THE November 2004

FORAGER

RENAISSANCE NUTRITION, INC.

Agronomics with livestock in mind!

In the Field – Fall Weed Management

Silage has been harvested in virtually all areas and cornfields lay barren. With recent rains many fields have greened up with weed growth. Without crops in the field many producers are not considering weed control at this time of year. However, fall herbicide applications can provide excellent control of hardy perennials and winter annual weeds.

In the fall, perennial plants are building up root reserves for spring regrowth. Translocating nutrients to the roots will also help move systemic burndown herbicides (like glyphosate) to the plants' roots. As a result, fall is the best time to kill weeds that spread from rhizomes (like quackgrass and Johnsongrass).

Winter annuals like chickweed can also be controlled at this time of year. Winter annuals are not often considered important, but they can create some problems. Controlling winter annuals can help alleviate some insect and disease issues. Black cutworms migrate to and lay eggs in weedy fields in early spring, which can then create problems for newly planted crops.

In fields where the weed problems were primarily summer annuals like velvetleaf and lambsquarter, fall herbicide applications will not be a worthy investment. Consider the weed spectrum across fields before deciding to make a fall application.

Nutrition Depends on Agronomic Decisions

New forages are in the silo and nutritionists across the country are blessing or cursing the forages they have to work with. Low milk prices, driving the increasing demand for a cheap ration, are forcing many producers to realize the importance of "Superior Silage". Key agronomic decisions, like cropping plans and hybrid selections are more critical than many realize. High crude proteins in haylage and high NEL's in corn silage should not be the only quality benchmarks used by producers and nutritionists, but they often are.

Before you begin to select hybrids a very important step is to make a blueprint-type plan of what crop will best 'fit' each field agronomically, as well as your overall program from a nutritional standpoint.

The fundamental factor to consider when selecting varieties is digestible dNDF. The effects of adding forages with digestible fiber to a diet are often times under-estimated. Fiber digestibility of forages has a major impact on the profitability of a ration. The proven equation, 1 unit of dNDF=0.37 lbs of DMI and 0.55 lbs of milk (Oba and Allen, Journal of Dairy Science 82:589, 1999) demonstrates the importance of fiber digestibility.

Fiber digestibility is not only important for making milk. Utilizing forages with high dNDF in transition cow diets can help maximize dry matter intake, improving the cows' appetite at and after calving. A simple thing like increasing forage intake has an impressive effect on reducing the occurrence of metabolic problems in fresh cows and starting cows off on the right foot for the upcoming lactation.

Poor agronomic decisions made on the farm have a snowballing effect on the farm's profitability, in a negative way. It is commonly believed that to obtain quality feed, yield must be given up. This is not true. Many Silage Specific™ corn hybrids are available today with superior digestibility, which actually offer yield advantages over conventional dual-purpose hybrids. BMR corn hybrids do still have a yield drag in stress situations, but offer such high dNDF digestibility that their feeding performance usually pays for any yield loss. Proper placement and timely harvest will go a long way in reducing any yield drag. Other crops like BMR sorghum-sudangrass can also offer improved digestibility and high forage yields. There are numerous options for improving fiber digestibility in most operations without losing yields.

Questions on agronomy or seed?

Call Steve Kuter today!

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814-937-4923 (cell)

NUTRONOMY ~

combining nutrition & agronomy for results!