Robert M. Pollok, Jr. Recognized as 2011 VFGC Outstanding Forage Producer of the Year

By: David Fiske

Robert M. Pollok, Jr. of Hill View Farm in Danville, Virginia has been recognized as the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council’s “Outstanding Forage Producer of the Year” for 2011. This statewide award is given annually by the VFGC and recognizes a producer that has implemented innovative forage management practices leading to enhanced production, forage quality, and profitability; better wildlife habitat; and improved soil conservation and water quality on their operation. This award is sponsored by Evergreen Seed Company, Rice, Virginia. Evergreen Seed graciously awards the winner a $500 cash award. Mr. Pollock was nominated for the award by Jamie Stowe, Extension Agent, Pittsylvania County.

Mr. Pollock and his wife operate a 630 acre diversified livestock and crop operation ten miles from the City of Danville and are the third generation to operate the family farm. He runs 100 brood cows, has a commercial hay production enterprise catering to the local horse industry, and is a Virginia Certified Seed producer.

Mr. Pollok utilizes rotational grazing on his operation and has taken advantage of NRCS cost-share programs to install watering systems and over 2100 feet of waterline in his rotational paddocks. Over the last ten years, he has installed over 11,000 feet of high-tensile fencing to exclude animals from streams and ponds and created wooded riparian areas to enhance water quality and wildlife habitat. Due to his outstanding conservation efforts, he was recognized as the Pittsylvania County Soil and Water Conservation District’s 2007 Cooperator of the Year. Congratulations to Robert M. Pollok, Jr., Hill View Farm, Danville, Virginia for being recognized as the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council 2011 Outstanding Forage Producer of the Year.

From front page Sapp later became Gallagher USA. At Gallagher, he was responsible for bringing New Zealand based fencing technology to the eastern United States. At one time, he served all states east of the Mississippi River. He retired from Gallagher in 2007 and worked briefly in real estate, before beginning with Stay-Tuff Fencing.

Throughout his long career, Lewis has given producers the tools that they need to implement controlled grazing, namely high tensile and temporary electric fencing, and now fixed knot high tensile fencing. Along with these tools he has also freely shared his knowledge and years of practical experience. He continues to share this knowledge as one of the primary instructors for the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council’s fencing schools (see article in this issue of the Forager). Lewis is dedicated to improving the industry through his leadership and experience. He has given generously of himself, his knowledge, and his time to the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and the Virginia Forager. He has been a dedicated friend to the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and continues to lend his support and advice.

To learn more about the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council’s Fencing Schools, please see the article in this issue of the Virginia Forager or visit our website at www.vafg.org.

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David Fiske is the superintendent of the Shenandoah Valley Research and Extension Center and is also the Treasurer of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council.
Tall Fescue: It’s Not Just for Cows

Tall fescue is the best adapted cool-season grass to Virginia and is an excellent choice for horse pastures. Even when infected with the TOXIC endophyte, it is safe for all classes of horses, except for broodmares that are in late gestation. Varieties infected with the NOVEL or FRIENDLY endophyte are even safe for broodmares in late gestation. For more information on forage species for horse pastures, visit http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/418/418-102/418-102.html.

Forage Seeder Calibration at a Glance

Planting too much seed increases establishment costs. Planting too little seed results in thin stands, increased weeds, and lower yields. Seeding charts can vary greatly from actual seeding rate. Seeders should be calibrated under field conditions whenever possible. The area covered and amount of seed dispensed must be known for calibration.

Seeding rate = amount of seed ÷ area covered

Area covered (acres) = seeded width (ft) × distance traveled (ft) ÷ 43,560

Determining amount of seed (always tare scale for weighing container):

Collection: Seed is collected for a known area.

Seeding rate = amount of seed ÷ area covered

Area covered (acres) = seeded width (ft) × distance traveled (ft) ÷ 43,560

For more detailed information on calibrating forage seeding equipment, visit http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/418/418-121/418-121.html or contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office and ask for Publication 418-121, Calibrating Forage Seeding Equipment.
Dr. Teutsch, a graduate of Ohio State University and the University of Kentucky, came to Virginia in 2000 to begin his work as the state’s forage specialist. Over the past decade, his research on forage production, grazing systems, and improved pasture management has offered valuable educational resources to livestock and equine producers. His statewide pasture management research and extension efforts have been important in all corners of the Commonwealth, not only in his local region of Southside Virginia.

