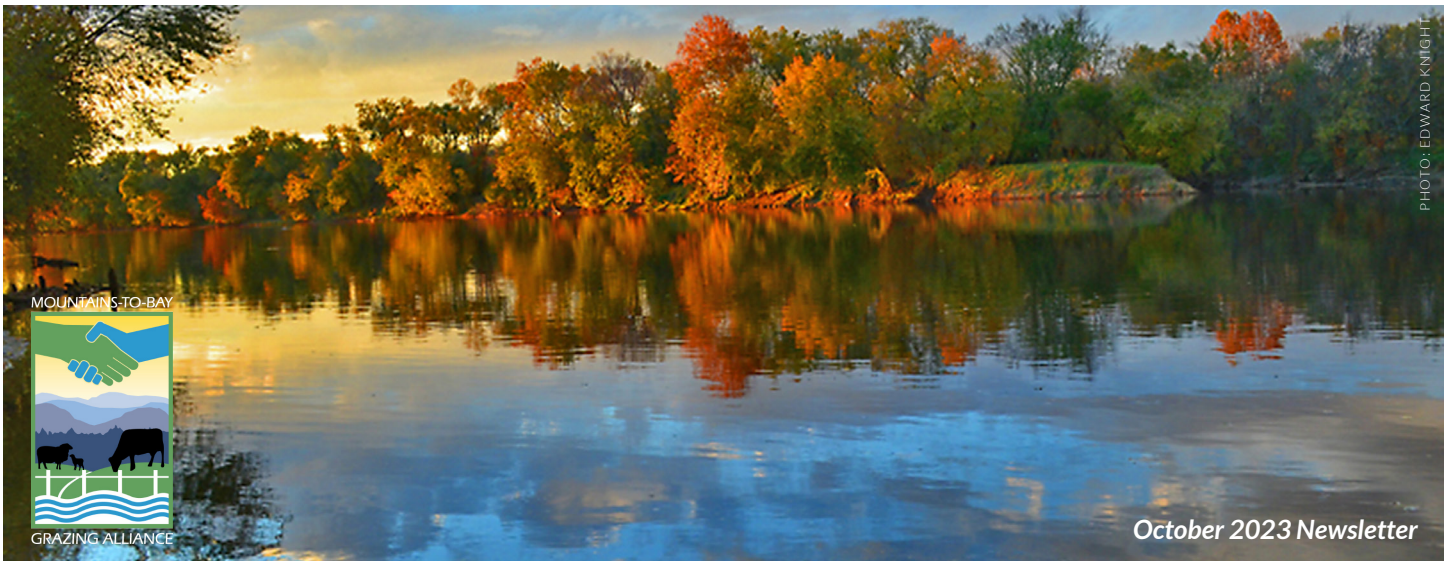

This Virginia Farmer Finds Silvopasture Success

by Amber Friedrichsen, Associate Editor. Reprinted from Hay & Forage Grower Magazine

The small community of Red Oak, Virginia, sits in the southern tip of Charlotte County, just hovering above the North Carolina state line. It is a pinpoint on a map of the state's Piedmont Region with a gentle rolling topography.

According to Miller Adams, much of this land was originally covered in trees before it was cleared for various agricultural purposes during colonial times.

Years later, native tree species returned to the region when agricultural activity declined during the Civil War. Adams said this abandonment of agriculture caused many of the crop fields to revert back to timber production.

Despite the historical back and forth between land uses, the area forester for the Virginia Department of Forestry has found a way to bring tree production and forage production together in a silvopasture system on his third-generation family farm.

Adams grew up in Red Oak and attended Virginia Tech to study forestry before moving home to help expand his family's grazing beef herd. Like many farms in the area at this time, the Adamses had a small herd of dairy cattle and grew various crops, including tobacco. As the dairy herd dispersed, beef cattle took their place.

In 2016, Adams purchased an additional 75 acres of land to integrate into the family's forage system; however, some of the property was peppered with loblolly pine trees.

The refined forester estimated the trees were roughly 15 years old. While loblolly pine trees have a productive lifespan of approximately 60 years, he explained these trees are typically harvested after about 30 years as they reach economic maturity.

