

Summer Annual Grasses: High Quality Summer Grazing!!!

By: Chris D. Teutsch

In summer months cool-season grass growth is limited by not only moisture, but also temperature. Once leaf temperature exceeds 70 F, photosynthesis in cool-season grasses becomes inefficient. In contrast, warm-season grasses do not reach peak photosynthesis until leaf temperature is 90 to 100 F. In practical terms this means that warm-season grasses have the potential to respond to summer rainfall, whereas cool-season grasses cannot due to temperature limited growth.



Warm-season annual grasses can provide safe and relatively high quality forage when properly managed. Advantages to using summer-annuals include fast germination and emergence, rapid growth, high productivity, and flexibility of utilization. Disadvantages include the high cost of annual establishment and the increased risk of stand failure due to variable rainfall in late spring and early summer when annuals are being established.

The primary summer-annual grasses grown in the mid-Atlantic region include sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass, pearl millet, and to a lesser extent crabgrass (see adjacent descriptions). Approximately one-third to one-half acre will provide adequate grazing for one mature animal during the critical summer months. Seeding one-half of the acreage as early as possible and the remainder four to six weeks later can extend the useful period of these supplemental forages. In order to optimize production, summer annual grasses should receive 60 to 80 lb nitrogen per acre at seeding and 40 to 60 lb nitrogen per acre after each grazing or harvest.

The most efficient way to utilize summer annual grasses is by grazing. These grasses should be rotationally stocked to maximize production and utilization. The grazing area should be restricted to supply only enough forage for one to three days. This will result in less waste and allow animals to be removed from the area before regrowth accumulates. Grazing should be initiated when summer annuals have reached a height of 20 inches. It is important to leave adequate stubble if regrowth is desired, never graze closer than 5-7 inches. This is especially important for pearl millet which

depends more on terminal buds for regrowth.

In some cases summer annual grasses cannot be grazed or get ahead of the animals under good growing conditions. In these cases, summer annuals may need to be harvested as hay or silage. Harvesting summer annuals as round bale silage eliminates the problems associated with curing summer annuals for dry hay. If dry hay is the only option, then the following suggestions will help to ensure that rapid and successful curing is achieved: 1) do not allow forage to become overly mature, cut at 30-40 inches in height, 2) always use a cutter-conditioner to crush stems, 2) make mower swaths as wide as possible to maximize surface area for drying, and 4) do not windrow forage until plants on top of the swaths are dry enough to bale.

For more information on management of summer annual grasses see *Warm-Season Annual Grasses for Summer Forage* (Publication Number 418-004) available on-line at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/forage/418-004/418-004.html>.

Chris Teutsch is a forage researcher and extension specialist located at Virginia Tech's Southern Piedmont Research Station and lives with his wife Angie and four children on a small farm in Dinwiddie County, VA.

Pearl Millet

Pearl millet has smaller stems and tends to be leafier than sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids. It is adapted statewide and grows the best on well drained to somewhat

poorly drained soils that possess medium to high fertility and a soil pH above 5.5. It does better than sudangrass or sorghum-sudangrass on sandier soils and soils with a lower pH. Pearl millet should be planted approximately two weeks after corn,

when the soil temperature has reached at least 65° F. It is more sensitive to cold temperatures than the sorghum species and should not be planted too early. The seeding rate for pearl millet is 20 to 30 lb per acre. Seeding depth should not be deeper than one inch. A primary benefit of pearl millet is that it does not contain prussic acid like the sorghum species. It can, in some cases, accumulate nitrates (see adjacent article).



Sorghum-Sudangrass and Sudangrass

These are tall erect growing summer annual grasses that are in the sorghum family. Sudangrass hybrids tend to have a finer stem and are a better choice if hay is the end use. Some varieties contain the brown midrib or BMR trait. As the name implies, the midrib of the leaf is a brownish color instead of white. This is in many cases, but not always, associated with increased digestibility and higher animal performance. If you are considering a BMR variety, ask your seed supplier for digestibility data. Sorghum species are adapted statewide and grow the best on well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils that possess medium to high fertility and of pH of 6.0 or higher. They possess very good drought tolerance and make better use of water than cool-season grasses. Sorghum-sudans and sudangrass should be planted in late spring after the soil temperature has reached 65° F. The seeding rate for sorghum-sudangrass hybrids is 30 to 40 lb per acre and 15-20 lb per acre for sudangrass. Seeding depth should not be deeper than one inch. In some cases, prussic acid and nitrates can accumulate in the plant and pose a health risk to grazing livestock (see adjacent article).



