

### **State Cattlemen Meeting**

The State Cattlemen Association will hold its annual meeting in Huntsville on February 12 and 13 at the Von Braun Civic Center. Anyone one can attend this event and they have a good trade show planned. It only comes to north Alabama every third year or so. I encourage you to make plans to attend this year's event. Registration fee for Cattlemen members is \$30.

### **Forage Insurance**

The FSA office has informed me that the deadline to purchase insurance on your fescue pastures and other fall seeded grasses has been extended to February 28<sup>th</sup>. Call the FSA office at 764-5833 Ext. 2.

### **Food Safety**

The FDA has proposed new regulations in Congress, in the name of food safety, for all fruit and vegetable producers to pay for a private inspector to do annual audit of their farm operation to see if they are following the recommended Good Agricultural Practices. If passed, this will be the most sweeping change in food safety rules in over 70 years. It is currently voluntary, but several national wholesale and retail food groups are requiring suppliers to pass an annual third party food safety audit. You may ask what does this have to do with me, a beef producer. Well, guess who will be next for this in the food chain. This along with the info about these national groups working to control the way you produce your livestock is all the reason you need to join and support your commodity organizations.

### **Farm Record Book**

If you need a hand written farm record book we have order forms to purchase one from the Illinois Extension. It is a softbound binder with 18 column worksheets for a price of \$11. Contact our office for the order form 766-6223.

### **Restricted Pesticide Permit**

If you have a restricted use pesticide permit, check to see when it expires. If you need to renew it then come to our office and obtain a new packet and get this done before spring planting. It takes about 2 weeks to obtain a permit. The permit is only good for three years and the cost is \$25. If you plan to purchase Grazon P+D or Surmount for pasture weed control or Atrazine for planting corn you will need this permit.

### **Fertilizer Prices**

The price of fertilizer is still high and the best way to keep from wasting fertilizer is to take a soil test. Now is a good time to get those samples taken and sent to the soil lab. We have the soil testing supplies at our office and we are open from 8-5 Mon.-Fri.



### **Radon**

Radon is an odorless, invisible radioactive gas that can enter your home and increase your risk to lung cancer. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for non smokers. To determine if you have a problem test your home with a radon test kit. The kit is only \$5 which includes postage and they can be bought at the Extension office.

### **Hay Tip**

For a 5 foot diameter bale of hay, if the outer 6" rots, you lose 35% and you will lose one bale for every two you feed.

### **Is Your Beef Operation Profitability?**

According to the Alabama Farm Analysis Association in 2008 the top 1/3 of beef farms made a profit of \$123 per cow, the average producer lost -\$35 per calf and the bottom third of producers lost -\$276 per calf. The breakeven production cost for the average producers was \$95.77 cwt. whereas the breakeven cost for the top third of producers was \$82. How does your operation compare?

### **Crop Info**

For the latest corn varieties and other crop information go to [www.alabamacrops.com](http://www.alabamacrops.com). Does it pay to plant the expensive Max Q fescue? According to one study a beef producer can recover their cost in about 3 years simply by the increase in production.

### **Last Word**

*The mighty oak tree was once a small nut that stood its ground.*

Sincerely,

Randall Armstrong  
County Extension Coordinator





## Spring Grazing and Grass Tetany in Beef Cattle Production

Rocky Lemus and Daniel Rivera  
Extension Forage Specialist and Extension Livestock Specialist

### Preventing Grass Tetany

There is always concern for the prevention of grass tetany, particularly in early spring and late fall when lush pastures are available. Treatment in oral or intravenous formulations can be administered depending heavily upon how advanced the condition of the animal is at the time of administration. Animals that have been down for 12 hours or longer are poor candidates for successful treatment; muscle damage may prevent these animals from rising even if their magnesium status is corrected. Treatment is often complicated by the severe nature of the animal's convulsions and potentially aggressive behavior. If you suspect grass tetany in an animal, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible to discuss proper treatment. When treating animals, practice caution to avoid being injured. Therefore, prevention is the best option. Also, producers can pick-up a few of the oral magnesium (or mag + calcium) gel/paste tubes from their vet or farm store and keep on hand.

