop.

Thus, you may want to take a moment now to assess your 1991 feed needs. And if there is a chance you may be short, you can still plug annual forage crops into this year's cropping plans. Two weeks ago I reviewed the Brassicas. These offer one possibility for pasture. The other possibility includes the warm weather annual grasses such as the sudangrasses and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. These grasses are not ideal for hay, but among the annuals there

are crops that make excellent supplemental pasture, green chop or silage. And they are heat and drought tolerant and are very productive when moisture and fertility are adequate.

Here's another brief run-down of your choices:

*Sudangrasses* have finer stems and are usually slightly higher in digestibility than the sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, but they are also usually lower yielding. *Piper Sudangrass*, the most widely grown variety, is also the lowest in prussic acid potential, and is normally used for pasture. *Hybrid sudangrasses* such as Beachley-Hardy's *Suretreat* produce somewhat more forage than Piper but also may have a slightly greater prussic acid potential. However, this difference is small and with good management the sudangrass hybrids are excellent for summer pasture as well as green chop and silage.

*Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids* such as *RSII* are usually much

higher yielding than Piper and are used mostly in a green chop or silage situation. They do have a higher prussic acid potential and must be managed more carefully during the summer and fall.

These multi-harvest, warm season annual grasses can be planted right now and will usually be ready for grazing or green chop about 6 or 7 weeks after planting. They can be no-till seeded in stubble or sod, or drill planted on a prepared seedbed. In the absence of a soil test 50 to 75 pounds each of N, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, and K<sub>2</sub>O worked into the seedbed before planting is desirable. In general, seeding rates of 30-35 pounds per acre for the sudangrasses or 35-45 pounds per acre for the sudan-sorghum hybrids are adequate. If you plant a sudan-sorghum hybrid specifically for silage a mixture of soybeans (90 lb. per acre) and the hybrid (25 lb. per acre) can be used.

Piper sudangrass can be grazed when it reaches a height of 18" with no danger of prussic acid; a two foot height is recommended for sudangrass hybrids. If properly fertilized and managed these crops can normally be grazed two or three times during the growing season. The sudan-sorghum hybrids should reach a height of 2 1/4 - 3 feet before grazing or chopping. At earlier stages, the forage will be higher in quality but may contain unsafe levels of prussic acid. If cut at a stubble height of five to six inches they will recover rapidly for a second crop.

If harvested for direct-cut silage these crops should be allowed to reach the early head to early bloom stage of growth. If harvested for silage at more immature stages wilting is desir-

able. While hay made from these crops harvested at the more immature stage is fair to good in quality, field curing can be a serious problem; thus, the use of a hay conditioner is essential.

*Japanese Millet* seeded at the rate of 15 lbs. per acre is occasionally grown as an annual forage on the cold, poorly drained soils of Northern Pennsylvania and New York while *Pearl Millet* may be used in the lower Mid-Atlantic regions. However, these crops produce little or no aftermath and are generally considered inferior to the sudangrasses where the sudangrasses can be grown.

The drought and heat tolerant forage sorghums grown alone or with soybeans can be grown for silage in place of corn. Under

favorable growing conditions adapted corn hybrids harvested as silage are said to yield slightly more feed per acre. However, the sorghums are more drought resistant and less subject to damage from deer where deer feeding on corn is a problem. When grown alone, row plant at the rate of 8 to 12 pounds per acre. Fertilize as for corn. If grown with soybeans use 90 pounds per acre of beans and 6 to 8 pounds of sorghum. Harvest for silage when the sorghum is in the soft to medium dough stage of growth.

It's too early to accurately predict the moisture conditions for this growing season. Thus, planting some acreage to a summer annual could be a good hedge against the unknown.

## Group Seeks Dairy Farmers For Exchange Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. — WANTED: Dairy farmers sought for cultural and technical exchange with Egyptian farmers. Washington, D.C. based non-profit organization will bring 80 Egyptian dairy farmers to the United States for three-week farm-stays this year.

This cultural exchange between American families and program participants serves as a rich learning experience for everyone. It offers a unique chance to learn about Egyptian culture, while providing an opportunity for Egyptians to learn about American farming techniques. Host farmers will receive \$20 a day to cover their costs.

Host farmers will participate in designing programs to expose the

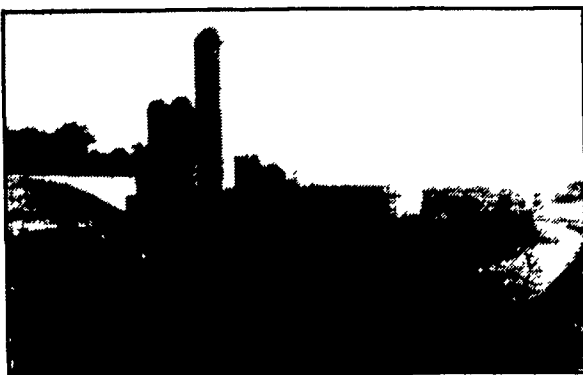
Egyptians to current cultivation practices and farm management operations. Each program will center around on-farm experiences as the participants take part in the daily routine of American farmers including meetings with the farmer's agricultural extension agent, cooperative representatives, suppliers, and neighboring growers.

ACDI will provide logistical support and work closely with the American farmer to arrange the program.

Farmers who are interested in participating in the project may write to Linda Schmid at ACIDI 50 F. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 or call (202) 638-4661.

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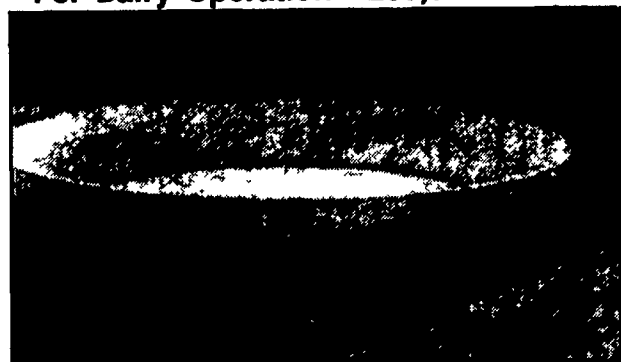
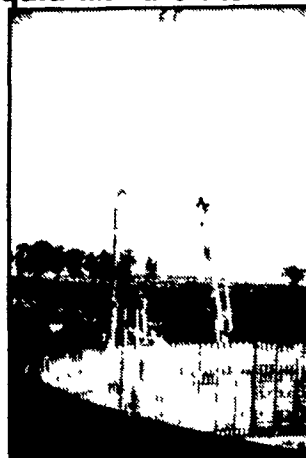


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