Crabgrass

Crabgrass is commonly considered a weed, but possesses significant potential for supplying high quality summer forage. A primary advantage of crabgrass is its high digestibility. Research at the Noble Foundation has shown that well managed crabgrass can produce average daily gains of more than 1.75 lb/day. Only two varieties of improved crabgrass are available (Estel Farm and Seeds, 1-800-858-7333). It is best adapted to well-drained soils



that have a soil pH above 5.5 and a medium level of soil fertility. Crabgrass should be seeded when the soil temperature has reached 60° F. The seeding rate is 4-6 lb per acre and it should not be seeded deeper than one-half of an inch. Crabgrass is best utilized by grazing. Grazing should be initiated at a height of 6 to 8 inches and stopped at 3-4 inches. Crabgrass is a summer annual that acts like a perennial through prolific self-seeding. Therefore, it must go to seed at least once during the growing season. Like pearl millet, crabgrass does not contain prussic acid, but can accumulate nitrates (see adjacent article).

Nitrate and Prussic Acid Poisoning in Summer Annual Forages

By: Chris D. Teutsch

In cattle, nitrate poisoning occurs when nitrate in the forage tissue is converted to nitrite in the rumen of the animal. The nitrite is absorbed into the blood stream where it interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen. The onset of symptoms and death is rapid and usually occurs within one to two hours. In animals affected by nitrate poisoning, the blood will take on a brownish chocolate color, giving the nonpigmented skin and mucus membranes a muddy brown color.

Nitrates can accumulate to toxic levels in commonly used summer annual grasses such as pearl millet, sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass, and crabgrass. This most often occurs when heavy nitrogen fertilization is followed by drought. Nitrates are taken up by the plant, but not utilized since plant growth is restricted by the drought. Any factor that slows plant growth in combination with heavy nitrogen fertilization can result in nitrate accumulation. Drought stressed plants should not be grazed or harvested for hay until growth has resumed after rainfall (usually 4-5 days). Nitrates are stable in hay and can cause poisoning months later. It is very important to have all suspect forages tested before grazing or feeding. For more information on nitrate testing contact your local extension office or veterinarian.

Another potential problem with the sorghum species (sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass, and naturally occurring Johnsongrass) is prussic acid or cyanide poisoning. Under normal conditions, these forages contain little free cyanide. However, when freezing, drought stress, wilting, or mechanical injury damages plant tissue, an enzymatic reaction occurs and free cyanide is produced. If forage is ingested during this period, cyanide is readily absorbed into the bloodstream where it interferes with normal cellular respiration. Symptoms of cyanide poisoning are similar to nitrate poisoning with death occurring in a matter of minutes to several hours. In contrast to nitrate poisoning, the blood of animals affected by cyanide poisoning is fully oxygenated and bright cherry red in color.

In most situations, sorghum species (including Johnsongrass) pose little danger to grazing animals when properly managed. Young plants or regrowth after grazing contain higher concentrations of prussic acid and should not be grazed until plants have reached a height of at least 20 inches. Drought stressed plants should not be grazed until growth has resumed after rainfall (usually 4-5 days). Plants that have been frosted should not be grazed for 7-14 days or until the leaves are dead and dried out. Cyanide does escape from plant tissue; therefore, hay that has been properly cured is safe to feed. For more information on nitrate and prussic acid poisoning, contact your local extension office or veterinarian.

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The afternoon hands-on session was spent outside where participants gained practical experience with all aspects of fence building. A post driving demonstration was conducted to illustrate the proper method for safely driving posts and post placement. Instruction was given in the proper construction of braces, high tensile fence knots and splices, proper installation of high tensile electric fence, offsets, and water gates. The day ended with participants learning how to properly construct a fixed knot high tensile woven wire fence.



