

Ohio County Farm & Home News

**Cooperative
Extension Service**

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MANAGING MUD: STRATEGIES FOR RECLAIMING DISTURBED AREAS (CONTINUED)

This article is a continuation of our discussion on reclaiming our hay feeding areas, but this week we will discuss using warm season annual grasses.

- **Plant warm-season annual grasses**

The second strategy involves planting a summer annual grass in late spring or early summer. This strategy has a much higher probability of success than planting cool season grasses in late spring. Summer annual grasses, especially sorghum-sudangrass or sudangrass, have very rapid emergence and canopy closure. This will prevent summer annual weeds from germinating and provide forage for grazing or harvesting during the summer months. Perennial cool-season grasses can then be reseeded under more ideal conditions in late summer or early fall.



The following tips will help to enhance your chances of success when using warm season annual grasses.

- *Plant adapted summer annuals species.* Always plant forages that are well adapted to Kentucky and the soils and conditions on your farm. Summer annuals that can be used to reclaim hay feeding

areas include sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass, pearl millet, and crabgrass. A description of these species can be found in AGR-229, Warm Season Annual Grasses in Kentucky.

- *Use the high end of the seeding rate.* Seeding rates are normally given as a range. (Table 2). Make sure and use the high end of this range. Even with summer annuals, rapid canopy closure is critical for

Table 2. Seeding rates for commonly planted summer annual grasses in Kentucky†.

Species	Seeding Rate (lb/A)
Sorghum-sudangrass	30-40
Sudangrass	15-20
Pearl millet	15-20
Crabgrass	4-6

†A small amount of crabgrass, 2-3 lb/A, can be seeded with the taller growing summer annual species to fill in thin spots in the stand that may develop

reducing unwanted weed competition.

- *Plant after soil warms.* For summer annual grasses to germinate and rapidly emerge, soil temperatures at planting should be at least 60 degrees F. This should allow plenty of time to let hay feeding areas dry out and to get them smoothed up prior to planting. If there is a delay in planting the summer annuals after final tillage, it may be a good idea to do one more pass of light tillage to disturb any weed seedlings that may have germinated.
- *Control broadleaf weeds.* Once warm-season annual grasses are established, some herbicides can be applied to control summer annual broadleaf weeds. If cool-season perennials are to follow in the fall, make sure and check the label for reseeding restrictions prior to application. Always consult and follow label directions. For more information on

using herbicides on summer annual grasses, contact your local extension agent.

- *Grazing summer annual grasses.* Allow taller growing summer annuals like sorghum-sudangrass and pearl millet to reach a height of 18-24 inches before grazing and stop grazing at 8-10 inches. Regrowth can be stimulated by applying 40-60 lb N/A after each grazing but the last. Crabgrass can be grazed once it reaches a height of 6 to 8 inches. Cattle should be pulled off once it has been grazed to a height of 3 to 4 inches. Detailed management recommendations on for individual summer annual species can be found in AGR-229, Warm Season Annual Grasses in Kentucky.
- *Haying summer annual grasses.* Allow taller growing summer annuals to reach a height of 30 to 40 inches before mowing. This will optimize yield and forage quality. If regrowth is desired, do not mow closer than 6 inches. Apply 40 to 60 lb N/A after each cutting, but the last. Crabgrass should be cut for hay at the late boot-stage. Care should be taken to not mow crabgrass closer than 3 to 4 inches. With the taller, thicker stemmed species, a crimping mower-conditioner will help the crop dry to safe baling moistures, although this may take some time. Ideally, summer annuals should be conserved as chopped silage or baleage.
- *Reseeding cool-season grasses in the fall.* Pastures with summer annuals should be sprayed with a non-selective herbicide in late summer to control any remaining summer annual grass and any weeds that have germinated. Use a no-till drill to plant cool-season grasses into the killed pasture area. More information on forage establishment can be found in AGR- 64: Establishing Forage Crops.

For more information on renovating pastures and no-till seeding techniques visit UK Forage Extension website at <http://forages.ca.uky.edu/> or contact your local extension office.

BEGINNING GRAZING SCHOOL

The U.K. College of Agriculture is offering their update grazing school again this year, but this program will focus on grazing for beginners. The program has been overhauled to better meet the needs of producers not as comfortable with controlled grazing practices.

The program will be held April 30 & May 1 at the Central Presbyterian Church in Princeton. The mornings

will be dedicated to classroom sessions, then after lunch you will go out to the field for hands-on activities.

Some of the topics to be covered include:

- Getting the stocking rate right
- Forage plant growth and grazing management
- Forage species
- Meeting the nutritional needs of grazing livestock
- Rejuvenating run-down pasture
- And many more

The registration deadline is April 23rd, with the registration costing \$60 per participant. This covers all materials, grazing manual, grazing stick, refreshments and lunch both days. You can register at <https://Spring2024GrazingSchool.eventbrite.com>

UPCOMING Events

- April 25 – Ky. Fencing School; Graves Co. Extension Office, Mayfield; 8:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m.
- April 30 – May 1 - Beginning Grazing School; Central Presbyterian Church; Princeton; 8:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. each day