Instead of clearing away all of the trees, Adams considered using them in a silvopasture system.

This concept involves intensive management of forages and trees in the same area to maximize the production of both.

Silvopastures can be established by introducing forage into a wooded area or by planting trees into a forage system.

With one foot in forestry and the other in farming, Adams decided to combine his areas of expertise and experiment with the former approach.

"Silvopasture was a topic I had been interested in for almost 10 years at that point, but I never had a place I thought it would work out," he said. "I was interested in having more grazable acres, and I thought this would be a good area to at least try something different."

The establishment process

Adams started out by dedicating 20 acres to silvopasture and clearing 50-foot corridors between every 50 feet of trees. He hired a logger to conduct a heavy commercial trim within the remaining rows of trees to allow sunlight to reach the forest floor.

Then in the fall of 2019, he administered a controlled burn around this area pasture to eliminate the accumulated debris and duff layer.

The following fall, Adams contracted the use of a forestry tiller to grind down the protruding tree stumps sprinkled throughout the cleared corridors. This ground was then disked with a tractor to prepare the seedbed for forage.

Before proceeding with planting, though, Adams considered what species would be best suited to the soil. "Being in a forest soil, I knew this area was going to have fertility issues that would need to be addressed from the forage side," Adams explained. "Native warm-season grasses have historically done better on low pH soils, so I decided to go that route with switchgrass."

Once he seeded switchgrass and gave the stand a year to put down a strong root system, Adams included the silvopasture in his grazing rotation. His herd of 80 Angus-cross cows stayed in the silvopasture for about a week until switchgrass was about 8 to 10 inches tall. Since then, Adams has integrated the silvopasture into the rest of his 200-acre grazing system, regularly rotating cattle through the switchgrass stand in the summer.

Being a native warm-season grass, switchgrass is an asset to livestock production when temperatures spike

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(*continued from page 1*)

June through August; however, the trees contribute to better animal performance as well.

"Southside Virginia gets hot and muggy, and our calves suffer to the point where they really need some relief," Adams said. "The silvopasture brings some shade and comfort the calves wouldn't have otherwise. I'm not managing the trees for timber production. The shade is the real commodity to me."

With that said, the silvopasture system is a balancing act between too much and too little shade. For this reason, Adams plans on thinning the stand in the next five to 10 years to ensure adequate grass growth while still providing enough shade for cattle.

The bigger picture

Trees don't have to be planted in perfect rows to be a part of a silvopasture, nor do they have to be a uniform species. In fact, grazing livestock among an assortment of trees scattered across a field can offer ample shade and relief from the heat. Therefore, Adams is trying to promote the regeneration of natural hardwood tree species in his silvopasture.

In addition to providing forage, shade, and timber, silvopasture systems can also enhance wildlife habitat and thus promote more biodiversity.

Miller Adams created 50-foot corridors between every 50 feet of trees in his silvopasture system. He then seeded the open areas to switchgrass to promote better forage production during the summer.

For example, red oak and white oak trees have been shown to attract various bird species in the silvopasture system at Virginia Tech's Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center two and a half hours north of Red Oak in the town of Raphine.

Overall, Adams appreciates the reduced soil erosion and improved water quality that result from having permanent pastures instead of annual crop fields.

Implementing silvopastures on his property is just one way to achieve those environmental benefits while making the best of his available resources.

Fall Fescue Toxicosis

by Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Our pastures are mostly made up of tall-fescue. Within the fescue plant grows a fungus, called an "endophyte," that produces an alkaloid toxin.

When consumed, the toxin constricts blood vessels, reducing blood flow to the animal's extremities. This prevents heat dissipation, worsening existing heat stress.

It can cause reduced conception rates, reduced milk production, and poor weight gain. Poor blood circulation to ears, tail switches, and feet can cause soreness, tissue damage, or tissue death. This sometime culminates in hooves or tails falling off after the onset of cold weather.

The endophyte fungus and toxin production are active in the plant from spring through early-December, at which point the fungus goes dormant and toxins decline. Toxin production is highest when plants are most actively growing, meaning symptoms are often reported in fall (especially after rain and/or nitrogen application).