The VFGC would like to thank Lewis Sapp and Billy White, Stay-Tuff Fence Manufacturing; Adam Ross, Gallagher USA; and Rusty and



Brian Tanner, Tanners Fencing and Extreme Drivers for all of their instruction and support in conducting this year's very successful fencing schools.

Consider More than Just Yield when Selecting Summer Annual Varieties

Chris D. Teutsch

In the past, recommendations for choosing a summer annual variety were to find a reasonably priced, locally available variety, and focus on management. While good management is absolutely critical for optimizing productivity and animal performance, recent data indicates that yield potential and digestibility should also be considered. Trials conducted at Virginia Tech's Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC) located near Blackstone, VA have shown that the yield and digestibility of summer annual varieties can vary greatly and are in many cases not well correlated. In fact, some of the highest yielding varieties in these trials were also some of the most digestible. When the difference from average for the yield and digestibility are graphed and the graph is divided into four quadrants, varieties with above average yield and digestibility are shown in the upper hand quadrant (Figure 1). Varieties that possessed above average yield and digestibility in the 2009, 2010, and 2011 growing seasons are listed in Table 1. Above average performance in both yield and digestibility for two or more years indicate that these varieties are robust and well adapted to the conditions under which they were tested.

Table 1. Varieties that had above average yield and digestibility in 2009, 2010, and 2011 Summer Annual Variety Trials held at Virginia Tech's Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Blackstone, VA.

Variety	Species	BMR-Gene	Seed Company	Phone
AS9301	Sudangrass	BMR-6	Alta Seed, Amarillo, TX	(877) 806-7333
AS6501	Sorghum-Sudangrass	BMR-6	Alta Seed, Amarillo, TX	(877) 806-7333

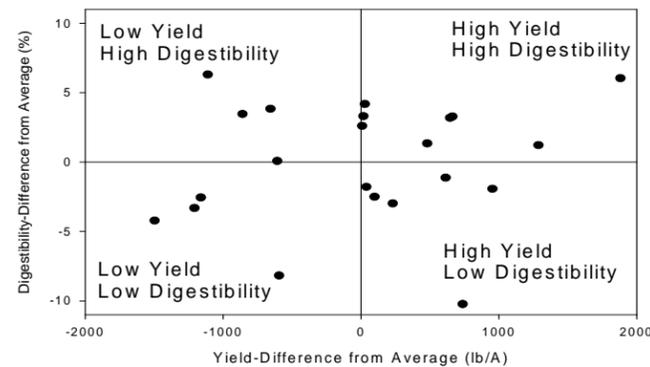


Figure 1. In this graph yield and in vitro digestibility are expressed as a difference from the average value. The value of zero represents the average value for the trial. Negative values represents a value that is below average, while a positive value represents a value that is above average. Producers should try to select varieties that are above average for both yield and digestibility.

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www.paforageandgrasslandcouncil.org

Shenandoah Summer Forage Tour
July 9, 2014
Raphine, Virginia
www.vaforges.org

Southern Piedmont Annual Tobacco Field Days
July 30, 2014—Tobacco
threed@vt.edu
July 31, 2014—Forage and Livestock
cteutech@vt.edu

Southern Piedmont Family and Farm Day
September 13, 2014
pjshep@vt.edu

2015 AFGC Annual Conference
January 11-13, 2015
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Long-time Grazer Uses Higher Stock Density to Achieve Goals

By: J. B. Daniel

I had the opportunity to attend an evening pasture walk last week at Beaver Creek Farm owned and operated by Tim Neale. I first met Tim and his wife Laurie about 4 years ago at a VFGC summer forage field day in Saltville, VA. They had traveled over four hours from their farm in Southeastern Orange County to meet and talk with the Clark family, host of that field day, to learn more about the practice of “mob grazing.” Between that summer field day and the previous VFGC winter forage conference speaker, Tim felt some variation of mob grazing might be beneficial to his forage-livestock system.



Tim leads the pasture walk sharing his style of mob grazing.

