

AG HAPPENINGS

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Farley's Thoughts

Over the past year you may have noticed that **Stephens Feed and Fertilizer** has now become part of Farley Farm Supply. **Ernie, Arthur and Robert are still running things** quite well and available to help you with your fertilizer, feed and seed needs.

We did make a change and moved all our garden supplies and livestock feeds from the West Bivar location over to the location on Gonzales Street (the original Stephens Feed and Fertilizer).

2015 is quickly coming to a close. What will it be remembered for?

May and October rains.

Record high beef cattle prices the first 2/3 of the year. Lots of hay made. Green grass, even in November.

Questions are on many people's mind for next year: What are milk prices going to do? (continued on next page)

Soil Sampling Time

This is the time of year that we take a lot of soil samples and we would love to take one for you! Winter time is a good time for us because crop scouting is at a minimum, fields are bare or winter killed and the weather is just right most of the time. Also, we like to take soil samples at the same time each year since weather can have some effect on results. We don't charge for taking the sample, only for the cost of testing which depends on what you want tested. Basic soil tests cost \$12.50 per sample or you can go \$16 to have results of more micro-nutrients. Most growers simply need a basic test but if you are growing specialty crops or even short season crops like vegetables you may need micros.

The basic test will tell you pH, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulphur. This is all most people ever need especially if you are raising hay crops.

If you would like us to sample your soil just call and we'll put you on the list. If you want to do your own soil sampling we can supply you with a probe to borrow and a few simple instructions. The main thing is to make sure you sample!

How often should you sample? If you are raising field crops then you should sample every year and the same if you are raising hay crops. If you are grazing cattle on pasture year round then University recommendations are to sample every 3 years since you are adding manure and urine from cattle.



Farley's Thoughts cont.

Where are calf and cow prices going? What row crops do I plant? How do I make a profit? I can't answer those questions but they are on my mind. 2016 is just around the corner. It may be too early to decide on a plan for next year, but some plans can be put in motion.

Now is the time to think about soil testing. Farley Farm Supply has already pulled and sent off over 100 samples. Irrigated cropland and pasture should be tested every year. Dryland fields and pastures can be tested less frequently, but I recommend at least every third year. Give us a call to get on the list to have soil samples pulled by our staff. I anticipate that fertilizer prices will be less than they have been the last 3 years but knowing what nutrients are needed is extremely important so that nutrients are applied in the proper ratios. The pH of soil is also critical to be able to utilize the nutrients that are applied or, are already in the soil. Lime works best when applied during the winter because it takes more time to work.

The question that I am asked more than any other is "How do I control grassburrs in my pastures and hay fields?" There is not an easy answer to that question. (Cont. on next page)

Sorghum Can't Win This Year

If you have tried growing sorghum for grain, forage sorghum, sorghum-sudangrass or any plant with sorghum genetics in it, then you had lots of problems this year including sugarcane aphids, problems with insecticides and now feral hogs.

Sugarcane aphids moved into our area during the 2014 crop year but only in a small way. In 2015 the sugarcane aphid appeared during the winter near Hillsboro on dead johnsongrass and as soon as we planted any sorghum type plant the aphid seemed to appear. This insect can multiply extremely fast and it feeds by sucking plant juices. High numbers of aphids combined with a tremendous appetite will take down a sorghum plant very fast. If the plants are small the damage happens quickly and in many cases the plant doesn't recover.

There are two insecticides that are effective on sugarcane aphid, Sivanto and Transform. It is good that we have had two but it is also bad that only two insecticides are available. Just recently EPA had to cancel the special exemption it gave to sorghum plants for Transform because of a court ruling. Transform did a good job and it was the cheapest option but for now we only have Sivanto.

Lastly, we have had lots of problems with feral hogs in sorghum.

The sorghum was doing well even in the droughty conditions we had this fall but as soon as the grain appeared the hogs found it. They can easily move into a sorghum type field and knock down the plants and strip the head. It is amazing what a group of hogs can do in just a few hours.



Farley's Thoughts cont.

In my opinion, the product that consistently works the best is Plateau. It has good pre-emergence activity on grassburrs. The reason that Plateau is not more widely used is that it can stunt bermudagrass when applied during, or just before, the growing season.

