

# Quality Forage Conference Offers Variety Of Information

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**MANSFIELD (Tioga Co.)** - Growing better forage, identifying pests and learning about new technology were the topics at the recent Northeast Pennsylvania Quality Forage Conferences.

Sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension, USDA, NRCS, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener Program, and the Pocono and Endless Mountains chapters of RC&D, the conferences were designed to provide information to all farmers who rely on quality forages as part of a balanced ration. The two conferences took here and in Mayfield, Lackawanna County.

Sid Bosworth of the University of Vermont kicked off the program with an in-depth look at new forage varieties that improve overall forage quality.

Bosworth noted that there are many factors affecting quality including cutting and grazing management, the forage species (legumes versus grasses), liming and fertilization and the forage variety.

"We have wonderful opportunities to select varieties that will mature whenever we need them," he said as he noted the new varieties of orchard grass, reed canarygrass, fescue and ryegrass.

He also explained that many factors make up forage quality.

"There's the nutritive value, like protein, energy, minerals, vitamins and fiber. Then there's the intake and the palatability. Then there's a whole group of factors I call the anti-quality factors which include plant chemicals that cause an-

fescue, but are much less persistent than high endophyte varieties.

When choosing the best variety, Bosworth suggests researching company information and state variety testing information. He also notes

Craig. "It's easy to overlook these pests."

In his research of pest problems on actual Pennsylvania farms, Craig has seen an increase in many pest varieties and infestation in recent years.

ally don't know all of what happened, but what we've seen happen more than anything is a bunch of mild falls and generally typically mild winters and whatever populations were there seemed to be surviving very well from summer into the fall period. They were laying eggs in the fall and a lot of those eggs were surviving and starting out very early in the spring," said Craig.

Craig highlighted other pest problems that have surfaced in the past few years.

The armyworm was also a problem pest that was made worse because of weather conditions.

"We had dry conditions and hot conditions which were very conducive to their survival," said Craig. Their eggs and their young larvae are very susceptible to bacteria, fungus and molds. If we had the right conditions at the right time, we can naturally cause some of these degradations."

Another pest that has been on the rise are aphids.

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**“That first time through your pasture or hayfield and you see something's wrong, maybe you ought to remember that you might want to slow down, get down and look a little closer. Don't be happy just to say you don't know what it is. It's easy to overlook these pests.”**

— Paul Craig  
 Forage Agent

imal disorders," Bosworth said.

New orchardgrass varieties on the market have a low crown and are better suited for pastures than traditional orchard grass varieties. Although they are not higher yielding, they feature improved quality and palatability than other varieties. Also in the development pipeline are low alkaloid varieties of reed canarygrass. These new varieties increase palatability. There are also crosses between Italian ryegrass and meadow fescue called festulolium varieties. These, according to Bosworth, combine the disease resistance and winter hardiness of meadow fescue with the high quality and season-long production of Italian ryegrass. There are also varieties of low endophyte tall fescue, which eliminate the animal health problems associated with tall

that you should "be wary of any variety without adaptation and yield data from your region, especially if the variety was developed in a different climatic zone or outside the United States."

Paul Craig of Penn State Cooperative Extension's Capital Region Agronomy team challenged conference participants to "get down on your belly," when looking for forage pests. As an agronomist, Craig quickly learned not to take early reports of pest development lightly.

"That first time through your pasture or hayfield and you see something's wrong, maybe you ought to remember that you might want to slow down, get down and look a little closer. Don't be happy just to say you don't know what it is," said

One such pest is the alfalfa weevil, which has caused major and widespread damage in the past few years.

"Those tiny weevils are hard to find when they first hatch, and they never stop eating," he said.

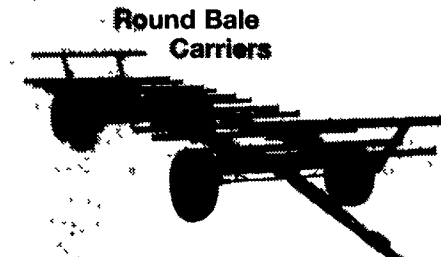
Craig doesn't have an exact answer to the increase in populations of some pests, he can only speculate as to the reasons for the increased populations.

"What has happened? I re-

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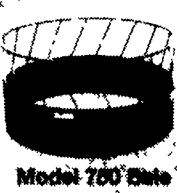
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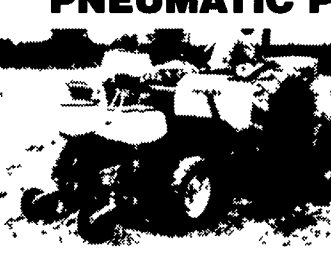
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