Dr. Teutsch is credited with assisting farmers’ transition from tobacco to other forms of agriculture. In addition to livestock, he has focused on pasture management for horses, helping to host a series of workshops to assist equine owners in better managing their pastures and addressing environmental concerns. Dr. Teutsch is also active in assisting in coordinating conferences, including the 2009 Mid-Atlantic Grass Finished Livestock Conference and the 2010 Virginia Cattlemen’s Conference, and Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and other groups.

During the presentation, Mr. Saunders stated, “He is responsible for much of the forage research that is so extremely valuable to Virginia cattle producers, and without his efforts, much of the work would not exist. ‘Dr. Teutsch is the ‘working man’s’ specialist, in easy to understand, and communicates things well to his audience.”

Dr. Brahm went on to note, “Dr. Teutsch is a great example of someone who integrates all facets of extension into his job – agents, industry members, students, other researchers, and faculty. We are pleased to recognize him with the Council’s 2011 Extension Specialist Award.”

The Virginia Agribusiness Council represents agricultural and forestry producers, suppliers, marketers, processors and commod-
ity associations in the Commonwealth with a unified voice. Through its government affairs activities. The Council has a combined membership of over 40,000. For more information on the Virginia Agribusiness Council, visit www.va-agribusiness.org.

New Program Offers Free Nitrogen to Virginia’s Livestock Producers

By: Chris Teutsch

Boy wouldn’t that be a great cost share program! Well it almost exists; all we have to do is manage for legumes in our pastures. Legumes are an essential part of a strong and healthy nitrogen cycle in grasslands. In many cases they come by themselves when we start to manage for them, but in some instances, we need to introduce them back into our pastures. That isn’t all bad since we can choose improved varieties that are higher producing and in some cases more persistent. There are a few steps that we can take that will help to ensure that our frost seedings are successful: Control Broadleaf Weeds. Broadleaf weeds must be controlled prior to seeding legumes. This is best accomplished by controlling weeds the season prior to renovation. Soil Test and Adjust Fertility. In order for pasture renovation to be successful proper soil fertility is required. Lime and fertilize pastures according to soil test results. Lime should be applied six months prior to renovation if possible. So we the state’s and Decrease Residue. The existing sod must be suppressed and plant residue reduced prior to seeding. The reduction in plat residue facilitates good soil-seed contact. This can be accomplished by hard grazing in late fall and early winter. Ensure Good Soil-Seed Contact. Regardless of what seeding method is chosen, good soil-contact is required for seed germination and emergence. Seed on Proper Date. Frost seeding or drilling legumes back into pastures is usually best accomplished in late winter or early spring (February and March). Frost seeding is accomplished by simply broadcasting the seed on the soil surface and allowing the freezing and thawing cycles to incorporate the seed into the soil. Success with frost seeding can be enhanced by dragging the seed further or as you broadcast the seed. This simply gets the seed in better contact with the soil. Prior planning and preparation are important so that seeding can be done in a timely manner. Use High-Quality Seed of an Adapted Species. Choose forage species that are adapted to the area and end use. Use either certified or proprietary seed to ensure high germination, seed genetics, and low noxious weed content. Cheap, low quality seed often cost more in the end due to lower production and thin stands. In Virginia, a good mixture for renovating pastures with 4.6-4 lb clover, 1.2 lbs of ladino or grazing white clover, and 10-15 lbs of annual lespezea per acre. Use correct seeding rate. Calibrate your seeder prior to planting (see box on calibrating seeding equipment). Seeding at too high of a rate needlessly results in higher seed costs. On the other hand seeding at too low a rate results in weak stands and lower productivity. Inoculate Legume Seed. Always use inoculated legume seed or inoculate it with the proper strain of nitrogen fixing bacteria.

