

“Ag Happenings”

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Farley Farm Supply

124 W. Bivar St., DeLeon, TX 76444

www.farleyfarmssupply.com farleyfarmssupply@gmail.com

254 893 2566 Office

254 893 4063 Fax

Staff

Jim Farley
Keith McIlvain
Matt Sparger
Jeremy Sparger
Bill Boswell
Jeannie Keith
Micky Salinas
Gerald Locke
Matt Nowlin
Junior Salinas
Joe Mendez
Victor Villareal
Manuel Cervantes
Rick Burns
Kiley Abbe
Bob Whitney

Very Good Fall

There is no doubt that this has been a very good fall. Rains have been good so far and most hay growers were able to cut a very good last cutting of hay. As an added bonus the bermudagrass has thickened up tremendously which will be a big help controlling weeds in the spring.

Small grains are also off to a great start with producers already putting calves and cows out grazing. It has been a long time since we have been able to graze this early. Fortunately we also had very little armyworm pressure which was strange since they were bad in many bermudagrass pastures in August. And as I write this I have not seen greenbugs in numbers that will cause worry and forage growth rates have been so good that I doubt they will be a problem.

This all means that we are set to have a good grazing winter and maybe moisture to begin a great spring.



Stocking Rates - Let Your Cows Tell You!

Dr. Bob Lyons is an Extension Range Specialist based in Uvalde. He has done a lot of research into grazing habits and stocking rates. One of his research projects was to put Global Positioning Satellite collars on a herd of cattle at a 2000 acre ranch. Basically what they did was to put Global Positioning Satellite collars on a herd of cattle at a 2000 acre ranch. These collars signaled back to the researchers exactly where all the cattle were at all times and even plotted if they were grazing (moving) or resting. All of this information could then be plotted out on aerial photos to determine where cattle were spending their time and consequently where they were grazing. This tracking information was then followed up with visual on the ground investigations of what was in an area that was grazed or not grazed.

For instance they found that there was an area of the ranch that the cattle just would not go into but from the aerial photos the ground looked like good grass. When they went to look they found that there was lots of grass, good grass, but there was also a lot of rock. In fact they found that with as little as 30% rock cover cattle will not go into a pasture. They will only use an area about 35% of the time if there is as little as 10% rock cover.

They also took soil survey information and laid it over the aerial photos to plot out grazing patterns by soil type. In this ranch they looked at two soil types, Rumble-Comfort and Comfort-Rock. Cattle consistently preferred Rumble-Comfort to Comfort Rock about 2.5 to 1. This means that cattle were in these areas 2.5 times more because the better soil grew better grass.

In another example a pasture section had no cattle grazing, in fact it showed up as a big hole in a pasture on their photos. When they went to investigate, this particular area was ringed in cedar. Now a cow could certainly get into this pasture area but she wasn't going to simply because it was "walled" off with cedar. In another example they found that no cattle had been in a pasture that looked like a "sea of grass." Even from their pickups they couldn't figure out why the cattle wouldn't graze the grass until they got out and started walking. This particular pasture was almost solid threeawn grass species. This is a beautiful looking grass but unfortunately not at all palatable or nutritious and the cattle showed them it wasn't by not eating it.

It doesn't take long to understand that even though this ranch was 2000 acres,

only a limited amount of it was available for grazing. In this area there is lots of pasture and rangeland but of the over 1,000,000 acres that could be grazed, how much really **can be** grazed. Use your livestock to show you any barriers to grazing and either fix them or subtract them from your grazing plans.



Small Grain Weeds

Rain can make a huge difference in everything we do in agriculture as we learned this fall. We have been blessed to have so much forage but along with the good stuff we also get the bad. The picture above is henbit and almost every grain field I look at contains henbit but along with henbit we have mustards, filaree, four point evening primrose, and thistles which make up the majority of our problems. None of these weeds are difficult to control now but as they grow they get harder and harder. They get

difficult because they get a bigger root system, more hair and thicker cuticle on the leaves and more plant mass to absorb chemical. No one likes to spend money on weed control but every pound of weeds in small grain is worth about 4 pounds of small grain grazing.



King Ranch versus WW-B Dahl Bluestem Grass

If you look at the two pictures above you can see that they look almost identical but the difference in grazing is huge! The top picture is of KR Bluestem which is now considered an invasive species. It has been planted for years to stabilize roadsides but in drought it moves out into pastures and native grass stands replacing good forages. Cattle will graze it in the spring but they will leave it as soon as they can. It is a low forage

producer and is characterized and noticed because of its prolific seedhead production in the late summer and fall. It is also a problem to homeowners because it loves to invade home lawns and can take over if not controlled.

The bottom picture is of a really good grass even though the seedhead is virtually the same as KR. WW-B Dahl is planted extensively now either by itself or in mixes with Kleingrass and Wilman Lovegrass. It has a lot more total grass production and its quality is persistent throughout the season averaging 12% in summer and 4% in winter. It is very summer and winter hardy and should be considered if you are planting “natives.”

Soil Samples

Don't forget that we are glad to come and take a soil sample for you. We only charge for testing the soil, not taking the sample. We take a sample and send it to A&L Labs and have the results back in days.



December 12th CEU Training

For those of you who need pesticide credit mark down December 12 because all the counties in this area will be holding training for licensed applicators. I know in De Leon it will be held at Hwy 6 Cafe for both Eastland and Comanche Counties. Erath will be held at the District Extension and Research Center on Hwy 281. I believe they will be offering up to 8 hours - if you can endure sitting for 8 hours!! Cost is \$50.



Common or Giant Mallow - This weed has taken over many areas in our fields. It is most noticeable in winter but can grow through the summer. In fact it is typically known as a biennial which makes it hard to control sometimes.

Khaki Weed - This weed has gotten to be a huge problem in lawns but also some overgrazed pastures. It grows along the ground but it is related to pigweed. It is very tough to kill and can take more than one spray of stronger, brush type herbicides in the mix.



Let me know if we can help you with your fertilizer, chemical or seed needs.

Bd Blumenthal

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