



Todd Vineyard
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
County Extension Agent - AG
206 S. State Street, Suite A
Decatur, Texas 76234
Ph: 940.627.3341 Fax: 940.627.8070

Ag. News

Submitted: 10-23-15

Small Grains Off to a Start

You know early grazing didn't work in our favor this year; however, those of you who were lucky enough to get your small grain fields planted before the rain may have a chance to have an excellent beginning and should be able to graze those fields much earlier than usual. Of course we don't need it washed out and we need it to stay warm a little while longer. If these things fall into place early grazed forage should contain 28-32% crude protein. It is important to remember, each ton of forage harvested by livestock will remove 90-100 pounds of nitrogen. Small grain forage that stands a foot tall will easily yield one ton per acre. That means if you only applied 60 to 80 pounds of nitrogen per acre at planting, most if not all of your nitrogen will be harvested with the first grazing.

Don't forget Armyworms in your small grain fields. There is a good chance that you will have them, it is only a question of when. Scout your fields daily because it can get away from you in a hurry. Those of you that have wheat up, you should be in good shape with the recent and upcoming rain events. It is worth your while to scout and spray for worms immediately.

We can also usually expect to see nitrogen deficiency symptoms before the first of the year. If you are able to graze early and remove the forage before then, nitrogen top dressing in December will surely help produce more winter forage. If you delay that nitrogen application until January or February, expect a forage growth loss.

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In many cases, hay quality is below average, so a few pounds of nitrogen may allow your winter forage to economically supplement the hay.

According to Noble Foundation research, limit grazing your small grains may be the best bet to extend that small grains grazing and provide the necessary protein. Grazing steers as little as 15 minutes on small grains equals about 2.5 pounds of 20% breeders cube. Using forage supplementation in place of feed can save money if managed correctly. Producers should look at all winter feeding options to determine the cheapest source of protein and energy to sustain suitable body condition scores throughout the winter.