The most common observation in fall is cattle with sore feet (although this is not always fescue related). Some producers report that fall-calving cows have reduced milk production resulting in dehydrated calves.

Unfortunately, there is no medical cure. An antibiotic might be prescribed to treat secondary problems. Copper supplementation has been marketed as a cure, but this has not been proven.

Afflicted animals usually recover after a week or two on a non-toxic diet. This can be achieved by supplementing pasture with non-toxic hay or feed to reduce toxic fescue to less than 30% of the diet.

Research has shown that natural phytoestrogens found in soybean meal help to reverse constriction of blood vessels, making it a good choice for supplementation. Animals with advanced symptoms should be pulled completely off fescue pasture.

Fescue hay will drop in toxin content during storage, so use hay older than six months if possible.

From a pasture standpoint, future problems with toxic fescue can be helped by inter-seeding clovers. In addition to diluting fescue in the diet, research has shown that natural phytoestrogens produced by legumes (especially red clover) help reverse constriction of blood vessels.

Mental Health Resources for Farmers & Farm Families

by Crystal Kyle, Kim Niewolny, Nicole Orndoff, Donald Ohanehi, Kirk Ballin, Joe Young, Steve Bridge, Tristan Robertson, Garland Mason, Virginia Cooperative Extension

There are a wide variety of online resources dedicated to helping farmers, farm families, and caregivers who are suffering from various mental health issues. Those mentioned here are meant to help those who have limited access to other professional resources or are looking for help and support. However, it is important that you seek a qualified health care professional for your mental health needs and questions.

Self-Screenings

A screening test can be the first step to recovery. It is quick, cost free, and can help give a likely diagnosis if someone is unwilling to visit a therapist, trying to determine whether to visit a therapist, or unable to access one.

Mental Health Screening Tools: Self-screenings to help determine if you may be suffering from a mental illness including: depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, substance use disorder, eating disorder, and psychosis. There is also workplace mental health survey and tests for parents and youth to take to assess mental health.

Stress

Farming is one of the most stressful occupations. Some stressors unique to farmers are: financial insecurity, changing government policies, and disease epidemic (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Other influences impacting farmers mental health include pesticide exposure, climate variabilities, and poor physical health or past injuries (Daghagh Yazd, Wheeler, & Zuo, 2019).

Additionally, expectations by family members to continue a family farm, physical health changes, balancing on and off-farm work, and relationship difficulties can influence overall mental health (Braun & Pippidis, 2020).

Prolonged stress leads to negative effects on your health and has the potential to lead to other illnesses including: heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, elevated depression, and anxiety disorders (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that the risk of farm accidents and injuries increases with stress (Simpson, et al., 2004; Tone & Irwin, 2021).

Signs of stress in the general population can include physical, emotional, and mental symptoms (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

Physical symptoms can include aches and pains, chest pain or the feeling of a racing heart, exhaustion and sleep disruptions, headaches, dizziness, shaking, high blood pressure, and other issues.

Emotional and mental symptoms include depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and sadness (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

Signs of farm and ranch stress can be shown in different ways. These could include changes in normal routines, declining care of livestock, increases in illness or accidents, or the overall appearance of the farm declines. Additionally, the children of stressed individuals may begin to act out (Fetsch & Williams, n.d.).

Here are additional resources about identifying and managing stress to increase on-farm safety that may be useful for farmers and farm families:

Farm Stress & Decision-Making During Challenging Times: This is a resource guide that helps to identify stressors, describes the physical consequences of stress, and provides advice on ways to manage stress.

Safe Farm's "Manage Farm Stress to Increase Safety" is a document that outlines common stressors, symptoms of stress on the farm, and different coping methods. It also includes a short quiz to check your stress level.

Depression

In 2019, 20.6 percent of adults experienced a mental illness, like depression (NAMI, 2021). Women experience twice the rate of depression as men do (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019). Like farming, caregiving can be classified as a chronic stress experience (Schulz & Sherwood, 2008). This is because caregiving comprises all the defining factors of chronic stress:

• Physical and psychological strain across an extended period of time;
• High levels of unpredictability and uncontrollability;
• Can create secondary stress (for example in work and family relationships); and
• Requires a high level of vigilance on a regular basis (Schulz & Sherwood, 2008).

