Little did we know that a grass discovered in 1931 would come to have such a significant impact on the livestock industry. Anybody know what the grass was? It was Kentucky 31 Tall Fescue. Kentucky 31 Tall Fescue was discovered growing on a mountainside in Kentucky by Dr. E.N. Fergus, a professor at the University of Kentucky. Kentucky 31 would later be released in 1943 and can be found growing in the lower Midwest and upper South. Kentucky 31 is the predominant grass species found in pastures in Alamance County.

If you have heard of Kentucky 31 fescue, chances are you have heard about fescue toxicosis. While everyone was excited for this new grass to come along that was easy to establish and persisted under a range of conditions, producers began to notice poor animal performance. It was then discovered that Kentucky 31 fescue contained an endophyte (a small fungus growing between the plant cells). This endophyte releases toxins that negatively affect grazing animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and horses. Fescue toxicosis symptoms differ depending on the animal species and can range from low feed intake/rate of gain to poor reproduction. This is where the novel endophyte fescue comes into the picture.

Endophyte strains that do not produce toxins were identified and inserted in place of the toxic endophyte strains in tall fescue. The result of this discovery was the release of novel endophyte tall fescue varieties in 2000. There was a small moment in time when an endophyte-free tall fescue was available and planted but researchers and producers quickly found out that it did not persist. What makes tall fescue so hardy is the endophyte found in the plant. The novel endophyte allows tall fescue to persist just like the toxic endophyte would.

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The excitement around novel endophyte varieties is that you get the hardiness of Kentucky 31 fescue but without all of the animal health and performance issues. Next time you consider renovating an old fescue pasture or you are clearing new land, take a hard look at planting one of the novel endophyte varieties. These varieties have come a long way since 2000 and are really making a name for themselves in the livestock grazing world. If you have any questions about novel endophyte tall fescue varieties, fescue toxicosis, pasture establishment/renovation, or replacing Kentucky 31 fescue, please contact me.
Internal parasites could be costing you more than $165 per head in lost returns if dewormers are not used at all (Iowa State University, 2006). When internal parasites are present, cattle do not perform well. You will see lost opportunity in weight gains, poor immune response, and overall declining health in calves. In cows, you will see weight loss and a drop in overall performance (milk production and reproduction).

There are several schools of thought or “strategies” on deworming beef cattle herds. With 20% of your herd hosting 80% of the internal parasites, it is important to understand deworming because worms are present. For this article, we are going to look at four deworming programs: strategic, opportunistic, suppressive, and selective.

**Strategic**– With this type of approach, you want to deworm when worms are likely to be a problem. For most beef cattle herds (depending on your location) this is in the spring when cattle are first turned out on pasture. Future dewormings would depend on the length of persistent activity of the chosen dewormer. The problem with this approach is it neglects year to year differences in weather.

**Opportunistic**– There is not a lot of thought put into this type of plan. You deworm when you are working cattle, whether they need it or not. The biggest issue with this is you are likely deworming cattle that do not need it and may be creating a resistance problem.

**Suppressive**– Giving dewormer in regular intervals (or on a schedule). For example, you worm your cattle every 3 months no matter what. That can get quite expensive and also create resistance much faster.

**Selective**– This program is just like it sounds, you are identifying animals that need deworming through visual signs or fecal-egg counting. The only problem with this program is that it can require intensive management.

So, what is the best strategy to use? For calves, you might use strategic deworming because you know that worms will be a problem and you want to deworm them at or prior to weaning to boost overall health. Mature brood cows and bulls may need to be on more of a selective strategy unless your farm has a history of internal parasite problems. I think most farms use a combination of strategies when deworming their beef cattle herds. It is important to know the internal parasites that you are dealing with so you can choose the best approach or combination of strategies to control them. I would highly recommend working with your veterinarian and determining the best strategy for the internal parasites present within your herd.

When it comes to dewormers, they are not all created equal. Most producers turn to pour-on dewormers as their number one choice because they are cheap and easy to use. Plus, with some of the products you can get a little external parasite control too. The problem with pour-on dewormers is accurate dosing and efficacy. How much of the pour-on dewormer is actually going on the animal and how much is being absorbed? If you use an injectable or a white oral drench, you know exactly how much dewormer is going into that animal (always use a scale for accurate dosing). It should have a higher efficacy rate because the dose is going right into the animal and not sitting on top of fur or manure not being absorbed.

There are also short acting and long acting products on the market, depending on what you need. If you need to use a product that will kill internal parasites and have a short withdrawal time, you need to look at the white oral drench dewormers. If you need a product to continue killing internal parasites over a grazing season, you want to look at a longer acting dewormer such as an injectable.

Deworming is important, and careful consideration should go into the product used and the correct timing. For more on developing a dewormer program, click here to read a recent Drovers article.
No-Till Drill Now Available for Rent from Soil & Water

The NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation secured funds from the Golden LEAF Foundation to implement a pasture improvement program for NC in the fall of 2017. Alamance County SWCD applied for the grant to receive a no-till drill and were awarded the grant in early September 2017.

