



## Farm Views

# Wait to Use Fall Forage

Rain received in late August will start some pastures and alfalfa regrowing this fall. This could provide some welcomed forage but Bruce Anderson, extension forage specialist, says we need to think about the long-term health of the stand before being too quick to utilize the forage.

### Pastures

Pastures have been under terrible stress this summer and this stress has left many plants with weakened root systems. But roots are getting stronger again, now that rain has caused leaves to green up and begin to grow, right? Well, not exactly or at least not right away.

In order to initiate and energize green up and early growth of new leaves after the rain, roots provide nutrients stored in them from previous growth periods. When roots release regrowth stimulating nutrients, they are weakened even more. But as the leaves continue to grow and harvest sunlight, after a few weeks, they start to 'repay' the roots for their earlier 'loan' of nutrients. So after a few more weeks, the roots are back to the level of health they had when the rain first began and are beginning to get bigger and healthier every day.

It takes many weeks for plants to recover from drought. Grazing regrowth too early or too severely will prevent roots from recovering from the drought and could even leave them weaker than before the rain. With winter coming on, that's a recipe for disaster or at least a cause slow green up and low growth next year. So wait as long as you can, until next spring if possible. If you must

graze, do it lightly so plants don't experience extra stress.

### Alfalfa

Drought still grips many areas but some folks received useful amounts of rain recently. With rain comes new growth of our alfalfa. By the time you receive this newsletter, it will be mid-September. Alfalfa does most of its winterizing between mid-September and mid-October. Cutting during this time will interrupt winterizing and increase the risk of alfalfa dying or being injured by winter.

Most years we escape serious losses following harvest during the winterizing period because alfalfa plants were very strong and healthy when winterizing began. This summer, though, drought and heat may have tipped the scale the other way. Many alfalfa plants probably were weak as they started to regrow following the rain. They will not have recovered fully from the effects of drought and heat when they begin to enter the winterizing period. So the risk of winter injury will be much higher than normal this year if you cut your hay during this time period.

What are your alternatives? The first one is to cut when you want and take your chances, but Dr. Anderson doesn't recommend that choice. The best thing for your alfalfa would be to wait to cut until winterizing is virtually completed in mid-October. While it takes a longer time to dry then, plants should be well recovered and yield and quality should be high.

Think ahead when taking your next alfalfa cutting. You don't need to risk next year's crop for a head start on cutting this winter's feed. (TD)

# Fall is a Good Time to Control Problem Weeds

Fall is an excellent time to control several species of perennial weeds in pastures and waste areas. Food storage in the root systems of many perennial plants such as field bindweed, Canada thistle and leafy spurge takes place in the fall. Herbicides applied at this time readily move into the roots as well, greatly improving the effectiveness of the herbicide. Even if the chemical doesn't completely kill the weed, it goes into winter in a weakened condition and is much more susceptible to winter kill.

Fall treatments can be made anytime after mid-September but before hard freezes occur. Treatments can even be made after a light frost has occurred as long as the plants are still active and growing. Daytime temperature in the 50's are

satisfactory for effective control.

In addition to obtaining excellent control on the target weeds, the potential for drift damage to non-target species is lessened in the fall. Most field crops and gardens are finished producing by this time, and the current year's growth on perennial shrubs and trees is hardened off making them less susceptible to damage as well.

For recommendations on specific weeds in crops, pastures and non-crop areas, consult the *2002 Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska* (EC 02-130-D) available for \$3 when picked up at the extension office or consult the Web version at <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/FieldCrops/ec130.htm>. (TD)

# Basic Information about the 2002 Farm Bill

President Bush signed into law the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 on May 13, 2002. The new farm bill carries over some familiar features from previous farm bills and has a few new twists as well. One thing is certain, this farm bill provides a multitude of choices for the producer. It is imperative that producers understand the many options and choices so they can take the best advantage of the bill. This article will address the major points to consider.

Some of the features in the new bill include: Producers have an opportunity to update bases and yields — but only if they desire to do so. There are no set-aside requirements (no idle acres) built into the new bill as was the case of farm bills of the '70s and early '80s. A carryover feature of the 1996 farm bill is farmers still have planting flexibility. They can plant any crop, with a few exceptions, without affecting the crop base for the farm within the current farm bill.