Tim was not new to grazing management. In fact his accomplishments in grazing management earned him the VFGC Outstanding Forage Producer of the Year Award in 1994. After moving to another farm in Orange County, building the pH and fertility in the soil, and installing a rotational grazing system, by 2010 he felt there was more he could do with his management to build his land.

He questioned what mob grazing really was and if the soil building claims were true. After hearing Greg Judy talk of managing his entire herd of animals in one large mob, then meeting Charlie Clark in southwest VA and seeing his herd managed in a mob and the grass that grew after long rest periods in this intensive rotation, Tim decided to try it.

“Mob grazing” is a very loosely defined term, in fact everybody seems to do it differently. Some focus more on extremely high stock density while others simply group all the livestock together and manage them as a mob. In both cases the goal is to give the livestock fresh forage daily and allowing them to trample some forage while grazing the highest quality at the time. Tim was hoping to keep things simple, while taking his operation to the next level to build the soil and improve forage yield on his acreage.



Tim manages all his livestock in one large herd (stocked at +/- 45,000 lbs per acre).

Tim runs a cow-calf operation (currently 125 pairs) on 300 pasture acres; he retains some heifers as replacements but sells most calves at weaning. First, he decided to group his entire herd together. He has a defined calving season beginning in September and typically weans calves in early June. His calves are tagged and banded at birth then typically worked twice before weaning. In a fescue based system, fall calving – winter

breeding – and early summer weaning makes perfect sense for the piedmont of Virginia. After weaning in early June, dry cows are managed through the summer months on somewhat dormant cool season pastures where the natural diversity of the sward carries them through until fall. When the calf crop is sold it removes approximately 25% of the demand on the system to carry the herd through the summer with good rest periods. The cows begin calving on new fall growth and are grazed on this high quality tall fescue pasture until it runs out sometime in January. This high quality fall forage keeps the cow in good condition between calving and peak lactation so they are ready to breed back on time during the winter months which is very favorable for the bulls.

Replacement heifers are separated for 3 weeks at weaning, and then reintroduced to the mob. Calving ease bulls allow Tim to manage everything together and so far his records indicate that most of those first calf heifers are calving out at 24 months. Tim attributes this to the excellent health and nutrition of his herd. He makes sure they have access to free choice mineral, clean stock water and fresh forage most of the year. Even when feeding hay, he unrolls the bales resulting in more sanitary conditions for the young calves.

When Tim made the transition from management intensive grazing to his style of “mob grazing” he also cranked up the stocking density. He had been using approximately 20 permanent paddocks +/-15 acres each and allowing the livestock to graze it down to the traditional 3-4 inch height. He now uses poly-wire to temporarily split each permanent paddock into approximately 3 sections, therefore tripling his stock density, providing a fresh break of forage daily for his livestock. The daily rotation of livestock into new forage maintains high intake and consistent quality from one day to the next, proven to improve livestock performance.

Higher stock density and long rest periods result in better nutrient cycling and thicker more vigorous sod.



After 3 years of this type of management, Tim is seeing noticeable changes. The high stock densities and short grazing periods have resulted in longer rest periods, and a more dense sod providing more ground cover from residue but mostly forage canopy. Tim explains, “It’s not perfect but the cattle trails are basically gone and the general gaps in canopy have filled in with plants. This management keeps the soil covered! Over the years I have used fewer inputs. Since I quit making hay, I’m at a level of maintenance fertility and I have not had to apply lime or fertilizer in years. I buy the hay I need, feed it across my pastures and the little bit that is left goes right back to the soil. I minimize disturbance to the soil and the soil microbes by basically not using chemical inputs. I have a healthy stand of clover so I do not use N fertilizer. This coupled with the high stock density results in great manure and urine distribution. I feel the

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nutrients are truly cycling now, eliminating the need for fertilizer additions. I do have some weeds or maybe I should say forbs because the cattle eat more of them as part of the diverse vegetative mix. I don’t use any herbicide. As I said the weeds aren’t much of a problem, and I definitely don’t want to kill my clovers. If weeds get too thick in spots I clip them.”

