

Hard Winter Good For Alfalfa Crop

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — All signs indicate a bumper crop of alfalfa across the commonwealth, according to a crop scientist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Marvin Hall, professor of forage management in the department of crop and soil sciences, says early reports from around the state this spring all point to a great start for alfalfa and other forage crops. And it started, he says, with the winter's substantial snow dumps.

"Forage plants are different than people," Hall said. "They like winter weather that stays cold, and heavy snow cover protects them from severe cold."

"Mild winter weather that freezes, thaws, then refreezes is the most damaging for forage plants — and alfalfa in particular. Our motto is, 'let it snow, let it snow!' On a scale of one to 10, I'd say this winter was in the 8-to-9 range; I don't expect to see much damage due to winterkill."

He explains that the less-severe winters the state has enjoyed the past few seasons promote a freeze-and-thaw cycle that can expose and tear alfalfa roots. Winterkill is a special problem for alfalfa, which is a perennial.

Alfalfa stands can overwinter and bounce back to produce forage for as long as 15 years, with a typical life of three to four years.

Alfalfa also is one of the most nutritious forages, with a high energy density. Hall explains that those demands make predicting annual yields important for livestock and dairy producers — often the difference between profitability and debt.

"If alfalfa yields are bad, it really can affect a farmer's profitability, because when they make their own hay it's a pretty cheap feed source," he said. If they're expecting three tons to the acre and they only get two, they can suddenly be 50 tons short of forage, and that has to come from somewhere. But the amount that they're getting in milk revenues isn't changing, so it's more of a cost squeeze on the farmer.

"With a cost squeeze, farmers aren't spending as much money in their local hardware stores and jewelry stores and it affects the whole agricultural community. The consumer wouldn't see it in the prices. But if they owned a business in the community, they'd know it immediately when farmers are having a hard time."

Lamb, Mutton Production Down 18 Percent, March Record Low

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Commercial red meat production for the U.S. totaled 3.70 billion pounds in March, up 1 percent from the 3.68 billion pounds produced in March 2002, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

March 2002 contained 21 weekdays and five Saturdays. March 2003 contained 21 weekdays and five Saturdays.

Beef production, at 2.05 billion pounds, was 1 percent below the previous year. Cattle slaughter totaled 2.77 million head, up 1 percent from March 2002. The average live weight was 1,234 pounds, down 7 pounds from March a year ago.

Veal production totaled 16.5 million pounds, 10 percent above March a year ago. Calf slaughter totaled 85,100 head, up 10 percent from March 2002. The average live weight was 323 pounds, down 1 pound from March a year ago.

Pork production totaled 1.62 billion pounds, up 2 percent from the previous year. Hog kill total-

ed 8.15 million head, 2 percent above March 2002. The average live weight was 268 pounds, up 1 pound from March a year ago.

Lamb and mutton production, at 18.2 million pounds, was down 18 percent from March 2002. Sheep slaughter totaled 264,000 head, 19 percent below last year. The average live weight was 138 pounds, unchanged from March

a year ago.

January-March red meat production was 11.27 billion pounds, virtually unchanged from 2002. Accumulated beef production was down 1 percent from last year, veal was up 8 percent, pork was up 2 percent, and lamb and mutton production was down 15 percent.

Cattlemen Unite In D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Hundreds of farmers and ranchers from across the country walked the halls of the Capitol today, meeting with key congressional offices on top priority issues. Most critical is the urgent need for permanent repeal of the Death Tax.

The livestock producers are active members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

"We represent generations of rural families across the United States who are struggling to maintain their family ranches built by our forefathers," said Idaho cattle producer and NCBA President Eric Davis.

"The excessive burden of the death tax hits us with a devastating blow of up to 55 percent in taxes on the entire operation when a family member dies. It is an unfair tax on American values and the American dream."

In an asset-rich and cash-poor business, the appraised value of rural land is extremely inflated from the agricultural value over the years. Many cattle producers are forced to sell off land, parts of the operation, or

the entire ranch to pay off tax liabilities. This takes more open spaces out of agriculture production and puts it into the hands of urban developers.

"We must fight for permanent repeal of this antiquated tax. It's not a tax on the wealthy elite — it's a death warrant for small-to-medium sized family businesses," said Jay Truitt, NCBA's executive director of legislative affairs.

"The rich can afford accountants and estate planners to help them evade the tax. They're cash-rich and amass fortunes, place the money within foundations, and are able to easily survive this tax burden."

Maryland Conservation Tour May 1



Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS)
Maryland Old Line Chapter

ANNOUNCES

2003 SPRING TOUR - "Nutrient Management on diverse landscapes in Western Maryland"

2003 Spring Tour • May 1 2003 • Allegany College of Maryland - Continuing Education Building • Cumberland Md • 9:00 - 3:30 • Cost \$20.00

- 9:00 Registration (see note below)
All participants will meet at the Allegany College
- 9:15 SWCS What is it?
- 9:30 Characteristics of Soils in the Region
Carl Robinette USDA NRCS
- 10:00 Acid Mine Drainage Flocc to control P³⁺ losses in runoff
Devinder Bhumbra WV Cooperative Extension
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 Acid Mine Drainage Remediation Systems
Joe Mills MDE
- 11:15 Biosolids application/permit/information process
Martha Hynson MDE
- 11:45 LUNCH (provided with registration)
- 12:30 Rotational Pasture and Weed Control
William Knepp MCE
- 1:00 Depart to Site #1 Fazenbaker Acid Mine Drainage Site Barton MD
- 2:00 Depart to Site #2 Rotational Pasture Farm Operation
- 3:30 Arrive back at Allegany Community College
- 4:45 Bus leaves to go back to Frederick

*Folks traveling from the Frederick area or from points East, a charter bus will be leaving the Frederick SCD office parking lot at 7:00 am leaving to meet at the Allegany College

**The days activities if you're a certified NIM consultant in Maryland, will count towards your certification requirements

Please mail/Reservation Forms to David Kann MDA 604 Solarex Ct Ste 105 Frederick MD 21703
Check payable to SWCS MD Old Line Chapter For more information Call 301 694 9290 x109

REGISTRATION FORM

Soil & Water Conservation Society Maryland Old Line Chapter

2003 Spring Tour
"Nutrient Management on Diverse Landscapes in Western Maryland"
May 1 2003

Name _____ No. of People Attending _____ @ \$20.00 each
Affiliation/Firm _____ NM cert# (if applicable) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Telephone _____ Amt enclosed \$ _____

Fee Reduced For Farmers Attending Half Day

CUMBERLAND, Md. — The Maryland Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is conducting a tour May 1 in Cumberland, Md.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Management Program has approved this course for nutrient management credits.

For farmers wanting to know more about rotational grazing and who wish only to attend the afternoon session, the cost is reduced to \$10.

Please see the attached announcement for more details.

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