**Ballard County Ag Newsletter**

**January 2023**

It’s hard to believe it is already January 2023. We close the books on the 2022 crop year, a year that was very good in some areas and just ok for others, all depending on rainfall. Commodity prices remain high and that has been the best part of the production year. Unfortunately, input prices also remain very high leading to a lot of money flowing through but not much change to the bottom line. Interest costs, while not yet scary can no longer be ignored and must be in the discussion again.

Long term weather forecasts tend to show maybe a little warmer and wetter for the next 3 months. Speaking of the weather, one bright spot was getting our county mesonet site up and running. While it does not encompass the entire county, it is a start and it showed just how much more rain the north side of the county received last summer and fall compared to almost none for the south side.

**Wheat Crop So Far**

Thank goodness for some snow cover, as our wheat crop was protected from the blast of cold temperatures we had over Christmas. I attended the Wheat Conference in Hopkinsville last week and one of the presenters showed wheat plants before the cold spell and the same locations a week after the cold snap. Heaving was a major concern as was cold temperature injury. There was almost no damage and temperature probes in the soil showed that even when the air temperatures were below zero the soil temperature under the snow was still in the low to mid 30’s.

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| **Cooperative Extension Service** |
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I thought the best presentation was on wheat diseases. You cannot afford to not spray a fungicide for head scab. The disease is not the main problem as it will decrease yield but the possibility of DON (vomitoxin) and the resulting dock at the elevator is the greatest concern. There are several new products with Maravis Ace still at the top, but only the application at flowering is very effective against DON. The earlier application at heading does not give nearly as much protection. It is still better to be five days too late with all the products instead of five days too early. Prosaro Pro and Sphaerex are new fungicides that seem to give similar control to Maravis Ace.



The best way to control head scab is still to plant a resistant variety and there are some that are much better than others. As you are picking wheat seed for next year, take a look at some of the better varieties for resistance and work one or two in to the mix that are still up there in yield. The economics of wheat disease control show that head scab is critical but the earlier flag leaf sprays very seldom pay for themselves. Fungicide costs need to be cheap, $15 or less and the wheat price needs to be close to $10 a bushel before you are going to see enough yield increase to cover the cost. Finally, you need to control ryegrass, as it is the biggest problem weed in wheat. It is probably going to take a soil product at planting followed by something else. That is my biggest concern over some of the work that is being done with ryegrass as a cover crop to reduce the effects of the fragipan.

 It is darn hard to kill and seems to be getting harder, with several known populations in the state now resistant to glyphosate.

**FSA Decision ARC-Co or PLC**

I recently did my first podcast with a group of other Ag Agents from the Madisonville area. It is called KY Ag Matters and here is a code.



 It is a good discussion on the farm bill programs and West Kentucky agriculture in general. The short version of what I said is that you need to stay signed up in ARC-Co for all crops. The only way PLC pays is if the prices drop dramatically. Arc-Co may pay off as the prices come down. If prices stay where they are neither program will pay or be needed.

**CAIP Deadline is May 26th**

Remember you have until May 26th to complete your CAIP projects and turn in the paperwork for reimbursement. You must fill out the producer report, the education form, have valid receipts and cancelled checks, some way to prove you paid for the items. Call me about the education form and I will be glad to work with you to come up with an activity that meets the requirements.

**Commercial and Private Applicator Changes**

There have been numerous changes on the commercial applicator side this season, the biggest is the change in date of paying your fees. That date has changed to January 31. If they are not paid on time you will have to retest.

On the private applicator side there are no major changes for this year. You now have to be at least 18 years old to get a card – 16 was the old requirement. For those of you with an expired card, you need to come in and we will get you recertified and a new card good for 3 more years. In the coming years I do expect some changes on the private side. Currently Kentucky does not charge a fee, many other states do, so it is probably coming.

**Upcoming Soybean Meetings**

The Murray State annual Soybean Promotion Day is on Tuesday January 24th at the CFSB Center in Murray. The program starts at 9:00 am and the speakers are Dr. Shawn Conley Professor of Agronomy university of Wisconsin Madison and Mike Steenhoek, Executive Director, Soy Transport Coalition. Sponsored lunch will be after the program. The program is free but you must register by calling 270-809-3556.