Tim has also noticed the 50-60 day rest periods are naturally re-vegetating his stream banks. He fenced most of his streams when developing the initial grazing system but certain stream segments were left open. The limited access due to long rest periods has provided the time for vegetation to grow right to the waters’ edge in much of this unfenced stream area.



Long rest periods between grazings allow natural riparian area re-vegetation.

Tim likes what he sees and is continuing to make changes. He purposefully expanded natural growth near old fence rows to allow for trees and brush to grow. In the short term it provides wildlife and pollinator habitat and in the long term it will be shade for livestock.

It is exciting to see people like Tim Neale continuing to make improvements, finding better ways to achieve their goals while enhancing the natural resources and sharing their experience with their neighbors. Tim explains, “When a mob of animals manipulate a small piece of land for a short duration, thereby lengthening subsequent rest periods, the positive impact on the entire ecosystem is a wonderful thing. It’s not complicated. My system is simple. I move fence and watch cattle graze. Life is good!”

J. B. Daniel, NRCS Grassland Agronomist and also serve on the VFGC Board.

Farmer’s Markets: Much More than a Marketing Opportunity!!!

By: Chris Teutsch

Until recently, I have always viewed Farmer’s Markets as an opportunity to buy and sell locally produced products, but that view has changed or rather expanded. This spring we started a small market in our hometown of McKenney, VA. Nothing big just 10 to 12 vendors with everything from fresh baked goods and goat milk soap. My kids (14, 11, 8, and 5 years old) and I are selling our pasture raised eggs and other assorted items.

One of unanticipated benefits of the farmer’s market was the chance to visit with our neighbors and become acquainted with ones that we had never met. We have probably met more than a half of a dozen people that live within 2 or 3 miles

from our little farm. We have also forged relationships with the other vendors at the market. It amazes me that in just a few short weeks that the vendors at the market have become a little community amongst themselves.

While the social aspect of the Farmer’s Market has been an unexpected benefit, an even more important benefit has been the opportunity for our kids to acquire and strengthen skill sets that many of today’s children just simply don’t have. The first opportunity was to introduce our kids to the idea of gross and net return to labor. We sat down and the kids actually did budgets for the products they were making and selling. Now these certainly weren’t Virginia Tech budgets, but they did get the kids thinking about the costs associate with producing the items that they were selling, what price they should be charging, and how much return they will be getting for the time they invested.

The second skill set acquired by the kids was simply handling money and making change. Have you ever gone to the Walmart when the electricity is off? I bet you that 95% of the cashiers couldn’t make change if their life depended on it. This is certainly a sad statement on today’s society. Taking money and counting the change back to customers is a skill set that the Farmer’s Market has given the kids that I would have never even thought about.



Sam and Collin Teutsch ready and waiting for customers at the McKenney Farmer’s Market located in Dinwiddie County, VA.

Probably the most important skill that the kids are getting at the Farmer’s Market is that of communication. Many kids today are so wrapped up in iPods and pads and phones that they there are almost incapable of holding an intelligible conversation with a peer let alone an adult. The Farmer’s Market has really given the kids the opportunity to learn how to speak with adults and communicate what their products are and how they were produced. It is amazing to watch how adults respond when the kids initiate a conversation.

Lastly, the Farmer’s market has provided us with the opportunity to do something as family. In today’s society everyone is so busy that the family seems to be constantly going in different directions. Having the chance to work and be together for 3 or 4 hours on Friday night is priceless and will hopefully build memories and experiences for our kids that will never be forgotten!

Chris Teutsch and his wife Angie live on a small farm located outside of McKenney, Va where they raise pasture poultry and more importantly their four children, Alex, Sam, Collin and Hannah.

Make Plans to Stockpile Fescue to Reduce Winter Hay Needs

Dr. Mark A. McCann
Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech

Although the first day of summer is not too long passed, it is the time to begin formulating plans for stockpiling tall fescue for grazing in the late fall and winter. This is not a new strategy but one that takes on new meaning as we come to appreciate the new value of hay in a cow-calf enterprise. Minimizing the number of hay feeding days and the amount of hay needed to get through the winter can have major impacts on an operation's bottom line. Many cattlemen have taken advantage of stockpiling fescue as an annual management practice for years; however the current production cost of stored forages emphasize that a greater percentage of producers need to adopt stockpiling as a method to reduce costs.

