Feb 2, 2015

Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

**New Year But Same Song, Same Verse – February Is the Time to Seed Clovers**

I know everyone says I have heard this before but it is hard to say this enough. It is good to make sure you have clovers in your grass pastures. The majority of cattle in Tennessee graze tall fescue or orchardgrass pastures. While these pastures provide good quality forage, they can be improved. One of the best and easiest ways for improvement is to add legumes such as red or white clover or an annual lespedeza to these pastures.

Clovers are legumes which can take nitrogen from the atmosphere and incorporate it in nodules on the roots of the legume. The legume has enough nitrogen in these nodules for its purpose plus some to share with surrounding plants. One of the most common forage recommendations made across the Southeast is to plant clovers in grass pastures. The yield of a tall fescue and clover mixture will be equal to a pure tall fescue stand fertilized in spring with 60 lbs. of nitrogen per acre. With the price of fertilizer, this can save a significant amount of money.

Many producers experience inconsistent results in clover stand establishment. There are several reasons for the difference in producer experiences with clover success. Seeding rate and environmental conditions are two common reasons but one of the most common reasons for the failure of clover seed to emerge and establish is due to planting the seed too deep. Clover seed is very small, and needs to be planted less than ¼ inch deep. Using no-till drills to plant clover seed in February and March can make it difficult to control seeding depth. The drills are heavy and the ground is soft. For this reason, it is often better to broadcast the seed on top of the ground.

The steps to planting clover into a fescue pasture are:

1. Soil test first and then fertilize according to soil test except for nitrogen. **Do not add nitrogen.** Nitrogen will not kill clovers, but it stimulates grass growth, and increases the potential of the clover being shaded out by the grass. It is very important to have a proper pH, sufficient phosphorus and sufficient potassium

2. Seed 2 lbs. ladino white clover and 4 lbs. red clover per acre. With the clovers, be sure to use pre-inoculated seed, or inoculate the seed yourself. Broadcast the seed the mixture from February 15 to March 1 but you will need to drill the seed if planted after March 1.

3. Very important. Don’t graze until the pasture is 8 inches tall. This will allow the clovers to develop a root system and not get pulled out of the ground by grazing.

Another good reason to plant clovers into pastures is to mitigate the negative effects of the tall fescue endophyte. The most common tall fescue is infected with a fungus called an endophyte. The endophyte has positive points and negative points. The fungus has a negative impact on animal gain
and reproduction. Yet, the endophyte has a positive impact on plant persistence, drought tolerance and plant survival when overgrazed. Clovers in the pasture help dilute the negative effects on animal gain and reproduction.

Bottom line...utilizing clovers is a simple tool to improve the quality of pastures and hayfields while at the same time reducing costs.

Important Upcoming Events:

- **Mid-South Stocker Conference**, February 18, Cave City, Kentucky Convention Center
  Discussions on heifer development and marketing along with technology tools and managing forages will be some of the highlights - $50.00 per person ($80.00 for husband and wife) if completed by February 6. After that, the late and on-site registration will be $65.00 per person and $100.00 for husband and wife. Contact for registration - midsouthstocker.org
- **Jr. Bull Test Sale** – March 12, Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center, Spring Hill, TN
- **Contact** your UT Extension Office for additional information – 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu

Agricultural Market Summary

**Cattle Market Trends**
There is always volatility in agricultural prices and prices have been lower the last couple of weeks. Cattle prices are lower but producers need to remember there are still good opportunities for profitability. Feeder steers $5 to $12 lower, $160.00-$335.00; Feeder heifers $1 to $7 lower, $130.00-$315.00; Slaughter cows $4 to $5 lower, $84.50-$102.00; Slaughter bulls $3 to $4 lower. $113.50-$134.50.

**Grain Market Trends**

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

Submitted by:
Ruth Correll
Agricultural Agent
UT/TSU Extension, Wilson County
acorrell@utk.edu