Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities
Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities

Capital Area Ag Report
August 28, 2014

“We often discover what we will do, by finding out what will not do; and probably he who never made a mistake never made a discovery.” - Samuel Smiles

Announcements
The “Ag Exchange” – Boosting Business for Local Agriculture

Now open, the “Ag Exchange” (http://agechange.cce.cornell.edu/) by Cornell Cooperative Extension (http://ccecapiroleon.org) is a new and simple online agricultural classified service and ag business directory. Through this one exchange farmers in the mid- and upper Hudson Valley will be able to buy, sell, or rent any agriculture-related product or service. Property owners will also benefit since it includes land and facilities rental. It is not for retail sales. The Ag Exchange classified is designed to facilitate wholesale business among our traditional dairy, beef, field crop, fruit or vegetable farms, bees and maple, as well as the new and developing farms involved in brewing, distilling, artisan products, organic production, and non-GMO animal feeds.

The Ag Business Directory portion is provided for commercial ag businesses to list their contact information and a link to their website. Along with our traditional machinery and feed dealers, smaller businesses, from hoof trimming to fencing, can also be listed to advertise their products and services. Businesses are asked to make an annual donation to support CCE and the Ag Exchange and to link the CCE regional website to their homepage.

The Ag Exchange is an easy to use, blog-based system. No password is required and you do not have to create any “accounts”. To look for a product or service, simply click on the category you want. To post an ad onto the Exchange, simply read the “terms of use for the Ag Exchange”; click on the button “Post Ad”; select the county you are from; select the category for your ad; and enter the appropriate information. You can also post images of your item. Before your classified or directory listing is posted to the web, you will receive an email to confirm you are the person making the post to the Ag Exchange. It is very

The NYS IPM Weekly field Crops Pest Report is at http://blogs.cornell.edu/ipmwp/
Local agriculture is very active. Many farmers have been asking for a service like the Ag Exchange. It may include other regions of New York beyond the mid- and upper Hudson Valley once it gets established. It will be a great boost for all farms in the local agricultural community. To use the Ag Exchange, simply go to (http://agexchange.cce.cornell.edu/). If you have questions or comments, please contact Aaron Gabriel, (adg12@cornell.edu, 518-746-2560) or Amy Sabbatis, (als77@cornell.edu, 518-668-4881).

**FYI**

**Disaster planning and preparedness** can be your lifeline to staying in business. With proper education, planning, testing and disaster assistance, you will be able to stay in business through any interruption and beyond. **The SBA and Agility Recovery will host a series of four webinars each Wednesday in September, which will highlight specific actions business owners can take to build a solid emergency preparedness plan. Head over to PrepareMyBusiness.org to check out the detailed list of webinars and to register for this important and informational sessions.**

**Weekly Harvest newsletter** from the Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural America is at https://attra.ncat.org/newsletter/archives.html#wh. In this week’s issue find the following articles:

- **USDA Now Providing Local & Regional Market News Data** USDA Market News has created a new series of market reports on locally or regionally produced agricultural products, available on the Local & Regional Food Marketing Information Web page. Three categories are now online: Farmers Markets reports, Farmers Auctions reports, and Direct to Consumer reports. USDA Market News is also developing Farm-to-School, Food Hub,
Retail reports.

- **Report Details Business Opportunities Arising from Cover Crops** A report from the National Wildlife Federation, *The Growing Business of Cover Crops*, details new business opportunities arising from a resurgence in use of cover crops. As more farmers begin using cover crops, they will need support businesses to provide them with services such as crop advising, seed production and sales, planting, and livestock grazing. Cover crop entrepreneurs can both make a living and contribute to the health of local economies.