There are three parts to the support system in the 2002 legislation: marketing loans, direct payments and counter-cyclical payments.

The marketing loan/LDP program, provides protection in the same manner as the 1996 farm bill. If you take a non-recourse loan on the crop, you must retain beneficial interest in the crop throughout the life of the loan. It may be paid back with interest at any time at the lower of the loan rate or the posted county price on the day the loan is paid back. Alternatively, you may take an LDP payment on any portion of the crop in which you still have beneficial interest, on any day they choose. LDP payments are calculated based on the difference in county loan rate and posted county price on the day the transaction is conducted.

One new feature under the 2002 farm bill is the direct payments. These payments are paid each year throughout the life of the farm bill (2002-2007), regardless of actual crop history

## Target Prices and Loan Rates

Crop	Target Price		Loan Rate	
	'02-'03	'04-'07	'02-'03	'04-'07
Wheat	\$3.86	\$3.92	\$2.80	\$2.75
Barley	\$2.21	\$2.24	\$1.88	\$1.85
Oats	\$1.40	\$1.44	\$1.35	\$1.33
Corn	\$2.60	\$2.63	\$1.98	\$1.95
G. Sorghum	\$2.54	\$2.57	\$1.98	\$1.95
Soybeans	\$5.80	\$5.80	\$5.00	\$5.00

or market price. Direct payments are based upon the 2002 PFC payment yield (or oilseed payment yield as established) multiplied by the payment rate per bushel multiplied by 85% of the crop base acres for each program crop. The direct payment rates per bushel for the program crops are: Corn: \$0.28, Soybeans: \$0.44, Wheat: \$0.52 and Grain Sorghum: \$0.35. Producers who received advance payments for 2002 should expect to receive the difference between the advance payment and the direct payment after they sign the new contract with the FSA office.

The third support mechanism under the new farm bill is called counter-cyclical (CC) payments. The CC payment is based on the target price for the commodity. The CC payment rate is based on target price minus effective price. Where: effective price is equal to the higher of the national average loan rate or the 12-month national average market price plus the direct payment rate. CC payments are paid on 85% of the base acres times the established yield (either 2002 PFC yield or updated yield).

Updated payment yields apply only to counter-cyclical payments (not direct payments). The farm owner must **update** bases if they choose to update yields.

You may choose one of five basic participation options under the new farm bill. Option 1 leaves the bases and payment yields as they were under the '96 farm bill (2002 PFC bases and yields). Options 2, 3 and 5 allow the producer to use his/her '98-'01 average oilseed acres to

adjust base. Under option 2, oilseed base can be assigned to any non-base (free) acres. Under option 3, all of the oilseed acres must be used, first to establish base on non-base acres and then to offset wheat or feed grain base.

Option 5 appears to be the most flexible option when adjusting bases. Under option 5, oilseed base can be used to establish oilseed base on non-base acres and then at the producer's discretion, any portion of the remaining oilseed base can be used to offset wheat and feed grain base. Support for oats base is relatively low under the new farm bill. You typically would first establish base on non-base acres and then offset oats base (if any) with oilseed base. The decision to offset additional wheat or feed grain base should be considered based on an economic analysis using payment yields for the respective crops versus oilseeds.

Option 4 allows the producer to update both bases and payment yields. You must update bases if you desire to update yields. The new bases are simply the average acres of program crops grown during '98-'01. The producer has three choices for deriving payment yields under option 4. You may keep the 2002 PCF yields. You may prove '98-'01 yields, compare to 2002 PCF yields and then add 70% of the difference to the 2002 PCF yield to derive an updated yield. Or, you may multiply the proven '98-'01 yields by 93.5% to derive the new payment yield.

No matter which farm program option is chosen, the same option must be used to establish bases and payment yields on the whole farm. If you farm several tracts of land with different farm numbers, you may choose different options for each farm number. In each case, you would choose which of the five basic options (and if choosing option 4, the best of the three payment yield methods) that provide the best return for the farm as a whole. (Note: within a farm number, you must use the same base and yield update option for all crops).

As stated above, this farm bill provides a multitude of choices to the producer. This flexibility allows each owner to select the option that will maximize returns for each farm number. Choosing the best option is going to require some number crunching. (TD)

## Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map

As of Sept. 5, Lancaster County is in Moderate Drought conditions.