To prevent grass tetany, it is recommended not to start grazing until grass has reached six to eight inches in height. Graze less susceptible animals on problem pastures. Dry cows, heifers, stocker cattle and cows nursing calves more than 4 months old are less susceptible than cows in heavy lactation. Another grazing management is to increase the legume content in your pastures with species such as clovers since they have high magnesium levels to compensate for the lack of it in lush grass. Apply potassium and phosphorous in the spring based on soil test recommendations to avoid "luxury consumption" (plant will take more than can utilize increasing concentrations in the tissues). Pastures deficient in Mg should be limed with dolomitic limestone, not calcitic limestone. If your soil is low in Mg and your soil test does not call for lime, Mg deficiency in cattle can be prevented by feed supplements. However, application of Mg oxide (60% Mg) at 250 lbs/ac or 1200 lbs/ac of dolomite (13% Mg) will add 150 lbs of Mg without adverse effect on soil pH. If the pasture has low soil Mg, do not apply heavy rates of nitrogen, potash or manure in early spring. Instead, make fall or late spring applications. Early spring applications of phosphorous will cause no problems on soils with normal Mg levels and phosphorous is needed to enable the plant to take up Mg. Monitor your nutrient balance by soil testing. By soil testing in the fall, sites with potential Mg deficiency can be diagnosed early and corrective measures implemented.

It is also recommended to replace a mineral that is 1 to 2% potassium (K) with a mineral higher in magnesium level (10 to 15%). This will allow livestock to have 10 to 25 grams of Mg per head per day. If using this type of approach, mineral supplementation should start at least 30 days before the spring grazing period. There are several commercial mineral mixes or soft molasses blocks containing Mg that could be used to address this issue. A home-made salt mineral mix containing magnesium oxide is one the cheapest sources to provide levels of magnesium needed. A mix containing equal parts of magnesium oxide with dical, salt, and ground corn can provide adequate levels of magnesium when livestock consume about a pound of the mix per head per week ([Table 1](#)). Intake on these mixes should be closely monitored, since added Mg can result in decreased palatability, and decreased consumption, which means that the animal may not be consuming the adequate amount of the minerals needed. It is highly recommended

that regular forage samples should be obtained for analysis. This simple procedure will provide valuable information for mineral supplementation to optimize livestock nutrition, production, and performance. Knowing the mineral composition of your forages will allow a more strategically planning for your feeding expenses and potentially save money, by cutting out the “extras” that are not needed. Check your minerals and be sure your herd is protected during late winter and spring.

**Table 1.** High magnesium salt-mineral mixtures for reducing grass tetany.

	Mixtures			
	Mix 1	Mix 2	Mix 3	Mix 4
	----- % -----			
<b>Feeds</b>				
Dicalcium phosphate	25	25	35	30
Dry molasses	--	--	--	10
Ground corn	25	30	20	--
Magnesium Oxide	25	25	25	30
Salt	25	20	20	30
<b>Mineral Content</b>				
Calcium	6.0	6.0	8.5	8.0
Magnesium	13.5 – 15.0	13.5 – 15.0	13.5 – 15.0	13.5 – 15.0
Phosphorous	4.5 – 5.0	4.5 – 5.0	6.5 – 7.0	6.0 – 6.5

Source: Guyer et al, 1984; Herring and Bolte, 2005.

## Summary

Grass tetany can be a serious cattle grazing problem. Low blood magnesium may be caused by 1) a diet low in magnesium, 2) a diet with nutrient imbalances that interfere with magnesium metabolism, or 3) higher levels of milk production. Environmental conditions and management factors combine to result in pastures with low magnesium levels. Cool and wet soil conditions reduce the plant’s ability to utilize available magnesium, as well as high nitrogen and potassium levels from chemical fertilizers or manure. Do not apply heavy rates of nitrogen, potash, or manure in early spring. Instead, make late spring, summer, or fall applications of potash or manure when correcting low soil potassium levels. Additionally, forage samples should be obtained on a regular basis to determine mineral content, which can help dictate which minerals to supplement in the feed. Because an outbreak of grass tetany can be so costly, prevention is the best course.

