

Weekly Article

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Knowing Your Forage Numbers

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. June is here and I for one am hoping it does not share the same pattern as May did. Looking back at May the weather was a roller coaster ride with close to 50 degrees swings, wet weather, dry weather, and everything in between. Most weather outlooks show southern Ohio having above normal precipitation and at or below normal temperatures. Planting progress around the county is progressing but there is still a lot of wet fields waiting to be planted, hopefully mother nature will cooperate with farmers allowing them to finish planting season strong.

This Spring has had its list of challenges for producers but there has been one upside, it has been a good year for forage growth. After talking to many producers and from my own farm, first cutting hay seems to be yield a lot higher than 2020. Many producers are thankful for this, coming off two years of poor yielding hay crops. If you have been able to make your first cutting hay, now is the time to think about evaluating the quality of your hay. It is always a good practice to evaluate your forage before feeding. Today I want to discuss what a forage sample can tell you about your 2021 hay crop. Some of the numbers to pay close attention to on a forage analysis are as follows

1. Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN), this analysis will be represented as a percentage. The higher the percentage the better. For most grass mixed hay TDN levels can range from 40-65%. TDN will tell you how digestible your forage is.
2. Crude Protein, this is a forage value most producers look at first. Crude Protein is important but if your forage is not digestible or palatable it won't make much of a difference in the ration. Knowing your CP levels can help you make decisions of which forage can be fed to different animal groups, for example lower CP level forage can be fed to finishing calves or dry cows while higher CP level forage would be fed to lactating cows or growing heifers.
3. NDF and ADF, Neutral Detergent fiber (NDF) represents the amount of cell wall content such as lignin and cellulose. NDF can represent the potential dry matter intake of the forage. Acid Detergent Fiber (ADF) is a good

indicator if the forage was harvested on time. ADF represents the amount of lignin within the plant and as the number increases digestibility decreases, this occurs when forage is harvested late or over mature.

4. Net energy for maintenance (NEm) and Net Energy for Gain (NEg), knowing these two numbers will allow you to make feeding decisions. Winter feeding programs should include higher % levels of NEm to help animals maintain body condition.
5. Macro minerals, Forage analysis can also include Macro minerals such as calcium, Phosphorus, Magnesium, potassium, sodium, and nitrogen. Forages such as sorghum Sudan or corn silage can be tested for nitrate levels during drought conditions. Knowing your Micro minerals can also allow you to adjust your free choice mineral program.

Some other details to go over:

- USDA FSA will open a sign-up period for CFAP #2 Assistance program for Livestock, row crop, and specialty crop producers effected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Call (937) 544 -2033 for assistance.
- July 15th is the set deadline to report acreage planted to spring crops such as corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa, Tomatoes, Potatoes and more. Contact the FSA Office to report once crops are planted.

From the field

- Soil Temperatures around 66 °F
- Corn and soybean planting progressing 80% corn 70% beans.
- Dry Hay yields are up from last season.
- Starting to scout alfalfa for potato leaf hopper.
- Winter Wheat starting to flower- good time for head scab scouting and control.
- Pasture clipping
- Corn and soybean emergence looks good with warmer soil temps.
- Start scouting for Water hemp and Palmer Amaranth
- Pest to be on the lookout for include European corn borer, Fall Amyworm, Western bean cutworm, flea beetle, squash vine borer.
- Start planning to side dress additional N to early planted corn.
- Tobacco has started to be transplanted.