The no-till drill was delivered last fall and is now available for rent. Rental rate in the county is $12 per acre with a $100 minimum. Rental rate for out of the county is $12 per acre with $150 minimum (surrounding counties only). To rent the drill please contact Alamance County SWCD at 336-290-0380.

Forage Management Tips
From Production and Utilization of Pastures and Forages in North Carolina.

April
- Fertilize cool-season grasses if you have not already done so.
- Watch for symptoms of grass tetany.
- Spray for alfalfa weevil according to recommendations.
- Winter annual pastures should be completely used before grazing begins on other pastures which may be harvested for hay.
- Harvest fescue and orchardgrass pastures or hay fields as soon as the seed heads begin to flower.
- Harvest alfalfa (second year stands or older) in the bud stage (before flowering begins).
- To maintain clover in grass pastures and maintain quality, develop a rotational grazing system in which cattle can graze forage to a 2-inch height before moving them to another pasture.
- Fertilize warm-season grasses (Bermuda, bahia, dallis, switchgrass, flaccidgrass) as soon as dormancy breaks.
- Get all hybrid bermudagrass established this month unless irrigation is available. Seed bahia grass or switchgrass during mid-April or May in the Piedmont.

May
- Plant warm-season perennial grasses such as switchgrass, flaccidgrass, common bermudagrass, gamagrass, and bluestem.
- Plant summer annuals at two-week intervals to stagger the forage availability.
- Fertilize warm-season grasses with nitrogen after each cutting or every four to six weeks on pastures.
- If irrigation is available, hybrid bermudagrass sprigs may be planted, but weed control will be essential.
- Spray pasture weeds while they are small (3 inches) for most effective control.
- Do not apply nitrogen to fescue or orchardgrass pastures after April until August.

June
- Take soil samples from fields which will be overseeded or planted during the autumn. Apply limestone as far in advance of planting as possible.
- A late planting of summer annuals may be made to extend forage supply.
- To stimulate warm-season grass yields, apply nitrogen after each cutting or every four to six weeks.
- Graze bermudagrass close (1 to 2-inch stubble), and, every four to six weeks, harvest any growth that has not been grazed. Cross fencing is a practical tool to help manage feed quality.
- Control summer pasture weeds before they get too tall and mature.
As a horse owner, you are likely overwhelmed with all of the hay, feed, and supplement choices available. In this article, I am going to focus on hay selection and why it is critical to know what to look for based on your horse’s individual needs. Throughout the year, I visit a variety of horse farms. Some farms are set up with grazing paddocks and others rely heavily on hay. The first step is to evaluate the horse: Is the horse young, old, underweight, overweight, reproducing, not reproducing, growing, maintaining weight, etc.? Each horse is unique, and selecting a hay that meets the physiological status (age, metabolism, weight) and their level of production (maintenance, growth, exercise, reproduction, and lactation) can be challenging. Horses require 2-3% of their body weight in feed (hay and/or grain) each day. At least half of their daily feed intake should be in the form of roughage (fresh forage or hay). A majority of the horses that I encounter really only need forage in their diet with little to no concentrate (grain). I am running across more cases each year where I am seeing insulin resistance in horses. This particular metabolic disorder is often associated with overweight middle-aged horses and ponies with severe laminitis that are considered “easy keepers.” This can be managed through diet and exercise. The horse should receive grass hay and no grain. Ideally, the hay should be tested for carbohydrate and sugar content.

Once you have determined your horse’s needs then it is time to make your hay selection. The following tips will help you make a more informed choice the next time you go to buy hay.

**Tip 1: Find a reliable source.** Nothing is worse than finding hay that you like, your horse likes, and your wallet likes and that source becoming inconsistent. Make sure that where you are buying hay from can supply you with a consistent product year after year.

**Tip 2: Don’t spend more than you need to.** Are you feeding alfalfa to a horse that needs mature fescue? A horse that is occasionally used for trail rides does not need hay high in protein and energy. A mature fescue hay that is lower in protein will still meet your horse’s needs while costing you a whole lot less.

**Tip 3: Do your homework.** Know the difference between fescue, orchardgrass, bermudagrass, alfalfa, timothy, etc. That will help you understand the quality differences and what to look for when purchasing hay. Visual appearance is a component to buying hay. The hay should be clean and free of mold, weeds, foreign objects, and foul smell. Color just depends on the type of hay and how it has been stored.

**Tip 4: Ask questions.** It is important to ask questions such as:
- When was the hay cut?
- Were there seedheads present or was it cut in the vegetative state?
- Was the field treated for weeds?
- Was the field fertilized and limed?
- How was the hay stored?
- Has the hay been analyzed for nutritional content?