Caregiving has been determined to be a major public health issue (Schulz & Sherwood, 2008). Caregiving in a rural community provides even more challenges because rural caregivers have more limited access to resources, issues with transportation, and more isolation, among other factors (Henning-Smith & Lahr, 2018).

This means providing these caregivers with resources and support is vital and should be a priority. Signs and symptoms of depression include:
• Changes in appearance
• Unhappy feelings
• Negative thinking
• Reduced energy and diminished pleasure from fun activities
• Interpersonal problems
• Physical problems like aches and pains, headaches, or sleep issues
• Guilt and low self-esteem (Fetsch & Williams, n.d.).

Suicide

Evidence shows suicide is a large problem in rural communities (Gale, Janis, Coburn, and Rochford, 2019) but scant research exists on incidence of depressive symptoms and suicide among farmers in the United States (Reed & Claunch, 2020).

Because of the elevated rate of suicide in rural communities, along with high rates of farm stress, it is important to be aware of warning signs that someone may be considering suicide.

Robert Fetsch and Roger Williams lay out some signs of suicidal intent in their article, *Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals*:

• Anxiety or depression
• Withdrawal or isolation

(*article continues on page 4*)

(*article continued from page 3*)

• Helplessness or hopelessness
• Alcohol use
• Previous suicide attempts
• Suicidal planning
• Cries for help including making a will, giving away possessions, or making statements indicating they may end their life or that their life is not worth living.

Professional Assistance
Adults living in rural areas receive mental health treatment less frequently than their urban peers, despite a similar incidence of mental health concerns and mental illness across both populations.

Additionally, adults in rural areas are more likely to meet with a provider with less training.

Contributing factors include reduced access to providers, fewer specialized providers in rural areas, lack of care coordination in rural areas and lack of trained providers, and underutilization of available services (Morales, Barksdale, and Beckel-Mitchener, 2020).

Rural America has a shortage of providers: as many as 65% of rural counties lack a psychiatrist, and over 60% of rural Americans live in "designated mental health provider shortage areas" (Morales, Barksdale, and Beckel-Mitchener, 2020).

This makes access to mental health professionals challenging for many rural individuals. That said, there are many resources that are available. Many websites are designed to help individuals suffering from various mental health issues including individuals in the farming population.

There are a wide variety of free courses and support groups available in-person and online to help with various caregiving and mental health challenges.

Many of these programs are certified by different U.S. government organizations, have curricula developed by psychologists, or are administered by mental health professionals. One noteworthy organization is Virginia NAMI which offers a large selection of free courses in different locations throughout the state. A course of particular interest is the NAMI Family-to-Family. This is an eight class program designed for family caregivers of individuals living with mental illness.

Mental health support groups in rural areas may be hard to find because of the low population density but there are courses and support groups offered solely online that focus on self-help through interactive programs.

Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) is a multistate resource that assists current military members, veterans, and their families in finding local behavioral health professionals that meet their unique needs.

Additionally, caregiver.va.gov includes information specifically about caregivers of military members coping with PTSD or traumatic brain injury.

Telehealth
Telehealth allows individuals whose main barrier to accessing professional help is distance or transportation to get help through video or other media services.

One reason telehealth is of interest is that it has the potential to transcend the rural barriers towards receiving professional services, and can connect rural Americans to highly trained and specialized providers.

The telehealth environment has expanded greatly in the last few years and especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person healthcare has become riskier to both provider and patient. In the early months of the pandemic, the use of telemedicine more than doubled across the United States (Ralls & Moran, 2020).

During the pandemic, many health insurance agencies (AHIP, 2021) along with Medicare (medicare.gov, n.d.) and Medicaid (Guth & Hinton, 2020) expanded coverage for telehealth visits to practitioners. This includes expanded telehealth access for behavioral health (e.g. mental health) services (Guth and Hinton, 2020).