# Beef Farmer – You Have Enemies!

In your occupation as a farmer, especially as a beef farmer, you raise the food that feeds millions of people around the globe. You provide needed protein for growth and development of muscle and brain tissue. Why should someone, who fulfills such a need have so many critics?

Let's start off with a little background information. The real blame starts with a fellow named Norman Borlaug. Norman, a Midwesterner and born-again Lutheran, thought that just because he could engineer grains that could probably grow on a paved parking lot, he had a God ordained mandate to teach the world how to do the same thing – not on parking lots, but in fields from Mexico to Africa to India and China. Dr. Norman Borlaug has been called, “the **Father of the Green Revolution.**”

You, Mr. and Mrs. Poultry Grower are a vital part of that Green Revolution – you are the heirs and beneficiaries of Norman Borlaug. You feed the world. Common sense would say that someone who feeds the world ought to be universally celebrated, but that's not the case.

Lets take a look at who doesn't like you.

## PETA – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

PETA is described as “by far the most successful radical organization in America.” The key word is radical. PETA seeks “total animal liberation,” according to its president and co-founder, Ingrid Newkirk. That means no meat or dairy, of course; but it also means no aquariums, no circuses, no hunting or fishing, no fur or leather, and no medical research using animals. PETA is even opposed to the use of seeing-eye dogs.

In the past, PETA has fronted for the **Animal Liberation Front (ALF)**, a violent, underground group of fanatics who plant firebombs in restaurants, destroy butcher shops, and torch research labs. The FBI considers ALF among America's most active and prolific terrorist groups, but PETA compares it to the Underground Railroad and the French Resistance. More than 20 years after its inception, PETA continues to hire convicted ALF militants and fund their legal defense. In at least one case, court records show that Ingrid Newkirk herself was involved in an ALF arson.

**Their Motivation:** According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, human beings are just another animal species, no more special or important than a snail darter or dairy cow. The group believes, as one commentator put it, that “animal trainers, hunters, fishermen, cattlemen, grocers, and indeed all non-vegetarians are the moral equivalent of cannibals, slave-owners, and death-camp guards.” Newkirk insists that the world would be a better place without people: “Humans have grown like a cancer. We're the biggest blight on the face of the earth.”

PETA is also actively involved in propagandizing elementary school children. In a report titled “Your Kids: PETA's Pawns,” The Center for Consumer Freedom said that PETA will stop at nothing to “indoctrinate children with its radical philosophy.” In addition to having kid-friendly websites and campaigns which appeal to children to renounce all animal products, they run targeted campaigns. An example of these is the horrific McDonald's program *Unhappy Meals* and the KFC campaign with buckets labeled “Shhh! The ‘secret recipe’ in this bucket of body parts is ... cruelty.” Last year PETA brought in \$38 million.



## **HSUS – The Humane Society of the United States**

Despite the words “**humane society**” on its letterhead, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is not affiliated with your local animal shelter. Despite the omnipresent dogs and cats in its fundraising materials, it’s not an organization that runs spay/neuter programs or takes in stray, neglected and abused pets. And despite the common image of animal protection agencies as cash-strapped organizations dedicated to animal welfare, HSUS has become the wealthiest animal rights organization on earth.

HSUS is big, rich and powerful, a “humane society” in name only. And while most local animal shelters are under-funded and unsung, HSUS has accumulated \$113 million in assets and built a recognizable brand by capitalizing on the confusion its very name provokes. This misdirection results in an irony of which most animal lovers are unaware: HSUS raises enough money to finance animal shelters in every single state, with money to spare, yet it doesn’t operate a single one anywhere.

Instead, HSUS spends millions on programs that seek to economically cripple meat and dairy producers; eliminate the use of animals in biomedical research labs; phase out pet breeding, zoos, and circus animal acts; and demonize hunters as crazed lunatics.

Last year, in California, HSUS, using emotionally charged television ads, successfully led the fight to pass **Prop. 2**, a radical act that, when implemented, could possibly eliminate California’s lucrative table egg production industry. Estimates are that they spend more than \$12 million on the effort.

