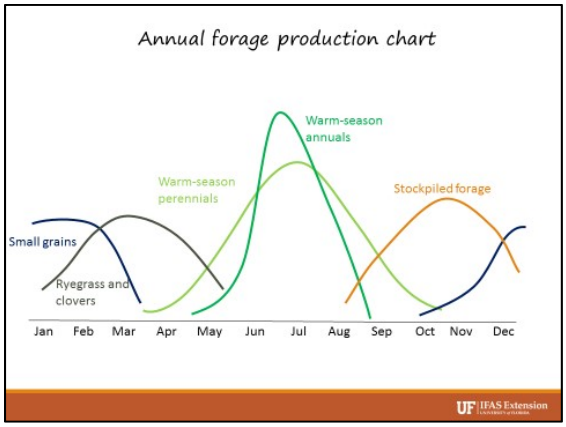
November 15, 2018



If a question keeps coming up, maybe there are several people in that situation. Probably, yes. Based on timing, this information does not need to wait for the next newsletter edition.

I have my thoughts on this subject plus I have consulted with two of our Extension Forage Specialists just to make sure I am not off target. You may be interested in this information and find it useful.

Late planting of cool season forages…

With the excessive rainfall we have been receiving, I have had numerous contacts about late planting forages over the past several weeks. Some producers haven't been able to get into their fields to plant. Official 2018 rainfall recorded in Huntsville, TX is 6.51 inches for September, 11.57 inches in October, with an additional 2.52 inches (to date) this month. That totals up to 20.6 inches for just the past 2.5 months.

My thoughts on late planting for our commonly utilized small grains, annual ryegrass, and cool season legumes beyond the "normal" dates of late September through mid-October are as follows:

If you haven't yet been able to get into your fields to plant, here is what you need to know.

You are late. No surprise there, but are you too late?

Maybe not depending on what you plant and what the weather does through the rest of the production season.

At this point (November 15), you have missed any option for early production benefit. Production within the growth curve of October, November, and December are beyond anything not yet established. (see Annual forage production chart/Source: Marcelo Wallau, UF Forage Specialist) We are now looking at forage species which can provide later growth, production, and utilization.

Dr. Larry Redmon, TX A&M Associate Department Head, Extension Specialist, has told me that our Extension Small Grains people are still planning to establish fields in areas that they haven't been able access yet. That serves as a "good enough for me" recommendation, so you may not be out of the game just yet. (*Be sure to read all related comments later*.)

Small Grains

Regardless of which small grain species you are interested in, a well-drained soil is important. Fields that are holding or standing water are not going to be highly successful.

-Oats: The real benefit of oats is early production. As the earliest producing small grain, we like to get these in early to provide some pre-frost production and utilization. That time is past. The item that bothers me about oats is the tendency to be less cold hardy than our other small grains. Read into that what you will, but at this point I am expecting a cold winter. The weather guys have been telling us for the past year (literally) that this winter would be cold & wet.

-Wheat: Good cold hardiness is an attribute of wheat. I like the thought of a plant that can withstand some cold.

-Rye: Remember we are talking about cereal rye (not annual ryegrass). Better adapted to acidic soils than wheat, this species is also known for cold hardiness. If you have pine tree growing type soils, this species will work for you. Elbon rye may work for you if you can get it planted.

Annual Ryegrass

In my opinion, if you are needing to still establish a cool season forage; a roll of the dice may be appropriate for this species. Furthermore, I received a consensus about annual ryegrass from both Dr. Vanessa Corriher-Olson, Extension Forage Specialist, and Dr. Redmon. Each of these very experienced individuals encouraged us to look at annual ryegrass with the understanding that overall yield will be reduced due to late planting. “The shorter window of a growing season”, Dr. Corriher-Olson’s terminology needs to be understood.

Dr. Redmon reported planting annual ryegrass into December with good results. His latest recommended planting date is the end of December as the “root system doesn’t get developed to the same extent as an earlier planting”.

Cool Season Legumes (Clovers)

It is wet, wet, wet. Thoughts on some of the common legume species:

My call on recommendations for this set of species is White clover as an option for wetter soils. With milder temperatures, White clover can persist well into the year. In the right place and under the right management, a look at this species is worthwhile.

The next specific species is Ball clover which is also well adapted to heavier wet soils; however, this species is sometimes a little more of a challenge to establish. Ball clover has been noted to require multiple years to establish due to the hard seed coat which is a benefit of the species allowing it to persist over multiple seasons.

Berseem clover is tolerant of wetter soils, but sometimes not as cold tolerant as other clovers. This species is adapted to heavy soils also, but the next problem is, it is not as tolerant of acidic soils.

Yes, there are other late producing clover species such as Arrowleaf; however, we need something that tolerates wet soils, which Arrowleaf is not adapted to.

I have had a question posed regarding Crimson. Crimson is an early producer, and it doesn't like wet soils. Under our current environmental conditions, it does not fit well.

Planting requirements

Regardless of what seed specie you may still want to get into the ground, you must have sunlight, and good soil seed contact. If you haven't grazed or otherwise removed your existing ground cover (mechanical mowing), you have a real problem on excessively wet fields.

For best germination rates, small grains really need to be planted into the soil. That means prepared seedbeds or a no-till drill. Depending on just how wet your field is, running that equipment across the land may not be an option. At this point putting a disk into the ground probably means you won't be able to drive across the pasture until sometime next year. Hoofed traffic across that same pasture could be a problem as well.

If you can't drag or roll the seed in to firm up the soil seed contact, Annual Ryegrass or possibly a small seeded cool season legume is the only option at this time. These options still work best with dragging or rolling in; however, there is more flexibility on getting an acceptable stand without the practice.

Keep in mind, whatever is planted now will not produce at the normally anticipated levels for overall tonnage.

To assist your information gathering options, I have included links below for your further reading.

What if you can't utilize cool season grazing and you are short on quality hay?

Information developed by Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist can help you answer that set of questions:

http://overton.tamu.edu/files/2011/04/ReducingSupplementationCosts.pdf

https://aglifesciences.tamu.edu/animalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2018/10/145-stretching-hay-supplies-wet-cow-fed-low-quality-hay.pdf

https://aglifesciences.tamu.edu/animalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2018/10/144-stretching-hay-supplies-dry-cow-fed-low-quality-hay.pdf

In addition to the information above, Dr. Stephen Hammack & Dr. Ron Gill have information which provides overviews of a range of common supplements and strategies for properly utilizing them.

http://aglifesciences.tamu.edu/animalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2012/04/beef-factors-and-feed.pdf

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