Many cattlemen have shared that the rains of the early summer have resulted in unplanned stockpiling of forage in their pastures. However the stockpiled forage that offers high quality grazed forage into the winter begins 60-90 days before the end of the fall growing season. That allows each cattleman to determine the typical end of cool season grass growth and count backwards. A good rule of thumb would be early August for northern and western parts of the commonwealth and mid-August for central, southern and eastern portions.

The addition and amount of nitrogen fertilization will have an impact on the amount of forage which can be accumulated. In a review of stockpiled fescue research, Moore et al, 2000 suggested a practical expectation of 10-20 lbs of additional forage dry matter per lb of N. Teutsch, et al, 2005 reported a range 5-13 lb of additional forage dry matter per lb of N in research plots in Blackstone and Amelia. The range in values was related to the form of N used. Ammonium nitrate and ammonium sulfate produced the highest yields. Urea and urea-ammonium nitrate produced the lowest yields and were the N sources most susceptible to volatilization. It was suggested that N volatilization rather than efficiency was the foundation for the differences.

Among the factors to consider beyond growing the added dry matter is how much pasture to set aside. Researchers in Kentucky (Caldwell, et al., 2009) compared 0, 33 and 50% of total pasture area to be stockpiled for fall calving cows. Stockpiled pastures received 60 lb/ac of ammonium nitrate in August. Cow and calf performance was not altered by the proportion of the pasture area which was stockpiled. However, hay consumption was reduced by 33% by stockpiling. The authors suggested that 33% of pasture area was effective to stockpile as winter feed to meet the nutritional needs of fall-calving cows and reduce winter hay needs.

In addition to the production decisions involved in stockpiling tall fescue, there are options available in regard to the grazing of the accumulated forage. Giving cattle access to large areas of stockpiled forage can result in

trampling losses and reduced efficiency of harvesting available dry matter. By rationing or limiting access to stockpiled areas such as with strip grazing will improve forage utilization and extend grazing days. More time and management expense is substituted for winter feed costs.

Stockpiling tall fescue is usually a very beneficial management practice. The variation in results and benefits of stockpiling in research trials are greatly influenced by the amount and timing of fall rainfall. While no one has a crystal ball, being attentive to local weather history, seasonal trends and forecast increase the odds of success with a stockpiling program.

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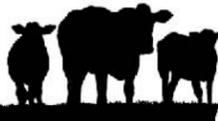
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The Shenandoah summer forage tour will be held on Wednesday, July 9th with registration at 5:00 and dinner from 5:30-6:30. The tour will start at 6:30 and end at 8:30. The tour will feature Beck-n-Rich Farm & Greene LLC. The farm is operated by Richard and Becky Clemmer and located at 76 Pleasant Valley Rd., Raphine, VA 24472.

Topics: View warm-season annuals for summer grazing including forage crabgrass, striate lespedeza, brassicas, pearl millet, BMR grazing corn, and a multi-species mixture. We will discuss forage species selection, forage quality, grazing management, as well as soil health. This is part of an ongoing on-farm demonstration which has grazed winter annual cover crops - and now summer annuals, in preparation to transition back into an improved perennial sod.



Speakers: Richard Clemmer, farm owner; Matt Booher, Augusta Co. Extension; Josh Baker, King's AgriSeeds; Forage Specialist, Virginia Tech; JB Daniel, NRCS.

Sponsors: Chesapeake Bay Foundation, King's AgriSeeds, Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Registration: \$5 per person to cover dinner.

For more information please visit www.vaforges.org.

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The idea that there are people who think that we raise “plain old grass” is somewhat offensive to anyone in the forage business. We've earned the right to get a little sensitive. For us, there's no such thing as “plain old grass”. Every grass, forb and legume has a purpose, even if that purpose is to tell us what we are doing wrong. And the more you do this sort of work, the more questions you have and the more you realize you don't know. Hence the winter conference series, where forage producers get together and talk about a lot of the stuff that they wish they knew more about. There are the summer grazing tours, where we learn from other operators. Some of us attend pasture walks. We're constantly learning about the interconnection between soil, pastures, our cattle and human health.