Doxy.me and Zoom are two ways providers use to connect with their patients using telehealth. This requires a reliable and strong internet connection—these continue to be barriers to access in rural areas.

During the pandemic, Medicaid and other insurance providers loosened the definition of telehealth to include "audio-only" services (Ralls & Moran, 2020). This could help expand access to healthcare, including behavioral and mental healthcare in rural areas.

Definitions of telemedicine as well as opportunities and barriers to access are constantly shifting, so it is important to talk to your insurance provider and your healthcare practitioner to find out the most appropriate type of care for you.

Virginia Caregiver Resources
These resources are meant to help caregivers find services, support, and information in the state or in their community. Many of these resources have online support groups and ways to ask experts caregiving relevant questions.

Family Caregiver Alliance Services by State: Various resource, services, and programs for family caregivers.

Virginia Family Caregiver—Solution Center: Helps locate local services and has links to various caregiving resources.

These resources are directed toward farmers and farm families experiencing stress related to financial instability or other factors related to managing a farm business.

Southern Risk Management Education Center provides funding for educational projects to assist farmers and ranchers to manage and improve the complex financial risks associated with their businesses effectively.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers and ranchers who are unable to access financing from commercial financial agencies with direct loans.

Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability (VirginiaFAIRS) provides financial assistance to rural folks and promotes cooperative and business development.

The FarmAid hotline at 1-800-FARM-AID provides 24-hour service to distressed farmers and ranchers who are at risk of losing their farms through financial stress.

Farmers Business Network Health provides health insurance specifically designed for farmers according to their budget and health needs.

Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition assists beginning farmers and ranchers to establish and sustain their farms, offering programs and farmer support for beginning farmers.

Bee-friendly Beef

Bee-friendly Beef workshop participants hear from a researcher in a wildflower meadow at Bean Hollow Grassfed farm.

In August, Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia hosted a Bee-friendly Beef Producer Workshop. They started with research updates and lectures from Virginia Working Landscapes, Virginia Tech, and the University of Tennessee, followed by a farm tour at Bean Hollow Grassfed.

What do we mean by "bee-friendly beef?" Pollinators have experienced precipitous declines in recent decades due, in part, to changing land-use and declines in floral resources.

The objective of the research is to explore avenues to increase pollinator conservation opportunities on working farms. Integrating native wildflowers into pastures across the 37 million acres of the fescue belt in the Southeastern United States has the potential to conserve pollinators while maintaining cattle production. The predominant grass across these landscapes, tall fescue, feeds millions of cattle and grows well during the cool spring and fall seasons. However, this non-native grass introduced from northern Europe outcompetes native grasses and wildflowers. This project examines the integration of native wildflowers into traditional fescue-dominated grazing systems.

For more information about how you can incorporate pollinator plants in your production system, please visit Virginia Working Landscapes Bee-friendly Beef webpage.

Partner Profile: American Farmland Trust

by Jacob Gilley, Senior Technical Livestock & Grazing Specialist
American Farmland Trust

American Farmland Trust (AFT) has been an active and proud member of the Mountain-to-Bay Grazing Alliance since 2020. During that time, a lot of great grazing and conservation work has taken place throughout the Mid-Atlantic due to the tireless efforts of many livestock producers, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations, including AFT.

Since May of 2019, AFT has led the Sustainable Grazing Project (SGP) based in the Rappahannock Region of Virginia. Our project takes a holistic approach to promote sustainable grazing practices which improve farm profitability and resilience, land access, water and soil health, local food systems, and much more.

With our project's grazing cohort of producers, we have been able to conduct several on-farm research and demonstration projects which promote the establishment and grazing of alternative forages.

One of our first trials compared the pros and cons of grazing weaned calves on perennial pastures in comparison to several different varieties of summer annuals.

Through this work, we also highlighted different types of fencing, watering, and portable shade infrastructure which are available to farmers to assist with making the best use of fast-growing annual forages on quick pasture rotations.

Similarly, we have planted two years of cover crop plots in which we have showcased diverse forages to be grazed. We have hosted workshops for each of these demonstration plots and have assisted over 50 producer attendees at each to gain a better understanding of how to implement these principles and practices on their operations.