Free Nitrogen from page 4 prior to seeding. This is relatively inexpensive insurance that legume roots will be well nodulated and efficient nitrogen fixation will take place. Control Seeding Depth. Small seeded forages should never be placed deeper than ½ inch. When using a drill always check seeding depth since it will vary with seedbed condition and soil moisture status. Place small seeded forages too deep will results in stand failures. Check seed distribution pattern. When using a spinner type spreader/seeders make sure and check you spreading pattern. In many cases small seeded forages are not thrown as far as fertilizer. This can result in strips of clover in your pastures rather than a uniform stand. Also check your seed distribution pattern. Single disk spinners often throw more seed to one side if not correctly adjusted. Control Post-Seeding Competition. Failure to control post-seeding competition is one of the most common causes of stand failures. Clip or graze the existing vegetation to a height just above the developing seedlings. This must be done in a timely manner to ensure that the competing vegetation does not get ahead of the seedlings. Pray for rain. Lastly and most importantly pray for rain. We can do everything just right, but if it doesn’t rain success will be unlikely.

Chris Teutsch works at Virginia Tech’s Southern Piedmont Research Station located near Blackstone, VA and resides on a small farm in Dinwiddie County with his wife, Angie and their four children.

Honoring Dr. White’s Years of Service

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council seeks your assistance in honoring the life of Dr. Harlan E. White. The Dr. Harlan E. White Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and will be used for scholarships, research, and other activities related to the promotion and better understanding of the forage industry. Dr. White dedicated his life to Virginia’s forage industry. It is now time for us, the recipients of these good works, to dedicate ourselves and share some of the great gifts that Harlan bestowed upon us.

Dr. White’s career was long and distinguished. He joined the Virginia Tech Animal Science Department in 1966 as an Extension Forage Specialist. In 1979, he was the driving force behind the formation of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council which has grown to become a major voice for the forage and livestock industries in Virginia.

Harlan was a recipient of many state and national awards recognizing his educational programs directed at improving the well-being of forage producers and their support industries. His dedication to the Virginia Tech grazing livestock education recognized by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) when he was awarded the Medallion Award. His dedication to the forage industry continued throughout his retirement years by serving as both treasurer and advisor to the VFGC.

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council is accepting funds from corporate and individual donors that wish to honor Dr. White. The goal is to establish a permanent endowment to provide scholarships to support Virginia forage education and research. VFGC has a ambitious plan to raise $50,000 by 2013, and $500,000 by 2015. The fund will be managed and administered by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Board of Directors. All funds will be audited on an annual basis and shall be dedicated to the sole purpose of the Scholarship Fund.

We are asking for your financial support in this endeavor and welcome all donations in any amount. The following categories will be recognized:

Platinum Medallion, $10,000 or more;
Gold Medallion, $1,000 - 10,000;
Silver Medallion, $500 - $1,000;
Bronze Medallion, $100 - $500;
and Friends of the Fund, under $100.

A donation form may be found at www.vaforges.org
Orchardgrass Survey

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council will again this August survey growers across the Mid-Atlantic region have experienced problems with orchardgrass stands in recent years. Reduced forage yield, fewer hay harvests each year and premature death of orchardgrass stands have been reported and confirmed in University sponsored forage variety trials. Estimates suggest lower orchardgrass yields and premature death of stands may be costing hay producers over $90 million a year. With the help of Extension agents in Virginia and neighboring states, I organized a survey to help answer questions about this orchardgrass problem and perhaps find the path to a solution.

The survey contained 28 questions that covered a wide range of issues. Data were entered on-line by agents who interviewed growers—usually in the field. Soil samples from many fields were collected and analyzed for standard soil nutrients. By the end of 2010, 43 orchardgrass fields had been surveyed across 4 states and 22 counties. Below is a summary of the more significant findings:

- 74% felt their stands had declined faster than expected.
- 64% of the problem fields were planted in last 5 years.
- 53% harvest hay twice per year, 30% harvest three times each year.
- 86% cut stands to the recommended 3-4 inch stubble height.
- 63% reported no visible insect or disease problems.
- 86% apply nitrogen fertilizer every year.
- 79% had a soil test done within last 3 yr.
- P and K ratings for most fields were in the Low to Medium range.
- Cultivar type appeared unrelated to poor stand persistence.