That is why I recommend a winter application of Plateau in December, January, or early February. It can be tank mixed with Roundup to clean up winter grasses and weeds. Plateau showed good residual control this year even with above average rainfall. Plateau costs approximately \$13.50-\$16.50/acre including application. The higher price includes Roundup. I do not recommend plowing or renovating pastures when applying Plateau. Another product you may have heard about is Pastora. Pastora is a post-emerge product that has no residual and has shown inconsistent control in our area.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Jim

Bermudagrass Stem Maggot

I sure don't want to sound all doom and gloom but we do need to make sure all our pasture and hay growers are aware of a severe problem that is only getting worse. Bermudagrass stem maggot is here and it doesn't seem to be going away!

If you have coastal bermudagrass hay or pasture then you know about this insect. If you are not sure then walk out in your pastures now and look at the dead tips. This insect has four life stages: the adult is a small fly, the adult lays an egg on the bermudagrass stem, the egg hatches a maggot or small larvae that burrows into the stem and feeds for several days. The feeding it does cuts through the topmost leaves so that they die. These leaves that died look just like a killing frost came through without the cold weather.

Alicia, Coastal and Tifton 44 are the most susceptible since they are finer textured bermudagrasses. Tifton 85, which is a coarser grass, just doesn't have much problem with BSM. If you are going to be sprigging this next year you really should consider this insect and its potential damage in the future for your choice of grass to grow.

December 10 CEU Training

If you have a Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide license then this time of year is very important to you! There are Continuing Education Units (credits) are offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to area applicators throughout the month of December. Most counties in our area are offering some sort of program to applicators and many occur on Thursday, December 10.

If you are needing 8 CEU's, costs is \$50, then you can go to the First Baptist Church in Comanche or at the Research and Extension Center on 281 in Stephenville. Be sure to call and reserve a spot since these meeting fill up fast.

Daily energy intake is the primary limiting factor affecting beef cattle performance on forage diets like coastal hay or pasture or even native grasses. This energy intake can be further limited when forages supply an inadequate amount of crude protein. The reason for this is that the amount of crude protein in the cow's diet needs to be in balance with the energy content. This is usually expressed as a ratio of 6 parts energy to 1 part protein. For instance, hay with 60% total digestible nutrients or TDN would need a protein content of 10% to be in balance and allow the microbes in the rumen of the cow to properly digest all the energy and also have enough energy to digest all the protein. The problem is that we allow pastures and hay fields to get too mature so that they have less protein and energy as a percent of the total. It is not unusual for coastal hay to test 45% TDN and have a 5% crude protein (CP). This is a ratio of 9 TDN: 1 CP which is way out of line. This kind of ratio has been researched to limit dry matter intake to just 1.6% of body weight (BW) when it should be above 2% of BW. When the crude protein of a forage falls below about 8% the dry matter intake of cattle declines rapidly. This decline is attributed to a loss of rumen microbes as they die for lack of protein and energy. (See Liquid Feeds article.)

Liquid Feeds

Farley Farm Supply is now offering two types of liquid feeds now, Farley's Beef Builder and Mix 30 Plus.

If you have fed a high molasses based liquid feed in the past and you like it and your cows like it then we have "Farley's Beef Builder." It is a 32% crude protein mix made with cane molasses. The protein is based off urea but the feed is self limiting because of the phosphoric acid added to improve reproduction. This mix contains both a vitamin and mineral mix. When fed at 2 to 2.5 lbs a day it more than meets an animal's daily requirements for crude protein and helps meet energy needs. Remember urea based feed products should only be fed to cattle and only when roughages are available at all times. Cost is \$268 per ton delivered.

Mix 30 Plus is made from corn and soy co-products including corn or soy fats. Mix 30 Plus supplies both energy and protein necessary for proper rumen function especially on poorer quality forages. Even on high protein forages Mix 30 Plus has fat energy to keep protein/energy in balance. It is 16.5% crude protein and 47% TDN with 10% of this energy from fat. Feeding rates are from 1 lb. to 4 lb. per day. Cost of Mix 30 Plus is \$240 per ton picked up and \$260 per ton delivered.

Diplodia Pine Shoot Blight

The rains we had last year and this year are usually very good for trees but we have a few pine trees in our area and they are suffering. The disease is a diploid which is a type of leaf spot. Leaf spots are hard to see on pine needles. Not much you can do except trim out the damage and water the tree in dry spells.

