

Maryland Grazers' NETWORK NEWS & NOTABLES

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS:



Fall is a Good Time for Weed Control

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Weedy pastures and hay fields are a sign of declining stands, typically as a result of poor management practices (low pH, low fertility, overgrazing, improper cutting management, etc.) and/or disease and insect problems. Weeds are seldom a serious problem in a well managed, vigorously growing pastures and hay fields. Good forage crop management involves the proper

choice of the forage species and variety, an adequate fertility program, controlled grazing/cutting management, and pest management (weeds, insects and diseases).

When hay and pasture health declines, weeds exploit the opportunity to germinate and become established. Bare ground is the perfect seedbed for establishment of weeds. But once established, weeds must be controlled with mechanical and/or chemical practices. However, the management problem that caused the hay or pas-



Field Thistle

*Mrs. W.D. Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - <http://www.wildflower.org/gallery/>

ture stand decline must be corrected before reseeding a new crop or weeds will quickly re-infest the field.

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2010 Future Harvest-CASA Conference Features Grazing Track

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SAVE THE DATE!
Friday and Saturday,
JANUARY 15th and 16th 2010

11th Annual Conference - Future Harvest - A Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture will be held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV (30 minutes from Frederick & Hagerstown MD).

The conference will feature four sessions dedicated to grazing systems.

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Future Harvest Conference *continued from page 1*

Session 1

Grazers' Network Mentoring Program

Will feature a farmer mentor and grazing partner

Session 2

Working Woodlands & Grazing for Conservation and Wildlife

Sustainably managing your woods can optimize both the economic and ecological benefits it provides. Learn of opportunities and incentives of incorporating your woodlands into your overall farm operations.

Pastures, hayfields, hedgerows, and the ribbons of trees and shrubs along streams provide important nesting habitat for a variety of birds. These areas also provide important habitat for bees, butterflies, and other insects that pollinate our food crops. Learn about how farm management techniques can benefit our local and migratory wildlife.

Session 3

Marketing Grass and Pastured Products & Is Your Farm Profitable

Grass and pastured products are in demand by

consumers, but what phrases, terms, 'stories', and types of marketing materials work best for these products? Learn what focus groups and successful producers have discovered about consumer perceptions to develop grass-fed meats marketing materials that really sell.

Session 4

Marketing Food (feed) for Thought

Beef production will be used as the example and production broken into 3 phases:

- 1) Cow/calf
- 2) Backgrounding
- 3) Finishing

Feed Value of Various Forage Systems for Grass-Based Livestock Production
Beef Quality of Grass-fed & Finished Cattle.

Please contact Rob Schnabel at rschnabel@cbf.org or 443-482-2175 if you would like to receive a conference brochure listing all tracks and presenters. Other topics include cheese making, on-site processing, healthy soils and numerous other important presentations.



**REBUILDING THE REAL ECONOMY
NOURISHING LOCAL FOODS AND FARMERS**

FUTURE HARVEST—CASA's 11th Annual Conference

January 15 & 16, 2010

At the National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV

WORKSHOPS ON:

- Sustainable Fruit and Vegetable Production: Organic Disease Control, Soil Science, and more
 - Maryland Grazers Network: Forage, Woodlands and Marketing Sense for your Farm
- Adding Value to your Farm Operation: On-farm Processing Regulations, Milling Wheat, Agritourism
 - Urban Homesteading: Turning Waste into Resources, Fermentation, Food Security
- Community Food Connections: Food Policy, Farmers Markets & Hospitals, Spreading the Good Food Movement

A conference FOR and BY local farmers
and gardeners! LOCAL FOOD!



www.futureharvestcasa.org

Weed Control *continued from page 1*

Improved forage management practices provide greater weed control by increasing the competitiveness of the forage crop. A thick hay or pasture sward decreases weed emergence, provides competition to suppress growth of any emerged weeds, and has an advantage in capturing light, water and nutrients necessary for growth. The aim is to apply management practices that will make the forage crop as competitive as possible.

There are two basic approaches to weed control – chemical and mechanical.

Chemical control

Successful chemical control of established perennial weeds in hay and pasture involves the use of systemic herbicides such as glyphosate, 2,4-D, dicamba, etc. that will kill the root system. To be most effective, the herbicides need to be applied at the time in the plant's life cycle when it is actively moving carbohydrate food reserves into its storage structures (taproots, rhizomes, crowns, etc.). Shorter days and cooler temperatures, especially cooler night temperatures, are signals to perennial plants that winter is coming and it is time to build up carbohydrate food reserves. Perennial plants need food reserves to survive the winter and early spring months when photosynthesis is not active.

