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## Management tips for drought-stressed forages

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## “Insuring Iowa’s Agriculture” workshop set for Nov. 5

by William Edwards, extension economist, 515-294-6161, wedwards@iastate.edu

Are you interested in the latest innovations in crop insurance? A one-day workshop for crop insurance providers and users will be held Nov. 5, 2012, at the Scheman Building on the Iowa State University campus in Ames. The leadoff topic is the APH trend adjustment, led by Dr. Gary Schnitkey, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois. The premium rerating process will be discussed by Dr. Bruce Sherrick, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois. That will be followed by production records and reviews, led by Michael Sieben, senior vice president, National Crop Insurance Services.

In the afternoon, Tim Davis, Product Standards and Administration Division, RMA, will cover the High Risk Alternative Coverage Endorsement (HR-ACE). Dr. Roger Elmore and Dr. Andy Lensen, extension crop production specialists with the

Department of Agronomy at Iowa State will discuss the recommended corn and soybean practices following a drought. They will be followed by Dr. Charles Hurburgh, ISU Extension grain quality specialist, discussing the grain quality considerations for 2012. To wrap up, Chad Hart, ISU Extension economist, will show the implications for crop insurance from the proposed 2012 Farm Bill.

The workshop has been approved for six hours of continuing education credit for crop insurance professionals. The registration fee is \$100 before Oct. 29 and \$110 after that date. Registration is from 8-9 a.m. with the conclusion of the sessions at 4 p.m. The workshop will also include lunch with one of the Cyclone coaches and displays from the major crop insurance companies in Iowa.

Register now at <http://www.uccs.iastate.edu/mnet/insuringiowasag/home.html>, or call 515-294-6222.

## Management tips for drought-stressed forages

By Stephen K. Barnhart, professor, Department of Agronomy, (515) 294-7835, sbarnhar@iastate.edu

The Midwest has seen some of the most extreme drought conditions of recent memory. Some rain has come recently for most of this area, but not enough for most of us to feel comfortable. Pastures may still be in poor condition. Many hayfields are showing enough recovery to maybe yield at least one more cutting. Regionally, hay supplies are tight and prices are high. Forage management considerations are many. Here are some things to think about as you prioritize your options.

### Hay and pastures

The goal is to help keep perennial forage plants ‘perennial.’ During the fall weeks, perennial forage legumes and grasses respond to shortening days and cooling average daily temperatures and progress through their gradual “cold hardening” process. The genetics of the variety and local

climatic conditions determine how cold tolerant the plant crown and taproot can be during the winter months. Most successfully winterhardened perennial forage legumes and grasses can withstand soil temperatures in the crown area to about 0-4°F without crown tissue damage. At lower soil and crown temperatures, varieties and individual plants will vary in the degree of cold damage they may experience.

To best acquire their potential for winter survival, these forage plants should get five to six weeks of uninterrupted growth to accumulate root carbohydrates and proteins before going dormant for the winter. A ‘killing freeze’ is about 23-24°F for several hours. Then, no more cutting or grazing until next season.

If you do decide to cut one more hay cutting or grazing, it is important to manage fall harvests

*continued on page 6*

Management tips for drought-stressed forages, continued from page 5

or grazings to give the plants the best chance for strong winter survival. It is best to wait until at or after the killing freeze (23-24°F) for the last hay cutting, then leave a 5- to 6-inch stubble. It is not recommended to take a late season harvest from a new (2012) seeding.

The same goes for late season growth management of pastures. Try to allow three to four weeks of fall recovery before a killing freeze, and then, if you are going to graze again, leave an average of 3 inches or so of lower stem bases on the grasses.

The practical problem with these management strategies is that it involves removing livestock from pasture. And no more hay harvest – in an already hay shortage season. I can't decide what is most important for you.

### Fertilization

Fall is a good time to soil test and fertilize both hay and pastures with needed potassium (K) and phosphorus (P). This will help drought-stressed forage stands to overwinter and improve regrowth and yields next spring. Applying 25 to 40 lbs of nitrogen to grass pastures during the last few

weeks of their fall growth will aid in stimulating more fall tillering (branching) and for more vigorous recovery in the spring.

Give recovering hay and pasture stands time to 'catch up' or regain more vigor next spring.

If fall recovery was not favorable, or you did cut or graze late in the season in 2012, the recovering forage plant may still be under some physiological stress. Hay and pasture plants will benefit from allowing a bit more recovery and growing time next spring before they are cut or grazed. For best 'recovery management,' delay the first cut of alfalfa stands until they reach early- to mid-bloom. For pastures, allow 3 to 4 inches of growth in the spring before livestock turnout.

### Repairing and reseeded

Consider 'interseeding' or 'frostseeding' drought-thinned pastures next late winter or early spring. Frostseeding is the broadcasting of legumes or additional grass seed in late winter when the last few weeks of night-freeze and daytime-thaw aids in seed coverage. Interseeding is using a drill to no-till legumes or forage grasses into an existing sod. Spring interseeding dates are mid-March through late-April.

Frostseeding works best with legumes on the thinnest, least competitive sod areas. Grasses are generally more effectively established with interseeding than with frostseeding. With both frostseeding and interseeding, having the existing pasture sod grazed closely (like many of our pastures following the summer drought stresses) reduces early season competition. Further competition for shade, sunlight and soil moisture can be reduced by timely and thoughtful rotational grazing for the first few months of new seedling establishment. For more details, see these ISU Extension and Outreach publications: Pm-856, Improving Pasture by Frost Seeding, and Pm-1097, Interseeding and No-till Pasture Renovation.

Updates, continued from page 1

#### Internet Updates

The following information files have been added or updated on [www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm).

**July Corn Basis** – A2-43 (12 pages)

**July Soybean Basis** – A2-44 (12 pages)

#### Current Profitability

The following tools have been updated on [www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/info/outlook.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/info/outlook.html).

**Corn Profitability** – A1-85

**Soybean Profitability** – A1-86

**Iowa Cash Corn and Soybean Prices** – A2-11

**Season Average Price Calculator** – A2-15

**Ethanol Profitability** – D1-10

**Biodiesel Profitability** – D1-15

**Returns for Farrow-to-Finish** – B1-30

**Returns for Weaned Pigs** – B1-33

**Returns for Steer Calves** – B1-35

**Returns for Yearling Steers** – B1-35

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