We try to cram most of the learning into the “slow” months of January and February, the brief time between calving and hay season, and during the heat of the summer.

This year VFGC is focusing focus is on soil health. For most of us, the idea of soil health isn't new at all, but advances in testing and measuring are introducing us to a new world that we always knew existed, but let's face it, it's pretty small and hard to see. There are constant discoveries being made about the universe of organisms beneath our feet. They sort of serve to remind us once again, that the more questions we ask, the more we realize we don't know.

Best Regards,
Patty Jonson
President, VFGC

VALOR: Leaders Obtaining Results

Valor is a noun meaning “strength of mind or spirit that enables a person to encounter danger with firmness, determination”, different from the acronym VALOR, but maybe not so much. Virginia Agricultural Leaders Obtaining Results is a privately funded and publically managed leadership development program. The stated vision of VALOR is, “to provide a sustainable future for Virginias' agricultural community by maximizing potential for successful growth through a system of networking, collaborative decision making, and development of strong leaders.”

Dr. Megan Seibel, in the Agricultural Leadership and Community Education Department at Virginia Tech, is the program director. Dr. Seibel stated that Virginia had a similar leadership program 25 years ago, but it was not well funded and only survived a couple years. Today about 36 other states have similar programs. Dr. Seibel said, “Dr. Eric Kaufman worked as a grad student for the Wedgworth Leadership Institute at Florida. After he came to Tech as faculty, we talked about the possibility of having a program here and students in a graduate course he taught in Agricultural Leadership conceptualized the early foundation of what has grown into VALOR as we now know it. The project justified several focus

group meetings with stakeholders around Virginia and a final report that led to the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences agreeing to hire a director.”



The VALOR website asks how you would benefit from two years of leadership development with experts in the agriculture industry. Have you been across Virginia, the United States, or taken an international trip to learn about the future of agriculture? Are you addressing the current trends in agriculture? Are you interested in advancing your sector of agriculture and understanding its equation for success in the industry? Are you interested in enhancing your skills and knowledge of Virginia's agriculture? Are you willing

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to foster relationships with community leaders and peers in the industry? The site goes on to say the program consists of 12 seminars over a 24 month period. Eight Virginia regional sessions, two capital seminars in Richmond and DC, one regional U.S. session, and one international session.

How is the VALOR program expected to impact Virginia agriculture? Just from the questions above it is obvious the program wants to develop and support collaborative leaders, persons that believe in agriculture, persons willing to put themselves on the line and work to broaden everyone's understanding of agriculture, and help people in agriculture understand how agriculture fits in the larger economic and societal picture.

Participants in VALOR must be actively engaged in the agricultural industry, willing to commit 45 days of their time over two years, invest \$5000 of their own funds (the cost of each individual slot in the program is \$20,000.00, a 4 to 1 return in two years, not bad). Finally participants are expected to put what they learn to use within their community. This sounds daunting until you see some of the specifics of the VALOR program, building relationship, using existing resources, partnering with other organizations, collaborative problem solving, understanding other sectors of agriculture at the local, state, national and international levels; and lots of networking are all part of the curriculum. Each class is a mix of full time and part time farmers, and other individuals directly involved in agriculture.

The first VALOR class started in September of 2012 and will graduate in July 2014. You can meet the inaugural class by visiting the VALOR blog at <http://valeadersor.com>, or just visit the VALOR Face book and Twitter pages. You can also find VALOR on YouTube. Applications for the second class are in and participants will be selected in August with the second class beginning this September. You can learn more about the VALOR program by visiting the program website at www.valor.alce.vt.edu. The website includes applications, information about VALOR, a newsletter, and links to the Blog, Face book, Twitter, YouTube, and more.

