



Ohio County Farm & Home News

**Cooperative
Extension Service**

*Ohio County
P O Box 66
Hartford KY 42347
270-298-7441
<http://ohio.ca.uky.edu/>*

MANAGE YOUR LARGEST COST AS A COW/CALF PRODUCER



The following article is from Dr. Kenny Burdine, discussing how to manage winter feeding costs, which is your largest expense in a cow-calf operation.

As we turn the page on October, winter feeding will move into the forefront of cow-calf operators' minds. Most cow-calf operations have already begun feeding hay or will do so very soon. Winter feed costs are likely the largest cost for a cow-calf operation and are impacted by the number of days an operation feeds hay, the cost of the hay (or other feeds) that is fed, and the efficiency of the feeding program.

The number of winter-feeding days is largely a function of stocking rate and pasture conditions throughout the grazing season. At the national level, the percentage of pasture rated poor and very poor has been lower than last year, but higher than the average of the previous 5-year period. In the Southeast, pastures are generally in worse condition than last year and considerably worse than the 2017-2021 average. In Kentucky, a lot of cow-calf operations have been feeding hay for a while and will see a higher than normal number of feeding days this winter.

At the same time, hay values are not always easy to estimate because most operations produce their own

hay. What hay does get sold is typically sold privately, so there is limited public data on the market price of hay fed by cow-calf operators. Hay is also unique in the sense that there can be wide ranges in hay values across regions due to the high costs associated with moving hay from one area to another. For these reasons, producers really have to put a value on the hay they feed based on what it cost them to produce it or what they paid for it, if purchased.

Finally, feeding efficiency is sometimes the forgotten factor in winter feed costs because it can be hard to observe and quantify. There is always a loss associated with feeding as cattle don't utilize 100% of the hay that is produced or purchased. This is typically a function of hay storage and feeding method and there is merit in looking for economical ways to limit losses at these two points.

Over the last couple of years, hay values in Kentucky have gotten much higher and that has had a significant impact on the cost of wintering cows. For illustration, a \$20 per ton increase in hay value leads to an increase of \$0.34 per day at the 15% loss level and increases at higher loss levels. While lowering storage and feeding losses will likely come at some cost, reducing this loss from 30% to 15% results in gross savings of \$0.37 per cow per day when hay is valued at \$100 per ton, and increases as hay becomes more valuable. Having a feel for winter feeding costs can be a crucial first step in understanding cow-calf profitability and is definitely something that cow-calf operators should seek to manage.

NOVEMBER TIMELY FORAGE TIPS

- Apply 30-40 lbs/N/acre to strengthen cool-season grass sods going into winter. This will stimulate the root growth, thus making the plants stronger and higher yielding next year.

- If not already done, inventory hay and assess hay quality.
- Using a plate meter or grazing stick, estimate stockpile available for winter grazing.
- Adjust animal numbers or purchase additional hay to balance forage-feed supply to livestock needs.
- Graze crop residues and cover crops that will not overwinter.
- Graze winter annuals that will not overwinter such as brassics and oats.
- Graze other winter annuals once they are 6-8 inches tall and are well anchored. Do NOT graze closer to 4 inches.
- Sugar content will rise in tall fescue with the cool temperatures and short days of fall. Alkaloid content of tall fescue can also be high in certain years, but will begin decline after a hard freeze.
- Graze johnsongrass once the plant has dried up after the hard freeze last week.

U.K. CORN & SOYBEAN VARIETY YIELD RESULTS

The 2023 University of Kentucky Corn & Soybean Variety Yield results are now available



online, which includes results for corn variety results at the Ohio Co. site, in cooperation with Sanderfur Farms. Booklets with results should be available in December.

Corn: <https://varietytesting.ca.uky.edu/corn>

Soybean: <https://varietytesting.ca.uky.edu/soybean>

The corn variety site also has corn silage yield results from three locations in Kentucky, which would be useful for livestock producers.

When evaluating variety yield results, it is good to look at the location closest to your farm but, pay

particular attention to the overall summary. By selecting a variety which does well over different locations, soil types, and environment, you will have a variety which should perform well on your farm, no matter the weather conditions.

U.K. FALL CROP PROTECTION WEBINAR SERIES

The next session of the “2023 Crop Protection Webinar Series” will be this Thursday, Nov. 9th, on the video conferencing app Zoom. The weekly webinars will occur at 9:00 a.m. CT on Thursdays and are hosted through the Southern Integrated Pest Management Center.

Preregistration is required to attend each webinar. The webinar schedule and preregistration links are as follows:

- Nov. 9 – Dr. Carl Bradley, Extension Plant Pathologist. “What have we learned from nearly two decades of research, on soybean foliar fungicides?” Registration link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3SvKPhEDSSWcYhnUnLrvsQ

This program is an excellent opportunity for commercial applicators to get CEU’s as program organizers have applied for continuing education credits for pesticide applicators and Certified Crop Advisers.



- Nov. 9 – Ky Fencing School; Ky Soybean Office; Princeton
- Nov. 9 - U.K. Fall Crop Protection Webinar: What Have We Learned From Research on Soybeans With Foliar Fungicides? : Over Zoom at 9:00 a.m. till 10:00 a.m. CT Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3SvKPhEDSSWcYhnUnLrvsQ
- Nov. 16 – U.K. Fall Crop Protection Webinar: Managing the Offensive Spread of Weeds; Over Zoom at 9:00 a.m. till 10:00 a.m. CT; Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SIOzGyibQiOk4A6pTRHGmw
- Nov. 30 – U.K. Fall Crop Protection Webinar: Insects in Field Crops During 2 Years of Drought and Heat; Over Zoom at 9:00 a.m. till 10:00 a.m.; Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_AqvCh08TQGCAJXvKxqdwFA
- Nov. 29 - Dec.2 – Ky Farm Bureau Convention; Galt House, Louisville

More information about these programs is available by contacting the Ohio Co. Extension Office at (270)298-7441.