Grazing and soil health guru, Dr. Allen Williams of Understanding Ag, helped instruct and inspire producers at two of our cover crop grazing workshops, and Dr. Pat Keyser of University of Tennessee presented on the ins and outs of integrating native warm season grasses into a grazing system at another workshop.

When it comes to assisting producers with increasing farm profitability, AFT has has a couple of different approaches. First, we have developed an equipment rental initiative based in Central Virginia which easily and affordably makes available an OK portable corral to producers along with a portable poultry processing trailer by using an online Booqable website which can be found here.

Through this online platform, farmers can see the availability of equipment, reserve it, and pay the nominal $35.00 per day rental fee via credit card. The portable corral has been used often by new and beginning producers who lease pastures that are lacking permanent

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Mentors and mentees who attended AFT's Ranching for Profit workshop last year pose for a photo.

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pastures that are lacking permanent and safe pens to gather cattle.

We also see a huge opportunity for our corral to be used by producers who are gathering cattle in cover crop grazing scenarios where the row crop field is void of pen infrastructure.

The poultry processing trailer has been equally as popular, especially by smaller producers who are processing their own chickens and turkeys to be direct-marketed to consumers.

Reducing the start-up cost for small-scale poultry producers has proven popular and beneficial due to the lower margins of selling poultry—which are often one of the first types of livestock new and beginning farmers start to raise and sell directly to consumers.

AFT has thoroughly enjoyed hosting several different poultry processing workshops in partnership with local high schools and the Minority and Veteran Farmers of the Piedmont.

AFT has also partnered with the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council to provide opportunities for livestock producers to attend a locally offered, two-day, Ranching for Profit workshop for the past three years.

Though the title of the livestock-focused business workshop has "ranching" in it, the content taught by the Ranch Management Consultant team is VERY relevant for the livestock producers east of the Mississippi, where we don't often refer to ourselves as ranchers.

This course focuses on helping producers identify which aspects of their agricultural business are most profitable based on crunching the numbers and works to eliminate the emotion in making business decisions by breaking down existing paradigms. The 2023 workshops took place on October 10th and 11th in Virginia and the 12th and 13th in Maryland through the University of Maryland.

A large emphasis of the Sustainable Grazing Project has been on helping producers extend their grazing seasons, which aids in reducing production cost while also providing several environmental benefits.

We have highlighted and shared the excellent work that the Virginia Graze 300 team has done to showcase the economic benefits of extended grazing seasons.

Over the past several years, AFT has also highlighted the benefits to soil health and water quality by ensuring pastures are appropriately stocked and not overgrazed.

In partnership with the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative team, we have also helped conduct field research which focuses on identifying optimal grazing timings and pasture management practices that optimize both production and the success of grassland nesting birds.

This work has been eye opening and showcases the importance of responsibly managed grasslands and how we can all be successful when we are aware of the interconnectedness of all those that rely on the land.

AFT has thoroughly enjoyed engaging with producers through the efforts described above and through our numerous other initiatives with partners in the region.

We are always looking for out-of-the box ways to assist producers with overcoming real, and not just perceived, challenges.

It is our mission to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land.

If you are interested in learning more about AFT and all of our initiatives, visit our website farmland.org or reach out to me at jgilley@farmland.org and I will put you in touch with the right person at AFT to assist you with your inquiry.

Dealing with Suspected Nitrates in Harvested Forages

by Matt Booher
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Recent rains have removed the concern of nitrates in grazed forages, but what about forages that were harvested during the drought that was prevalent in some parts of Virginia this summer?

Nitrates present at harvest of dry hay will not be reduced during storage. If you made hay on annual grass forages known to be nitrate accumulators (like Sudangrass or foxtail millet) during the drought, you may want to send off a sample for testing.

Nitrates present at harvest of silage may be reduced up to 50% during fermentation, but not necessarily to safe levels. You may want to test your corn silage after it has gone through 30 days of fermentation.

Nitrates present at harvest of sweet hay will likely not be reduced during storage due to incomplete fermentation. If any heating of the forage occurred in the bale, nitrates may convert to nitrites, which are 10 times as deadly.

