



Field Notes for The Week Of 4-10-2023

Spring or Summer?

I think it is safe to say that spring has truly sprung, and the county could see a hint of summer in the near future. This past week was a tad slow for much fieldwork with on-and-off cool rain showers moving through the majority of Ohio. With that said the pastures continued to grow and the woodland is beginning to fill out with the color of green. I couldn't help but notice many of the redbud trees on my farm have begun budding and unfortunately the autumn olive trees are turning the landscape green as well! As I made my travels and answered many different questions this week, I thought it would be a good time to address a challenge that many livestock producers face each spring, how to stay ahead of the grass! For those who practice manage grazing keeping up with extremely fast-growing forage can be a challenge. This rapid growth has gained the term spring flush, this is when cool-season perennial forages have a rapid growth spurt. When forage growth outpaces livestock consumption, capturing the full benefit from the forage's nutrition can be challenging. Plants of any species have a pretty simple lifestyle that eats, drinks and reproduces. Some plants have different ways of going about this and some continue the produces mutable times while others are one and done but for a producer to manage the forage, they must understand what they have growing in their hay and pasture. Forage Identification is critical and not as easy as it sounds, let's be honest, the grass looks like any type of grass at a certain growth stage! Here are a few things to consider when managing different forage species this grazing season.

- **Tall fescue**- Alfalfa is referred to as the queen of forages so I would probably give fescue the title of the soldier of forages due to its tough growing habit, being able to withstand poor soils, poor grazing practices, and even a tillage tool!!! Tall fescue can tolerate closer grazing, but grazing heights should be held at a minimum of 3 inches and then allowed to rest for 21-30 days. The goal of Tall fescue is to graze early and more frequently to prevent reproduction, as Tall fescue matures the quality degrades fast and the old Ky 31 variety contains a bacteria called endophyte that can negatively affect livestock health.
- **Orchard grass**- High quality can be captured from Orchard grass but only if it is managed. Orchard grass does not tolerate close and rapid grazing. This forage is a bunch forming perennial grass that has a growing point about 2 inches above the soil surface, close and continuous grazing can kill the forage.
- **Kentucky Bluegrass**- This forage is a long-lived forage that forms a thick sod and can tolerate very close grazing. Kentucky bluegrass does not tolerate hot and dry weather so early grazing should be practiced to capture full quality and palatability.
 - **Perennial Ryegrass**- If your pastures are shining you probably have a lot of perennial ryegrasses in your mixture. Perennial Ryegrass is a short-lived perennial that grows in bunches. This forage is a good candidate for early grazing due to its poor growth as the days get warmer and longer.