When I asked Dr. Seibel what was most challenging about the first VALOR class, she said, “Creating a brand was the greatest challenge. Helping everyone understand what VALOR is about. It is not just for young beginners, it's for individuals in agriculture that want to develop knowledge and skills that will

The application dates for the next class have technically passed. We will be doing interviews in June and July. It has been a true pleasure accepting the challenge of developing this program content, fundraising, and network of participants and program partners as we travel and learn. As faculty in Agricultural, Leadership, and Extension Education at Tech, I am able to oversee research projects related to program outcomes and work with the program graduate student to develop solid learning opportunities that make this an outstanding fellowship experience.”

Finally Dr. Seibel related, “that significant private funding is key to the success VALOR. Various individuals, corporations, associations and organizations invested in the start up of VALOR and in funding the inaugural class. Additionally, Farm Credit of the Virginias created an endowment to provide partial support of the program in perpetuity. Ongoing philanthropic investment will remain critical as the program continues.” Perhaps this is where “valor” comes in, the danger here may be the same fate as an agricultural leadership program 25 years past, and will Virginia Agriculture show its valor and support this Program?

Dennis Jones retired, NRCS District Conservationist, is currently serving as the VFGC Secretary.

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Don Faulkner Receives VFGC Special Appreciation Award

Don Faulkner, formerly of Lexington, VA was presented with the VFGC Special Appreciation Award this past April for his tireless physical and financial support of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council.

Raised in Richmond, Don was attracted at an early age to agriculture. As a youngster, Don spent much time on his cousin's mule-powered farm in Chesterfield County and worked on many area farms as a teenager.

Wanting to pursue agriculture as a career, Don attended NYS College of Agriculture at Cornell where he graduated in 1956 with a double major in Agronomy and Animal Husbandry. He then received an MBA from the UVA Darden School of Business.

After college, Don pursued his life-long desire to farm but due to health issues at the age of 30, was forced to abandon that dream. Because of his love for the land and a desire to still be involved in agriculture, Don began a 30 year career in country real-estate brokerage concentrating on getting and keeping properties of high natural, agricultural, and cultural value into good hands and uses always with conservation, restoration, and good stewardship foremost in mind.

In 1993 and retired from the real estate business, Don took advantage of an opportunity to get back working "on the farm"

behind horses on an Amish farm and from 1998-2008 on a small Vermont organic grass farm. However in 2008, health issues again forced him away from production agriculture and untimely brought him to Lexington, Virginia.



Don Faulkner (left) longtime supporter of the VFGC intently takes notes at recent VFGC winter conference.

Back page Faulkner

Faulkner Front Page

After returning to Virginia, Don attended one of the VFGC Winter Forage Conferences and was impressed with the VFGC and their educational mission. For the last four years at the VFGC Winter Forage Conferences, Don anonymously donated funds to help pay the annual VFGC membership dues for new VFGC members.

Don and his wife Mary recently moved back to Vermont and are enjoying life in a retirement community. The VFGC greatly appreciates Don's many contributions and financial support over the past several years and wish he and his wife many happy and enjoyable retirement years.



J. B. Daniel and Don Faulkner visit at the recent VFGC conference held in Weyers Cave, Virginia.

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Building Fencing Across Virginia: VFGC 2014 Fencing Schools

Properly constructed fences are an essential component of any good grazing system. It is essential that fencing systems be carefully planned and properly constructed to get the best quality finished product that will last for many years. Because proper fencing is such a vital component of all grazing systems, the VFGC and Virginia Cooperative Extension teamed up to held three Fencing Schools in Halifax, Fries, and Berryville this past March and April. Over 75 participants attended these very successful and educational schools.

During the morning classroom session of the schools, participants learned about fence economics and current Virginia fence laws. The remainder of the morning classroom session was spent going over proper construction techniques required to build strong and long-

lasting permanent fences. Participants also learned about the different type of fences needed for various species of livestock for permanent perimeter and cross fencing and portable temporary fence.

All aspects of electric fencing were covered including construction, energizer selection, grounding, temporary fencing, and trouble shooting.



Participant at the VFGC fencing school held in Halifax County learns how to tie high tensile fence knots.

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Reporting the progress of Virginia's forage industry