In recent months HSUS has supplied the USDA with undercover video purportedly showing animal mistreatment at a Vermont veal packing facility. The HSUS videotape showed abuses including calves being kicked, slapped and “repeatedly” shocked with electric prods. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a USDA press release, “The deplorable scenes recorded in the video released by the Humane Society of the United States are unequivocally unacceptable. The callous behavior and attitudes displayed in the video clearly appear to be violations of USDA’s humane handling regulations.”

But how accurate are the videos and what is their context? Recently, we reported on a so called “animal rights’ activist” who made undercover videos. He admitted to staging a number of the scenes that he video taped.

Like PETA, HSUS is actively involved in getting their propaganda into schools with child appealing websites. They have also begun advertising on Fox News Network appealing for donations, while showing pitiful photographs of abused animals. The caption over an obviously abused kitten asks plaintively, “Do I have to die today?”

### **HSUS – In their own words:**

“My goal is the abolition of all animal agriculture.”— HSUS grassroots coordinator John “J.P.” Goodwin.

“The life of an ant and that of my child should be granted equal consideration.” – HSUS senior scholar Michael W. Fox.

# Limitations to Optimum Pasture Production

By: Micheal A. Davis

For years pasture production was ignored as a valuable asset by some livestock producers in the Southeast US. Fertilizer cost, machinery cost, and fuel cost were relatively inexpensive for hay production and supplemental feed cost were not high relative to the price of beef. However, that cost/price relationship has worsened in recent years and that trend will probably continue. Grazed forage continues to be the most economical source of nutrients for cattle in our production systems. There are limitations to economical pasture production that must be addressed if cattle producers are to remain competitive.

**Overgrazing** of pasture is one practice which severely limits forage production through a decline of desirable species in pasture mixtures. A good example of this is fescue. Fescue is a forage species which requires a period of rest after heading to allow the plant to replace nutrients in the crown necessary for the plant to survive dormancy. We see a disappearance of fescue in continuous grazed pastures and encroachment of broom sedge after years of such practices. The simplest way to address overgrazing is to implement a rotational grazing system which allows each paddock at least 21 days rest before regrazing. This requires a 4 pasture system, grazing each pasture for 7 days before rotating to the next pasture. While shade and water considerations must be addressed and some additional fencing will be required, the benefits far outweigh the cost. One added benefit to a rotational grazing system is the more uniform distribution of recycled animal waste nutrients from feces and urine. Additionally, we have seen gradual reintroduction of desirable forage species, like legumes, into a rotationally grazed pasture.

**Low pH** of pasture soils severely limits the ability to grow legumes in a pasture system. Not only are legumes very high in nutrient quality but they add much needed nitrogen to a mixed grass/legume pasture. If a producer applies sufficient lime to maintain the soil pH at 5.8-6.0 and applies sufficient phosphorus and potassium for clover growth, and plants the legume seed it will provide great benefits to his profit/loss statement. The one legume that has the ability to improve pastures in Central and South Alabama pastures is crimson clover. While crimson clover is an annual benefits far outweigh any costs associated with the reseeding of crimson each year. Crimson clover is considered a reseeding annual but in my experience if you are depending on the clover each winter and spring you need to seed it in the fall each year. Some years the self reseeding works great but some years, a spell of cool wet weather in late August or early September leads to the germination of seed and if the dry, hot weather returns, the clover dies leaving you with an undependable stand for the winter. A mixture of crimson and apache arrowleaf is probably a good combination since they have peak growth at different times and arrowleaf is a much more dependable reseeded than is crimson. Occasionally we have witnessed problems with inoculation of arrowleaf due to insufficient scarification of the seed. This can be addressed by doubling the inoculation rate to two packs/50 pound bag. In test conducted at the Lower Coastal Plain Substation at Camden, a bahiagrass pasture with crimson clover sod seeded at 15 pounds of seed/acre into a closely grazed sod and P and K applied with **NO** nitrogen, provided more forage than where: 60 pounds of N were applied to bahiagrass alone; and, ryegrass was planted at 25 pounds/ac and 80 or 140 pounds of N applied. These plots were seeded in late October and clipping began in mid-February and continued through August.

