Conference Brings Together Farmers, Researchers, Industry

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TUNKHANNOCK (Wyoming Co.) — "If you're green, you're growing and if you're ripe, you're rotting," said Pennsylvania dairyman John Rodgers as he participated in a panel discussion about the fine points of managing forage.

The dialog took place at the 1997 Northeast Quality Forages Conference which was held in November at the Shadowbrook Convention Center.

Other panel participators fielded questions ranging from protecting forages from drought to getting the most out of the forages that are fed to the animals.

Rodgers, who is a past president of the American Forage and Grassland Council, also delivered the keynote address at the conference, entitled "Forages Now and Their Importance To the Future."

During the ensuing breakout sessions, Dr. Harold Harpster of Penn State University led the group in a study of the impact of forage particle length on intake.

"There's a lot more emphasis on particle size of forage to maintain milk production and health," Harpster told the crowd.

In his presentation he gave advice on how to fine-tune particle size on a day-to-day basis. He also took an applied look at processing round bale silage.

"The bottom line is we can get higher intakes in our cows with processed bales," said Harpster. "It's a physical thing. They can pull the forage apart more easily."

In another room, Dr. Doug Beegle of Penn State University addressed the other half of the group on maintaining pasture fertility.

The next sessions included talks by Richard Lutz of Pioneer Inc. and Dr. Lisa Holden of Penn State.

"Silage additives are considered a value-added product," explained Lutz.

This statement, he continued, hinges on the fact that the silage must have some value to begin with.

"Reputable manufacturers of silage additives will readily admit that an effective additive will make good silage better — they will not make poor silage good," he said.

Five factors that can be controlled by the producer contribute to making better silage. First the maturity and moisture at harvest; second, harvesting and ensiling methods; third, the type of storage structure; fourth, the use of silage additives; fifth, the feedout storage structure management; and sixth, the feedbunk management.

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PFGC Provides Executive Director's Report

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council was supported by its 242 members and supporting organizations as well as the Pennsylvania State University personnel during 1997.

Some of the major activities and programs involving the council in 1997 were:

- The Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council co-sponsored the 1996 Quality Forage Conference held Nov. 20, 1996 in Tunkhannock.
- Co-sponsored the Hay Show at the Pennsylvania Farm Show held Jan. 11-15, 1997.
- The Council co-sponsored the 1997 Pennsylvanai Grazing Conference held March 4-5, 1997 at the Embers in Carlisle.
- The Council held a strategic planning meeting at the Plum Bottom Farm in Belleville on July 25, 1997. The Council adopted a mission statement, "To enhance the profitable and sustainable use of forage based agriculture for all Pennsylvanians."
- The Council established the position of executive director this year. Dick Hann was appointed as the first executive director for a minimum of three years.
- The executive director attended an AFGC training conference in Ardmore, Okla. Aug. 7-10, 1997.
- Co-sponsored the Agricultural Progress Days at Rockspring Research Center of Penn State Aug. 12-14, 1997.
- The Council conducted a Hay Show held in conjunction with Ag Progress Days.
- The Council held its annual summer social event at the Wayne Harpster farm on Aug. 13 during Ag Progress Days.
- ***Lancaster Farming*** publication provided a special section for PFGC called "Foraging Around" three times last year.
- The Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council Newsletter was published four times during 1997.
- The Council presented Scholarships at Penn State in the amount of $750 to Mark Moseman, a senior in dairy and animal science, and to Damon Harwood, a senior in agronomy.
- A $750 scholarship was provided for a student at Delaware Valley College.
- Awards were presented to John Weidman for the PFGC special award, Craig Williams for the teaching, extension award, and to Jim Welch for the pasture award.

PFGC ❖ SPECIAL REPORT ❖

Bales Can Be Ensiled At Lower Moisture

Research by the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center and Oklahoma State University indicates that high-quality round bale silage can be made at lower moisture levels than are considered acceptable for adequate fermentation.

Large bales with moisture levels ranging from 25 to 65 percent were wrapped with at least six layers of stretch film. After six months in storage, dry matter losses and forage quality changes were not different between bales with different initial moisture contents.

"The results of this study show that forage quality can be maintained through bale wrapping at moisture contents above that considered safe for dry hay storage (approximately 20 percent), but less than that acceptable for well preserved silage (approximately 50 percent)," noted the researchers.

Grazing Sheep And Cattle Together Or Separately: Effects On Soil And Plants

Differences in grazing behavior suggest opportunities to improve forage use when cattle and sheep graze in the same pasture, but a better understanding of their effect on soils and plants is needed.

Angus cows with calves and ewes (½ Dorset ¼ Finn ¼ Rambouillet crossbred) with lambs grazed Kentucky bluegrass-white clover pastures from spring until autumn in a study of the effects on soils and plants of grazing cattle and sheep together and separately.

Grazing sheep alone increased soil bulk density and percentage bluegrass compared with grazing cattle alone. Grazing sheep and cattle together resulted in a higher B horizon soil pH than where cattle and sheep grazed alone.

Percentage of bluegrass increased, white clover decreased, and there were fewer weeds in the pasture where both animal species grazed compared to pasture where cattle and sheep grazed separately.

(Source: A.O. Abaye, V.G. Allen and J.P. Fontenot, IN - Agronomy Journal 89:380-386 (1997))