

## How Soon Can I Grow More Forage? (II)

*Continued from February 2012 edition*

- **Double crop winter forage** – All of the above high-energy crops can be planted after harvesting winter forage such as triticale. They can then allow subsequent winter forage to be planted again after the short-season energy crop, continuing the high yield rotation. Most of the corn last season yielded 12–20 tons/acre. High population, short-season corn yielded 19.6 ton/acre and the sorghum 19.3 tons/acre. Adding [another] 8 tons of silage/acre from winter triticale gave us **27 total tons** from the same acreage in one very poor growing year. The double crop reduces the risk from one crop getting decimated; spreads the work load; and protects the soil on highly erodible land by profitable forage cover crop, and opens opportunities to spread manure.
- **August Oats** – Planting grain-type oats at 4-5 bu/a at the beginning of August can give two to four tons of dry matter by the end of September. This forage has tested at over 4,000 lbs of milk/ton – a very highly digestible energy and protein source. In our research, the yield and protein levels justified 12,000 gallons of manure/acre, immediately incorporated, to meet the nitrogen needs (low P soil test). With short days, cool temperatures and very high yields, it will need to be tedded in order to drop the moisture to ensiling levels.
- **August Oats Plus:** In the above fall oat research, we simultaneously planted 80-100 lbs of winter triticale with the oats. By harvesting the oats at greater than a three inch cutting height, the winter triticale was able to re-grow before winter and thus give another early very high-quality forage harvest the next spring.

Each of these crops can give you a forage boost. They take some planning and effort but the reward of increased profitability from high (>60%) forage diets is well known.

Check with me to obtain a copy of this entire article.  
*(Edited from an article by Tom Kilcer, Advanced Ag Systems Crop January 2012)*



Pictured above: Fall oats can give 2—4 tons/acre of very highly digestible forage at flag leaf stage

## NUTRITION & AGRONOMY... NUTRONOMY™

Simply stated, dairy farming is converting crops to milk as efficiently as possible. Taking a single approach is not necessarily the most efficient way for every farm. Agronomy is no different than nutrition in that respect. As nice as it is to “cookie cut” corn and alfalfa programs on every farm, it is often not the most efficient way to make milk from every acre. It is important to “think outside the box”, which can make it easier to make milk and lower purchased feed costs. Maybe you have a herd with limited acreage and are forced to buy forage. BMR Sorghum-Sudangrass or double cropping may help get the tonnage needed, while helping to lower feed costs. If cutting timeliness or forage storage are limitations to obtaining quality feed, switching crops can offer a wider harvest window or be better suited to your farm’s storage structures. A quality forage program needs to maximize profitability; the end result of any crop needs to be dollars in the bank. For instance, BMR corn can pay dividends in the right circumstances, but can potentially reduce profits if it is improperly positioned. What are the limiting factors of your farm’s profits – available land, soil types, or labor? To identify these factors, you need to take a critical look at your entire farming operation. Tracking milk production back to the seed it started from can help to improve your overall productivity and profitability. Ask me about available varieties, agronomic information and how to optimize forage in your nutritional program. Remember, **NUTRONOMY™** really works and can make an important difference on your farm and for your cows!

*Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call me!*

*My goal is to help you. That's Renaissance's commitment!*

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**SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS!**

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**Supporting Agriculture Every Day**

# ***Digestibility!***

Forage digestibility has a critical impact on the productivity and profitability of your cows. Nutrient availability is important to both rumen microbes and the host. At Renaissance, we offer the advantage of a large and growing database, which catalogs extensive results on starch and fiber digestibility. This includes a large number of corn hybrids, alfalfa, grass varieties and mixes. Samples are analyzed at several time points and with *In vitro*, *In situ* and gas methods, allow us to see how a particular forage may react in the rumen. Understanding the nutritional value and digestibility of forages makes a difference in knowing how your cows will perform. Check it out and call me today!

## **WHAT ARE YOUR COWS TELLING YOU?**

*Cows don't talk... at least not as we think of talking. But they have many ways to communicate, if we know what to look for and pay careful attention to them each day. It's their way of letting us know if things are going well or if there are concerns that need attention. Sometimes it is a very small thing - something we notice in passing, such as a listless look, dull and lackluster eyes, or a rough coat. Other concerns may be more obvious, such as lameness, loose manure, a rapid loss of weight, etc.*

*The key to understanding cows is to watch them closely. Then try to discover what the problem is and how to address the concern for a positive outcome. Problems often stem from a nutrition-or -management-related issue that should be addressed. Are dry matter intakes where they should be? Is the ration properly balanced? Are the cows given sufficient, clean water at all times? Are there cow comfort issues that need to be addressed? Can the cows lie down in clean, dry bedding? Do you use a foot bath and is it changed on a scheduled basis? Are parlor bottlenecks a concern? Is the feed consistently pushed up?*

*Consider what your cows are "telling" you every day. It can make a difference in their health, productivity and your profitability.*



**DAIRYINFO**

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***March 2012...***

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***CHECK IT OUT!***