On February 1st, there will be an Intensive Soybean Management Workshop at the KY Soybean Office in Princeton. The speaker will be Dr. Conner Sible from the University of Illinois. His focus is on biologicals and their effect on fertility with soybean production. The workshop starts at 9:00 am and concludes with lunch. Reserve your seat and lunch at the kysoy.org.

**Timely Tips**

***Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Professor, University of Kentucky***

**Spring‑Calving Cow Herd**

1. Study the performance of last year's calf crop and plan for improvement. Plan your breeding program and consider a better herd sire(s). Select herd sires which will allow you to meet your goals and be willing to pay for superior animals.
2. Consider vaccinating the cows to help prevent calf scours.
3. Keep replacement heifers gaining to increase the probability of puberty occurring before the start of the spring breeding season.
4. Start cows on the high magnesium mineral supplement soon. Consider protein supplementation if hay is less than 10% crude protein. If cows are thin, begin energy (grain) supplementation now. Cows must reach a body condition score of 5 before calving to maximize their opportunity for reproductive success. Supplementation now allows adequate time for cows to calving in adequate body condition score.
5. Get ready for the calving season! See that all equipment and materials are ready, including obstetrical equipment, record forms or booklets, eartags, scales for obtaining birthweights, etc. Prepare a calving area where assistance can be provided easily if needed. Purchase ear tags for calves and number them ahead of time if possible. Plan for enough labor to watch/assist during the calving period.
6. Move early‑calving heifers and cows to pastures that are relatively small and easily accessible to facilities in case calving assistance is needed. Keep them in good condition but don't overfeed them at this time. Increase their nutrient intake after they calve.

**Fall Calving Cow Herd**

1. Provide clean windbreaks and shelter for young calves.
2. Breeding season continues. Keep fall calving cows on accumulated pasture as long as possible, then start feeding hay/grain/supplement. Don’t let these cows lose body condition!
3. Catch up on castrating, dehorning and implanting.

**General**

1. Feed hay in areas where mud is less of a problem. Consider preparing a feeding area with gravel over geotextile fabric or maybe a concrete feeding pad. Bale grazing is an option for producers to help control mud while spreading nutrients across pastures.
2. Increase feed as the temperature drops, especially when the weather is extremely cold and damp. When temperature drops to 15°F, cattle need access to windbreaks.
3. Provide water at all times. Cattle need 5 to 11 gallons per head daily even in the coldest weather. Be aware of frozen pond hazards. Keep ice "broken" so that cattle won't walk out on the pond trying to get water. Automatic waterers, even the “frost-free” or “energy-free” waterers can freeze up in extremely cold weather. Watch closely.
4. Consider renovating and improving pastures with legumes, especially if they have poor stands of grass or if they contain high levels of the fescue endophyte. Purchase seed and get equipment ready this month.

**Frost Seeding Clover: A Recipe for Success**

***Chris D. Teutsch, S. Ray Smith, and Jimmy Henning***

Legumes are an essential part of a strong and healthy grassland ecosystems (Figure 1). They form a symbiotic relationship with *Rhizobium* bacteria in which the bacteria fix nitrogen from the air into a plant available form and share it with the legume. Clover also increases forage quality and quantity and helps to manage tall fescue toxicosis. In the past, the positive impact of clover on tall fescue toxicosis has always been thought to simply be a dilution effect, but [new research from the USDA’s Forage Animal Production Unit in Lexington](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmRuhhZp0Ho&t=838s) shows that compounds found in red clover can reverse vasoconstriction that is caused by the ergot alkaloids in toxic tall fescue. The primary compound found in red clover is a vasodilator called Biochanin A.

Clover stands in pastures thin overtime due to various factors and require reseeding every three to four years. There are several techniques for reintroducing clover into pastures including no-till seeding, minimum tillage, and frost seeding. Of these techniques, frost seeding requires the least amount of equipment and is the simplest to implement. Frost seeding is accomplished by broadcasting clover seed onto existing pastures or hayfields in late winter and allowing the freezing and thawing cycles to incorporate the seed into the soil. This method works best with red and white clover and annual lespedeza. It is NOT recommended for seeding grasses or alfalfa..

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