During September and October, depending upon location, perennial plants actively move carbohydrates from their site of synthesis (the leaves) to the storage structures. Thus systemic herbicides applied at this time are moved down into the storage structures along with the carbohydrates and kill the plant's root system. Early spring herbicide applications to perennial weeds are usually less effective since the flow of nutrients and water at that time is

upward in the plant, from the roots to the leaves.

The herbicide should be applied to actively growing, well-developed foliage. Adequate, healthy leaf tissue must be present to absorb the herbicide. At least 6 inches of new growth is needed for effective uptake and control. Favorable air temperatures are desirable immediately before, during and after application – cold nights and cool, cloudy days reduce and slow the effectiveness of the herbicide. Most perennials such as horsetail, milkweed, hemp dogbane, bindweed, etc. need to be sprayed before frost damages the leaves. Dandelions are an exception and are often best sprayed after the first frost.

For central Pennsylvania, Bill Curran, Weed Science Specialist at Penn State, says that for warmer season perennials like johnsongrass, horsetail, groundcherry, wirestem mully, pokeweed, Japanese knotweed and poison ivy, application between September 1 and 15 is generally ideal. For weeds like hemp dogbane and bindweed, he says that applications should be before October 1, and for quackgrass, other cool-season grasses and Canada thistle, make applications by October 15. Those dates would be appropriate for the higher elevations of western Maryland but adjusted later by 1 to 2 weeks for central and southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

Key to successful weed control is identifying the weeds present and selecting the most effective herbicide (s) to provide control. Helpful weed identification Web sites include:

<http://weedid.aces.uiuc.edu/>

<http://www.ppws.vt.edu/weedindex.htm>

http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/weeds_intro.html



Horsetail

Mrs. W.D. Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <http://www.wildflower.org/gallery/>



Hemp Dogbane

Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <http://www.wildflower.org/gallery/>



Bindweed

Mrs. W.D. Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <http://www.wildflower.org/gallery/>



Dandelion

Mrs. W.D. Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <http://www.wildflower.org/gallery/>

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<http://weedid.missouri.edu/>

<http://weeds.cropsci.illinois.edu/weedid.htm>

Knowing the weeds present, you can then find the most effective herbicides for control by going to the weed control section of the University of Maryland Pest Management Recommendations for Field Crops interactive Web site:

<http://extension.umd.edu/publications/EB237online/>

Mechanical control

Some people may not want to treat weed problems with herbicides. In this case mechanical weed control is the most commonly used alternative method, but the practices that can be used in established pastures and hay fields is largely limited to mowing or clipping and hand digging of individual plants. Repeated mowing, clippings, and hand digging can diminish weed infestations.

Mowing imposes stress on the rhizomatous broadleaf weeds as they regrow, while it stimulates more vigorous growth of the desirable grasses and legumes. Repeated mowing reduces a weed plant's competitive ability, depletes its carbohydrate reserves in the roots, and prevents seed production. Mowing can kill or suppress annual and biennial weeds. Mowing can also suppress perennials and help restrict their spread.

A single mowing will not satisfactorily control most weeds. However, mowing three or four times per year over several years can greatly reduce and occasionally eliminate certain weeds including Canada thistle. Research at Colorado State

University has demonstrated that frequent mowing on pastures infested with Canada thistle can be successfully controlled if performed diligently for a couple years. The number of years required to effectively reduce Canada thistle depends on other factors such as available grass competition and the extent of the weed problem. Mowing is generally more effective on broadleaf than grass weeds and is more effective on annual weeds than perennial weeds.

Research at the University of Missouri showed that repeated mowing (three times per year for two years) reduced the population of perennials such as goldenrod and western ironweed by as much as 80 percent. Some species may require up to six mowings per season to prevent seed production. Weed problems are typically less in hay fields than pastures. This is undoubtedly has a lot to do with regular mowing and fertilization of hay fields.

Most weeds should be cut in the early bud to early bloom stage at 3 to 4 inches above the ground. Timing of the mowing is critical because you must

eliminate the seed production, which will prevent future re-infestations. Canada thistle seed is viable 8 days after pollination. Field bindweed requires about 10 to 15 days after pollination to produce viable seed. Thus, mowing in the bud stage instead of waiting until the bloom stage or later is important in preventing seed production by some species.

Plants such as Canada, musk, and plumeless thistles are difficult to control due to their ability to produce a second seed head during the same growing season. This forces a follow-up clipping. In addition to re-growing, they commonly produce the second seed head close to the ground, making clipping very difficult.

