

Time to Wrap Up Native Haying

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Many producers have been busy "making hay" as the old saying goes. Native hay is an important part of many livestock operations, especially in winters when we have extended periods of snow cover - or snow cover, period. Something we haven't had in recent years. But we need to remember that native hay is different than brome and management needs to be handled differently. Native hay meadows or pastures are primarily comprised of warm season grasses. As the days get shorter and temperatures cool down in the fall, these grass species head into winter dormancy. Ideally, at the time that the plants go dormant, they should have full carbohydrate reserves stored up in their crowns and root system. In other words, they go into winter with a full tank of gas. This is needed to make sure that when they start growing in the spring they have plenty of food to make good early season growth. But here's the challenge - when we cut native hay, the plants immediately begin regrowing, assuming there is adequate soil moisture. This early growth, post cutting, uses up food reserves that had already been stored. It takes a couple of weeks of normal growth until leaves are big enough to produce enough food to carry the plant and then start replenishing those root reserves. We generally feel that under normal conditions it takes six weeks from the time of hay harvest until root reserves are restored. These native pastures normally stop growing in early October. So to make sure the plants have plenty of time to refuel, you need to be through harvesting by mid August. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Small Grain Forage Options

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A management practice that I've noticed more cattle producers using in recent years is utilizing small grains as a fall forage option. Traditionally this meant getting your winter wheat planted a little earlier than normal so you get enough growth that cattle can graze it in mid to late fall. This can produce some inexpensive gain for younger cattle or maintenance for mature cows. But what I've been seeing more recently is the small grain forage is being planted not for grain production later, but solely for livestock feed in fall, winter and spring. What is being done is a reduction in the use of harvested forages and letting the cattle harvest the forage directly. Other than the cost of seed, fertilizer and planting it, about all the producer has to worry about is getting an electric fence around the field or to divide some fields. There are many options for fall forages. In addition to winter wheat there are spring oats, winter barley, winter rye (and I shudder as I say that) and winter triticale. While rye can produce a lot of forage, the quality is not nearly as good as most of the other options. For a graze out, or non-grain harvest setting, triticale is probably my preferred choice. It has much better forage quality than rye but retains good quality. It starts growing earlier in the late winter and can be grazed much harder than wheat. It often heads later than wheat so it produces more quality forage longer than wheat will. If you want more information on using any of these for fall and winter forage, give me a call! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fall Planting of Bromegrass

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Unlike the native grasses that we talked about a couple days ago, bromegrass is a cool season grass. It isn't native to Kansas but it is very well adapted to our conditions and is now considered naturalized. Which is a botanists term for, it's very well established, it reproduces on it's own and we're never getting rid of it. While brome is most frequently used in waterways for erosion control it can also be considered for permanent pasture especially in deeper richer soils. If you are in rocky, shallow upland soils, you'd better stick with the native grasses. Bromegrass, and even the less favored tall fescue, can have a good role in cattle management either as a harvest forage, fall grazing, or stockpiled for early winter grazing. Bromegrass does respond well to fertilizer, in fact you need to fertilize brome for it to remain productive. Unfortunately, too much of our brome gets fertilized too late to get the full benefit of the fertilizer - more on that later this fall. Since it is a cool season grass you can go by the old rule of planting it any month of the year that contains the letter R. For our part of Kansas, brome should be planted from mid August to late September. October and November plantings are discouraged. The other critical thing with brome is a soil test before planting to check soil pH and phosphorus levels. Just like alfalfa we need to make sure that the pH is above about 6.2. Then we need to make sure there is adequate soil phosphorus at planting. A sure way to have a poor stand of new brome is to NOT check these two items. For more information on brome planting, call me! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Pasture Weed Spraying

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The calls haven't started to come in yet, but judging by what I've seen in some pastures, they are going to. Often in late summer and by this I'm thinking last week of August and through September, I'll start to get pasture managers calling me all upset and wanting to spray this weed or that weed because it's taking over the pasture.

Mid to late summer I'll invariably get calls on ironweed and sometimes leadplant and scurfpea, or wild alfalfa. These are all native plants that can become quite thick in some parts of pastures. When they do, they indicate that we have had an overgrazing problem and that's what needs to be addressed. What I'm bracing for right now though is the calls about annual broomweed.

Annual broomweed is rarely noticed until it starts blooming in late August or on into September. This is the plant that has small yellow flowers and can look like a blanket of yellow in parts of some pastures. Most people aren't even noticing it right now, but I am. It's out there and it's doing well. It's an annual plant and by the time most people see it, it's too late to control it. But in reality, it doesn't need to be sprayed. It will be favored by areas of overgrazing, especially in years with good early season rainfall, like we had this year. The plant dies at the end of the season. Even if you wanted to spray it, it's hard to control because it just doesn't have a lot of leaf area. So don't let anyone talk you into wasting money on spraying this. If you have a lot of it and it concerns you, then give me a call. I can come out, take a look at the pasture and we can talk about options! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Prescribed Burns

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Prescribed pasture burning is what we say we do every spring when pastures are burned off. But you are probably going to see more late summer prescribed burning in the years to come. Now don't get worried that you're going to see the thick billows of smoke like we see in April. Late summer prescribed burning is being done for a very different and specific reason. I truly feel that a late summer burn is more of a true prescribed burn than spring burning which we do because we always do it. Late summer prescribed burning is being done in our area for one very good reason: sericea lespedeza control! Several years of study have been done in the Flint Hills and several more years worth of studies are needed, but the preliminary information looks very promising. Keep in mind that you aren't going to totally control sericea with burning alone, but late summer burning coupled with timely herbicide treatments does look very promising. There are couple of things at play here. First of all we want to damage the sericea plants and we want to prevent them from producing seed. Burning in mid summer, around August 1st and in late summer, around September 1st greatly reduced or eliminated seed production. Mid and late summer burns also reduced sericea plant mass at dormancy by 85 to 95%. Typical spring burns did nothing to reduce seed production or plant mass. If you've got areas of sericea that you've been fighting, consider burning it the end of this month. For more details or to answer questions about this, give me a call, and yes, it will burn when it's green! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.