**Tri-County Cattle Gathering and Ryegrass**

This fall several local counties are coming together to host a Tri-County beef production program. The program will be held at the Dublin Sale Barn on Tuesday, October 23rd from noon until 3:00 PM. Some of the topics will include Cattle handling or chute-side manners and what is the buyer looking for? We have Dr. Jason Cleere and Dr. Ron Gill Texas A&M Beef Cattle and Animal Science Specialist presenting at the program. The program including lunch is being sponsored by the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and the Texas Beef Council. If possible please RSVP to your local county agent office. There will be no charge, and everyone is welcome.

**Ryegrass is a Good Option**

Annual ryegrass can add several months of grazing for your operation. In a mild winter you can expect to get fall and winter grazing from ryegrass; however, most years your grazing will be from late February or early March through the first of June. With adequate spring moisture, annual ryegrass will produce as much or more forage than most small grain varieties. Two of the top ten producers in county trials are ryegrasses. Ryegrass can be planted as late as December, but ideally you would have it in by early November. If you are hoping for winter or fall grazing the earlier planted the better.

Ryegrass works very well over-seeded on bermudagrass pastures and meadows, however you must be careful not to let it over compete with your bermudagrass. Starting around the first of May you will want to either cut the excess forage or keep it grazed down. This will help prevent crowding out of your bermudagrass by the ryegrass. For fields that have had manure, litter or excess fertilizer applied ryegrass is an excellent option to help control winter and spring weeds. If the nutrients are there then something is going to grow, it may as well be a ryegrass that has good feed value as opposed to winter weeds.

When over-seeding ryegrass into existing sod, you have two options either broadcast or no-till it into the sod. The quickest and cheapest method is to just broadcast it out over a closely grazed or cut sod. This method works fine, so long as you get enough rainfall to germinate the seed, and then keep the seedling growing long enough to develop a root system. If broadcasting you may consider dragging a heavy gate or light spring harrow behind the seeder, or lightly disking prior to broadcasting, while this is not always necessary, it will help insure that you have some seed to soil contact, which is critical. I prefer using a drill, either a no-till or even a conventional drill to plant into the existing sod. This will usually at least guarantee some seed to soil contact, and if you get the seed covered it will help keep the young seedlings roots from drying out if more rainfall does not come soon after germination. Just be careful when using a drill, due to the small size of ryegrass seed you do not want to plant to deep. Somewhere between 1/8” to1/4” would be the ideal depth, any deeper than 1/2” will probably result in a poor stand. Seeding rates vary, but usually 20 to 25lbs/acre will be in the right range.

For good productivity ryegrass does require proper fertilization. Ryegrass can tolerate a wide range of pH levels, but like many grasses a pH of 6.0 to 7.0 is ideal. Fertilization rates should be based on soil test recommendations. Phosphorus and potash should be at least in the medium range for optimum yields. At planting ½ of the recommended potash all of the recommended phosphorus and 40 to 50 units of nitrogen are recommended. After the first heavy grazing apply the rest of the potash and another 40 to 60 units of nitrogen. If we are having a good year and you are getting lots of grazing applying 40 to 60 units of nitrogen after each graze down will keep you in grass. Soil test recommendations will really help you in applying the proper nutrients.

Gulf ryegrass is the old standard by which other varieties are rated. Under the right conditions Gulf is still a good variety, but the price for a new improved variety is about the same as Gulf, so I recommend using one of the newer varieties. There are several improved varieties available that have done very well in our local trials they include: Prine, Marshall, and Nelson with some rainfall you cannot go wrong with any of these ryegrass varieties