Clipping some perennial weeds will actually stimulate the plant to put up new shoots such as with milkweed. Using a shovel or hoe can be effective only if you dig into the ground 2 or 3 inches to cut off the root below the crown, particularly with weeds such as burdock.

Also, mow under fences and along field borders to help prevent the introduction of new weed seeds.



Photo by Stephen Ausmus - <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/graphics/photos/sep04/k11431-1.htm>

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Regular mowing helps prevent weeds from establishing, spreading, and competing with desirable forage crops.

Influence of grazing management

Many pastures become severely infested with weeds due to continuous grazing. Cattle, and especially horses, will overgraze areas of young, succulent growth and avoid more mature areas.

Overgrazing results in an open sod and bare soil that allows light to penetrate to weed seeds and seedlings. Areas that are avoided can have excessive growth that can smother new shoots, inhibit tiller development and weaken the desirable grasses and legumes.

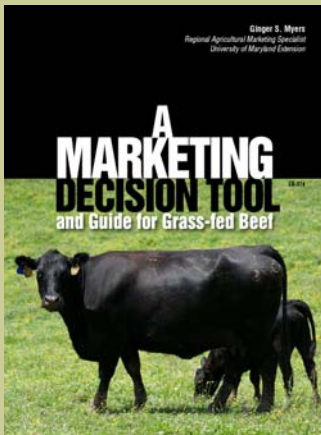
A properly managed rotational grazing system reduces these problems. This helps maintain a healthy, vigorous pasture that can better compete with weeds. Maintaining proper pH and fertility is also critical in maintaining a healthy, vigorous stand and reducing weed invasion. And some weeds,

when they are young, are readily consumed by livestock. This further reduces weed problems in a good rotational grazing system.

This further reduces weed problems in a good rotational grazing system. Broomsedge, for example, can be controlled through a combination of fertilization and other improvement practices. Researchers in Missouri drilled tall fescue into a pasture infested with broomsedge and then began a program of N, P, and K fertilization. The broomsedge was eliminated over a four-year period. In a separate study, P and K fertilization eliminated broomsedge over five years.

Eliminating the cause of the problem, rather than treating the symptom, should be the focus of weed management.

New Market Decision Tool & Guide For Grass-Fed Beef



"To market, to market to buy a fat pig. Home again, home again, jig-gety jig." This old nursery rhyme only addresses one side of the marketing equation- the consumer's task of going to market to a product. The other side of the marketing equation is having a product the consumer wants, available in a convenient location,

packaged and presented in a manner that entices the buyer to purchase it.

A new resource guide has just been released that will assist grass-fed beef producers formulate profitable marketing strategies. It is a decision tool to assist individual producers in making marketing decisions about what to produce; where/how/in what venue(s) outlets to market their product; and practical risk management strategies.

"A Marketing Decision Tool and Guide for Grass-fed Beef" helps beef producers evaluate

their individual operation on six of the factors that are barriers to entering a market - finding a niche, product development and pricing, regulatory constraints, promotion and distribution, selling product, and managing risks.

The guide is written in sections with decision-making worksheets that help producers identify their "best fit" grass-fed beef marketing opportunities. Following the decision worksheets are articles and resources individual producers can use to address possible barriers or lost opportunities within specific marketing venues.

The information in this booklet is for educational use. It was written by Ginger S. Myers, Regional Marketing Specialist, University of Maryland Extension and Director of the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center. Publication of this workbook was made possible through support from the Jorgensen Foundation and the University of Maryland's Department of Animal and Avian Sciences.

For more information on receiving a hard copy of this publication, contact Susan Barnes at 301-432-2767, sbarnes6@umd.edu. It is also available as a printable PDF at agmarketing.umd.edu or mredc.umd.edu.

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Guide for Consumers for Purchasing Meats

<http://www.sustainabletable.org>

The Sustainable Table has published a "Glossary of Meat Production Methods" for consumers to use while shopping. Many consumers are confused about the plethora of terms now used to describe farm-raised meats. Familiarizing yourself with the differences in these terms can also help producers better answer their customers questions about different production methods.

Marketing Tools from SARE

<http://www.sare.org>

The content of SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) bulletins and publications are based on SARE research. They expand on the latest agricultural trends and link to more detailed information sources.

Ag Alternative Products – Dairy Beef

<http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/PDF/dairybeef.pdf>

Dairy beef is an opportunity to diversify operations and boost income, especially if the production is pasture-based.

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