Forage can be tested for nitrites, but the current cost is over $400/sample...so, if any wrapped bales of suspected high-nitrate hay appear to have heated, it is probably just best not to feed them.

If you would like to test any stored forages for nitrates, you can get it done for a total cost of about $30/sample plus shipping. I recommend Cumberland Valley Analytical in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania (1-800 282-7522). Call them to discuss billing and sample shipment, or possibly work with your local Extension office to run it through their account. Keep in mind it will take 1-2 days to run the test once it is received at the lab. Just like any forage test for silage or hay, sampling from multiple bales or areas of the tube or trench should be done.

The lab results will provide the level of nitrates found and specify if it is safe to feed or if precautions need to be taken.

Livestock have the ability to adapt to high-nitrate forages, so they can usually be fed safely with care. The key is slow intake, so do not introduce high-nitrate forages all at once, especially to animals that are hungry. If possible, blend or feed high-nitrate forages alongside safe forages. Grain or grain byproducts fed alongside high-nitrate forages also helps rumen bacteria to safely convert nitrates to bacterial protein.

Grazing vs. Baling Corn Residues

by Ben Beckman, Extension Educator, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Reprinted from Morning AgClips.

As harvest progresses, crop residues are readily becoming available as a forage source.

Producers looking to capitalize on these feeds often consider two options for use: grazing or baling. Which option is best for you?

Grazing corn residue allows animals to be selective about what they eat. Animals choose higher quality grain, leaf, and husk first, grazing soiled or lower quality feed when it becomes the only choice available.

With proper stocking, corn residues will meet nutrient requirements in dry cows. However, quality of residues will decrease with time as stalks are subjected to weathering.

Practices such as strip or rotational grazing can help extend the grazing period and balance quality.

Initial investments in fence and water sources are drawbacks of grazing, but once the labor of putting fence in is completed, the cows do the work of harvesting.

Baling, on the other hand, requires labor and fuel to harvest and put-up residues.

Because of the tough nature of corn residue, wear and tear on machinery is a consideration.


PHOTO COURTESY MORNING AGCLIPS

How residues are harvested is also important and can greatly impact final quality. If the initial raking of residues is particularly aggressive, the dirt (ash) content of the final product will be high.

Because of the generally low quality and the risk of sorting, grinding cornstalk bales before feeding is beneficial. This does, however, add additional cost and equipment requirements for use.

Finally, baled residues are usually fed away from the field where they are harvested, resulting in nutrients losses where harvest occurred. The value of these losses depends on fertilizer price and how much residue is removed. Spreading manure from the feeding location back on the field can help mitigate some of this loss.

Mountains-to-Bay Grazing Alliance

VFGC

University of Maryland Extension

Capital RC&D — Bridging Conservation Communities

Maryland Grazers Network

USDA United States Department of Agriculture — Natural Resources Conservation Service

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Future Harvest — Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

PAGLC Pennsylvania Grazing Lands Coalition

Chesapeake Bay Foundation — Saving a National Treasure

Virginia Cooperative Extension — Virginia Tech, Virginia State University — www.ext.vt.edu

American Farmland Trust — Saving the Land That Sustains Us

Graze 300 — Virginia Cooperative Extension — Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Maryland-Delaware Forage Council

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bringing Basic Solar Energy to Your Farm
October 11, 2:00–4:00 PM
Fredericksburg, VA
Join Farmer Thomas Roberson as he discusses solar energy options in use on his small 10-acre farm. Learn about design basics, solar operations, and how he uses it for electric fencing, powering his well, and cooling his high tunnels during the summer. Register by clicking here or contact Michael Carter Sr. at 804-481-1163 or mcarter@vsu.edu.

Ranching for Profit Workshop
October 12, 9:00 AM–October 13, 5:00 PM,
Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, MD
This workshop is designed for producers looking to transform their operation into a profitable business with less work and stress. Workshop attendees will dive deeper into the principles behind farm economics and increasing farm profitability, giving them the tools and insights they need to improve their business. For more information or to register, visit: go.umd.edu/rfpworkshop or contact Amanda Grev at agrev@umd.edu or 301-432-2767 x339.