Overall, most growers reported poor stand persistence and these included seemingly well-managed stands. None of the individual variables surveyed (e.g., pests, disease, cutting management, soil fertility) were well correlated with poor orchardgrass persistence.

So what might have caused these orchardgrass problems? Well, the evidence probably points to a combination of factors, and I suspect a major player was climate. For example, from June 2007 to April 2008, approximately 90% of Virginia was under drought. Drought conditions also were widespread in 2006, 2008 and 2009 but for shorter duration.

Moreover, since 1960 mean air temperature has increased by 0.3 deg F each decade. Warmer temperatures and periodic droughts surely stressed many orchardgrass stands in recent years. When combined with other issues, like low soil fertility, these environmental stressors probably contributed to many problems observed by growers. If this climate hypothesis is correct and temperatures continue to rise, as they have been, growers in Virginia might consider switching to more stress tolerant forage species (e.g., novel, tall fescue varieties) to replace declining orchardgrass stands.

If you are interested in participating make sure to sign up early because space is limited to 30 participants per location and they typically fill up fast. The fencing school agenda and registration form can be found on the Virginia Forage & Grassland Council website at www.vafourage.org. For questions or more information, contact Margaret Kenny at 434-292-5331 or mkenny@vt.edu.
I hope you were able to attend the Winter Conferences this year. What a great program it was with Temple Grandin, Fred Provenza, and John Anderson! I apologize to the many people who could not attend because all locations sold out. However we hope to have DVDs (PC computer) of the entire program for sale by the middle of February. I want to thank the entire Board, Margaret Kenny, all the Extension Agents and helpers at each location, and all the Sponsors, who helped us pull this off. The results of the evaluation forms showed that it was successful and the hard work paid off.

I also want to encourage everyone to consider contributing to the Harlan White Memorial Scholar ship Fund. Harlan had the foresight too see the benefit of helping form the VFGC in 1979 and through his hard work over the years, VFGC has grown to be a major voice in the livestock and forage industry and to put on excellent educational programs too benefit Farmers in Virginia, today.

I want to welcome the following new members to serve on the VFGC Board and we look forward to your input and service. To the Board members going off, thank you for your many hours of time spent in helping us move forward. In closing, if you are a member, please consider supporting this organization so we can continue to bring beneficial programs and be a strong voice for the forage industry and farmers in Virginia in the future. Best wishes for a most productive Spring.

Best Regards,
E. N. Garnett
President, VFGC

Wow! What a winter conference! We sold out every location and had over 1100 participants. The best part of the conference was the number of young people in the audience. There is nothing that I like more than seeing youth at agricultural meetings. They are our future and each and every member of the VFGC needs to encourage their love for agriculture. I want to thank everyone who helped out with the meetings. They can do a well-oiled machine. The only problem with this year’s conference is that it is going to be very difficult to top it next year. Unfortunately I think we may have set the bar too high.

Well there is certainly a lot of volatility in the fertilizer market right now and the best way to fight this volatility in cow-calf systems is to build strong nutrient cycles in our pastures. Once we build them up in pastures, remove them to a certain value each year with an understanding they will be used in a manner consistent with the mutual goals of the landowner and the farmer-tenant.

Senior U.S.  Each school has a limited number of spots. So if you are interested, make sure and sign up early.

I want to make sure to congratulate our award winners for this year. Mr. Robert Pollock of Danville, VA was the VFGC’s 2010 Forage Producer of the Year. Mr. Robert Pollock of Danville, VA was the VFGC’s 2010 Forage Producer of the Year. What impressed me the most about Mr. Pollock’s farming operation was not one single enterprise, but rather how all of the enterprises, grain, certified seed, hay, and cattle, came together to result in a sustainable farming system. It seems that we have got away from diversity in agricultural operations and I think that has resulted in farms that are less robust in these tumultuous economic times. The second award winner was Lewis Sapp of Stay Tuff Fencing who received the Harlan White Distinguished Service Award. Lewis has been serving livestock producers in Virginia and North Carolina for more than 30 years by giving them the tools that they need to implement controlled grazing systems in the form of simple and functional fencing systems to control livestock. He has also served as the primary instructor for the VFGC fencing schools.