It is important to know the maturity of the hay because the more mature the hay, the lower the protein and energy. The more seedheads present, the more mature the hay is. Mature hay has a place with easy-keeping horses or horses on a diet. Ideally, you want hay that has been treated for weeds so you are not paying for weeds that your horse will not eat or could likely cause issues for your horse if ingested. If the field has been fertilized and limed then the field is likely being managed for a high quality hay crop—be aware of nitrates though (if too much nitrogen has been applied). Good quality hay is stored in a shelter or covered so that is does not lose nutritional value. Finally, you can make a pretty good guess at the hay quality but really it is just a guess without it being tested. For $10, the NC Department of Agriculture will test hay for protein, moisture content, energy, digestibility, non-fiber carbohydrate, fat, calcium, phosphorous, and more.

In summary, make sure you are feeding a hay that closely matches your horse’s individual needs. This will ensure that your horse’s requirements are met and you are not under or overfeeding your horse.

Information Source: [https://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/horse/](https://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/horse/)

Check out the NC Horse Blog for more on horse nutrition and management: [http://nchorse.blogspot.com/](http://nchorse.blogspot.com/)
Judging in January Contest Results

Alamance County 4-H competed in the Judging in January Livestock Judging Contest on January 27, 2018, hosted by the North Carolina Junior Hereford Association. Alamance County 4-H entered two junior teams and a senior that competed with another county’s team. There were 94 junior contestants, 22 junior teams, 84 senior contestants, and 18 senior teams entered in the contest. This is the 5th year Alamance County 4-H has entered youth into the Judging in January Contest.

Alamance A Team members were Salem Sifford, Aiden Kernodle, Hope Andrews, and Tyler Dodson. Alamance B Team members were Gracie Hadley, Leah Black, and Lane Whitfield. Senior contestant was Madison Sifford.

Team Results

Alamance A Team was 3rd in meat goats, 12th in sheep, 2nd in swine, 2nd in beef cattle, 3rd in oral reasons, and 1st high team overall. Alamance B Team was 13th in meat goats, 19th in sheep, 13th in swine, 14th in beef cattle, 10th in oral reasons, and 14th high team overall. Madison Sifford’s senior team placed 6th in meat goats, 15th in sheep, 5th in swine, 5th in beef cattle, 4th in oral reasons, and 4th high team overall.

Individual Results

All of our youth did exceptionally well for their respective knowledge and experience. Listed below are the individuals that placed in the top ten.

Salem Sifford placed 1st overall in beef cattle, 8th in meat goats, 9th in swine, 4th in oral reasons, and 2nd high individual overall. Aiden Kernodle placed 4th in meat goats, and 8th in swine.
Upcoming Events

Alamance Co. Cattlemen’s Field Day
April 10, 2018– 1:00 pm–Until
Teague Ranch, 3341 Preacher Holmes Rd., Graham
Educational Activities, Vendor Displays,
Cash Raffle, and more!
FMI Contact: Ricky Reid at 336-516-0989 or click here

“Homegrown” In the Park
April 14, 2018– 10:00am-4:00pm
Burlington City Park, FREE Food & Entertainment!
Sponsored by: Alamance County Farm Bureau

73rd Annual Central Piedmont Jr. Livestock Show & Sale
April 18-19, 2018
Schedule of Events
Location: Orange Grove Rd., Hillsborough (near the Dairyland intersection beside the Fire Department/Community Center)
Please come out and support the Alamance County 4-H’ers that are showing across both days!

Pasture Management Workshop Series
May 3, 2018, and August 9, 2018 | 5:30 p.m.
2315 Jeffries Cross Road, Burlington
Topics: Pasture Establishment Methods, No-Till Drill Calibration, Crabgrass, Demo Plots, and more!
Pre-register online by April 27th:
http://go.ncsu.edu/pastureseries2018

Horse Owner Workshop
May 22, 2018
3925 L Lawrence Trail, Graham | 5:30 p.m.
Topics: Dry Lots, Pasture Evaluation, Horsemanship Demo
Pre-register online by May 15th, Cost: $10:
http://go.ncsu.edu/horseownerworkshop18

Cattlemen’s Association Meetings
Alamance County (ACCA)
Regular meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from September-March, Field Day in April:
✦ April 10– Field Day @ Teague Ranch
✦ September 11– Farm Taxes
✦ October 9– TBA
✦ November 13– TBA
✦ December 11– Christmas Dinner

*Location Change!*
Meetings begin at 6:30 pm at Harbor Inn Seafood Restaurant, 2408 S. Church St, Burlington, NC

Household Hazardous Waste Day
Saturday, April 14, 2018
8:00 am—12:00 pm (rain or shine)
Location: 100 Stone Quarry Rd. Haw River, NC
Click here for more information.

4-H Spring Plant Sale
Order now through April 6th: blueberry plants, herbs, and Boston ferns.
For more information please click here.

Disclaimer - The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina State University nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

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