**Weed control in pastures** is a never ending challenge. It is essential that weeds be removed in a pasture system since they rob the desired plants of moisture, nutrients, and sunlight. Periodic clipping and/or the judicious, timely application of recommended herbicides are necessary if forage species are to provide sufficient forage growth. I have attached a 2009 weed control calendar for specific weed control. However, new herbicides become available so check with weed control specialist for other recommendations.



## Weed Control Calendar for Selected Weeds

Month	Weeds Controlled	Chemical	Application Rate	Type of Treatment	Notes	Grazing, Hay, and Slaughter Restrictions
January	Woody Perennials: Privet, Locust, Osage Orange, Oak, etc.	Remedy + Diesel, or RTU	25% Remedy and 75% Diesel	Basal Spray, encircling entire circumference of base for 8-10 inches	Use as Spot treatment as dormant application or any time during year	Remedy-grazing, dairy-14 d, slaughter-3 d
January	Little Barley	Gramoxone Inteon 2, or Firestorm 3	0.25 pds/ac Gramoxone Inteon 2 + surfactant; 11 oz firestorm + surfactant	apply as dormant spray to bermudagrass in late winter or early spring		Gramoxone Inteon 2-hay-40 d Firestorm 3, check label
February-March	Yellow Buttercup, Thistle, annual weeds such as dog fennel	2,4-D amine or ester, weedmaster	1-2 pints/acre	Broadcast	air temperature above 55 degrees and no rainfall for 6 hours	2,4-D-grazing-0-7 beef, 7-14 dairy, hay-30 d, slaughter-7 d
April-September	Thistle, dog fennel, horseweed, plantains, bitterweed	2,4-D amine or ester, weedmaster	2-4 pints/acre	Broadcast	higher rates for larger weeds	weedmaster-grazing dairy-7, hay-37, slaughter-30 d
April-September	redroot pigweed, smartweed	Banvel, 2,4-D, Surmount Grazon P + D	1-4 pts/ac + surfactant for Surmount and Grazon P + D	Broadcast	higher rates for larger weeds use Surmount and Grazon P + D on larger and more dense weed populations	Banvel-grazing dairy-7-40 d, hay-37-70, slaughter-30 d; Grazon P + D grazing-dairy-7, hay-30, slaughter-3 D
April-September	horsenettle	Surmount	1.5-6 pints/ac + surfactant	Broadcast	Use higher rates on larger plants	Surmount-grazing dairy-14, hay-7-14, slaughter-3
April-September	blackberries, dew berries	Surmount	2-3 pints + surfactant	Broadcast	Use higher rates on larger plants	Surmount-grazing dairy-14, hay-7-14, slaughter-3
April-September	Cherokee and McCartney rose	Redeem/Remedy, Surmount, Grazon P+D	1 pt Redeem +1/2 pt Remedy; 3 pts Surmount; 2 pts Grazon P + D + 1 pt Remedy; + surfactant	Broadcast	Repeat treatments may be necessary	Redeem-grazing dairy-14, hay-7, slaughter-3 D
May/June	Bahiagrass in Bermudagrass hay fields	Cimarron Max, Chaparral	(Cimarron Max-0.1-0.3oz Part A+1-4 pts Part B) (Chaparral-1.5-2.5 oz/ac, max of 3.3oz/ac/yr, + surfactant)	Broadcast	Apply after 1st cutting of hay and allow about 2 weeks for chemical to work on bahia before next cutting	No grazing or hay restrictions
May-August	Milkweed	Surmount	2-3 pts/ac + surfactant	Broadcast		Use higher rates for larger weeds
November-December	Yellow Buttercup, Thistle	2,4-D Amine or Ester	3/4-1 pint/acre	Broadcast	air temperature above 55 degrees and no rainfall for 6 hours	2,4-D-grazing-0-7 beef, 7-14 dairy, hay-30 d, slaughter-7 d