Forage Research and Extension

Chris's Corner

Chris D. Teuch
to ensure that significant portions of Virginia pastureland are not rented or grazed or are at risk of being abandoned. Farmer-tenants are currently willing to ‘make-do’ on rented land with poor fences, but as costs spiral upward, many of these farmer tenants will throw up their hands and sell cattle rather than endure the headaches and liability of escaped livestock. Without properly fenced pastures the Virginia pastoral landscape we and visitors to our Commonwealth enjoy will experience further encroachment of unshyly invasive weeds and diminished economic vitality in rural communities.

If you are a farmer-tenant or a landlord, I recommend the following steps to prevent the decline and possible abandonment of a rented farm.

1. Develop a written lease that has a provision for the farmer-tenant to keep the lease for multiple years.

2. Depending on the relative rental rate for the farm, I think it is good if the landlord agrees to provide fencing materials up to a certain value each year with an understanding that they will be used in a manner consistent with the mutual goals of the landlord and the farmer-tenant.

3. Both landlord and tenant need to mutually agree what is expected in the way of fence and pasture maintenance and put it in writing. Ideally, at least once per year both the landlord and the tenant should inspect all parts of the farm together.

There are now and will continue to be profitable farming operations in Virginia. The farms that are profitable and well managed in the future will be so because of the commitment of all parties, landowners and farmer-tenants, to the care of all the fixed assets of the farm, including its fences.

Tom Stanley, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, Farm Business Management, Northern District
**Record Crowd Attends VFGC Winter Forage Conferences**

By: Desy Campbell

2011 Winter Forage Conferences, held across Virginia in mid-January, were definitely over the top, a record breaking 1100 people attended at one of the three locations: Wytheville, Lynchburg, or Weyer’s Cave. Over 100 college and high school students attended the Weyer’s Cave meeting. The agenda was the same at each location.

Keynote speaker Temple Grandin, the expert in animal behavior, enraptured the audiences about her cow’s eye approach to animal handling. Fred Provenza, opened our minds about the necessity of varied diet and landscape and how everything is interconnected. Jon Anderson gave us the economic picture, pointing to the new reality for agriculture’s role in feeding the world.

Temple Grandin, well known in animal science and behavior circles as much as being “an autism self-advocate”, gave us the low-down, common-sense approach to handling cattle. Whether moving herds from field to field, or through the chute for veterinary procedures, or for the trip to market and ultimately the kill pen, Grandin’s end goal is reducing animal stress and improving animal welfare.

Because of her autism, Grandin utilized her skills and knowledge to figure out what exactly cows were seeing while in the chute: she got down to their eye level and went through on hands and knees, noting where the light was bright, casting shadows. She found the scary objects (yellow colored ladders and yellow clothing particularly), white objects, dangling chains, reflecting objects, bare bright light bulbs. She has a long list of things that producers can do to clean up their working area in an effort to eliminate stress the cows from an already stressful situation. Relating observations and examples, Grandin kept on task informing the audiences about her unique perspective. Thinking in pictures is the way her brain operates, just like many animals - cattle, horses, included. Down to earth, Grandin held the audience in her sight while she related her experiences.

**Lewis Sapp Receives Harlan White Distinguished Service Award**

By: Chris Teutsch

Lewis Sapp of Stay-Tuff Fence was the 2011 recipient of the Harlan White Distinguished Service Award. This award is named in memory of Dr. Harlan White, former Forage Extension Specialist at Virginia Tech. Dr. White was a true extension educator that possessed a unique ability to translate scientific information into a form that producers in the field could understand and implement on their farms. Our 2011 recipient possesses many of those same characteristics.

Lewis is a graduate of North Carolina State University where he majored in turf grass management. Following college he spent almost a decade in the western United States working as a ranch manager and hunting guide. In 1980, Lewis returned to North Carolina and began working for Snell Systems which