Tour of Slade Family Farm
October 13, 10:00 AM–1:00 PM
Surry, VA
Learn about various green manure crops, summer and winter cover crops, native species, wildflower production, winter cole crops and more. We will have a planting demonstration and discuss improving soil health and organic matter. There will be something for all attendees to observe and learn. Register by clicking here or contact Tim Sexton at 804-524-1028 or tsexton@vsu.edu.

Pasture Walk
October 18, 5:00–7:30 PM
Ambling Brook Farm
4810 Elmer Derr Road, Frederick, MD
Ambling Brook Farm raises Gotland sheep and has recently set up a silvopasture system for grazing. How and why the silvopasture system was designed, how the installation process went, and any challenges that were encountered along the way will be discussed. Register at go.umd.edu/pasturewalkoctober

Sustainability in Our Grazing Havens
October 20, 8:00 AM–5:00 PM
Wilson Land and Cattle Co.
1417 Stitzinger Road, Tionesta, PA
Join Pasa in Forest County to learn more about different topics related to sustainable grazing operations. See the full agenda and register at clarionconservation.com/events or call 814-393-6147.

Converting Cropland to Pasture for Sheep
October 20, 1:00–3:00 PM
Kilmarnock, VA
Point Pleasant Farm is a new/old farm located in the Coastal Plain of Virginia. It was mostly crop-farmed until 2020 when Nan Harvey purchased several small adjoining parcels, added fencing, and changed the land use to livestock farming. Nan will share the good, bad, and ugly she had to face along the way. Raising sheep changed the crop from a bean/wheat/corn rotation cycle to a permanent grassland constrained by proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. Register by clicking here or contacts Tammy Holler at 804-229-2730 or tholler@vsu.edu.

Cover Crop Workshop
October 27, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM
Clagett Farm
11904 Old Marlboro Pike
Upper Marlboro, MD
This workshop is tailored to new, beginning, or small-acreage farmers interested in learning more about cover crop methods on regenerative operations. Visit events.cbf.org/cover-crop-102723 to register.

Pasture Walk at Sasscer Farms
November 13, 3:00–5:30 PM
St. Mary's County, MD
Join University of Maryland Extension, NRCS, and Charlie Sasscer for an educational pasture walk at a farm in St. Mary's County (exact location TBD; will be updated soon). This pasture walk will focus on winter feeding options, including grazing stalks, grazing cover crops, using stockpiled forages, and feeding bales on pasture. Click here for more information.

Soil Testing
November 16, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM
Virginia Beach, VA
Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist with the Small Farm Outreach Program, will discuss the importance of soil testing to determine the necessary amendments to soil for a successful growing season. A hands-on sampling in a predetermined area will take place at the end of the workshop to show the step-by-step process of soil testing for a paddock in preparation to support a small herd of Angus & Angus-Hereford cross cattle. Register by clicking here or contact Ben Dukes at 804-731-7916 or bdukes@vsu.edu.

Nourish & Flourish: From the Ground Up
Future Harvest CASA Annual Conference
January 18–20, 2024
College Park, MD
Save the date for Future Harvest's 25th annual conference! Visit futureharvest.org/2024-conference to learn more as the date approaches.

2024 Winter Forage Conference
January 23, Wytheville, VA
January 24, Chatham, VA
January 25, Warrenton, VA
January 26, Weyers Cave, VA
January 26, Virtual only
This year's Virginia Forage and Grassland Council winter forage conference will focus on optimizing animal performance in forage-based production systems. Learn about understanding the specific nutritional requirement for cow-calf, heifer-development, forage-finishing, dairy, and stocker operations; how to identify and address the nutritional gaps in your forage supply; developing supplementation programs that dovetail with your forage system; and guiding herd genetics to match your nutritional supply. Visit vaforages.org/events for more information.

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Mission Statement: *The Mountains-to-Bay Grazing Alliance networks organizations within the agricultural community to support and encourage wider adoption of rotational grazing and related conservation practices that benefit water quality, improve soil health, and boost farm economies.*