**Pasture:** I had an interesting development with heifers grazing my pastures this week. I noticed one of the ten, not sticking with the group. When I looked at it, its right hind foot was swollen. I looked at the others and one more had a swollen right rear foot. It is swollen from the hoof and up about eight inches. There is a small open lesion at the bottom. These symptoms are characteristic of “fescue foot”, caused by the alkaloid chemicals in native tall fescue. (related to LSD, the psychodelic drug). They cause blood vessel constriction and edema in the foot, as well as abortions. I have a little tall fescue in my pasture (maybe 5%), but it is mostly native meadow fescue, which is not supposed to have the harmful alkaloids. After talking with a veterinarian (who works for CCE), he suggested that it was ergot poisoning. Developing grass seeds can be infected by a fungus that produces similar harmful alkaloids. A black ergot (looks like a mouse terd) fills in where the seed would have been on the seed head. It just so happened, that despite my fence work (blood and sweat), the heifers were pushing through on length of fence. So, I had to keep them out of that paddock until I added an offset electric wire. So, that paddock got some very mature pasture that was headed out. I thought, great, the heifers will do the mob grazing type-thing and trample the crummy forage back into the soil. Which they did, and it is growing back nicely. But the price paid, it seems, is that they took in the ergots, in the old grass and now have some serious effects.

The remedy, is to take the livestock off of the pasture and give them time. We will have to consult a local vet, to see if there is any medicine or other thing we can do to promote healing.

Lesson to be learned. Be sure livestock are not grazing tall fescue. An identification guide is at [http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/a3637.pdf](http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/a3637.pdf). Look for “black seeds” or ergots in the seed heads of mature pasture. Another sign that livestock have fescue or ergot poisoning is that they will stand in water, trying to cool off. They will be hot and try to cool off by breathing hard. Their body temperature will be a degree or two above normal.

Tall fescue has a strong clump habit. The leaves are shiny underneath and ribbed on the top surface. Where the leaf blade meets the leaf sheath is a broad collar that has “auricles that wrap around the emerging leaf blade (which is rolled). These auricles have small hairs on the outer edge (use a magnifying glass to see them). Meadow fescue does not have hairs. Tall fescue identification (meadow fescue has no hairs on the short-rounded auricles and has a larger ligule)
not have strong solid clumps. The leaves (1/8—3/16th inch wide) are more slender than tall fescue, and there are no hairs on the auricles. I know that is a little technical, but that is what you need to know to distinguish the two.

**Corn:** I just want to repeat that whole plant moisture at harvest has a huge impact on silage quality. It should be between 65% and 68% moisture. Chop some plants and dry them down in your microwave oven to get a moisture measurement (see last week’s Ag Report for the microwave method). Foliar diseases are out there to varying degrees. Only apply fungicides if you really need to. Diseases are very good at developing resistance to fungicides. The less we use them, the longer they will be effective.

**Alfalfa:** It is probably good that corn harvest begins in September, because alfalfa now needs a long rest before a hard freeze. Evaluate alfalfa fields to see if they will need to be rotated to a different crop (or treated like a grass) in 2015. Any corn field that will be alfalfa in 2015, should have had lime already to bring the pH up to 7.0 for seeding. Apply lime whenever the ground is hard to support heavy trucks.

**Small Grains:** Winter triticale should be planted the first half of September for the best forage yields. Plant 1 1/2” deep. Apply 30 lbs nitrogen. For any winter grain (and for other cover crops or winter forage crops) depth of planting is very important to get good winter survival. Red or ladino clover can be under-seeded in early September to produce forage in 2015 after the small grain harvest.

Do not plant wheat until after mid-September to avoid the Hessian fly and also aphids. Aphids transmit viruses (barley yellow dwarf and cereal yellow dwarf viruses) to winter grains when they are planted too early.

You will find the Cornell Small Grain Variety Trial results at: [http://plbrgen.cals.cornell.edu/research-extension/small-grains/cultivar-testing](http://plbrgen.cals.cornell.edu/research-extension/small-grains/cultivar-testing).

**Notes from the “Soil Health Workshop”** put on by Ashley Pierce, CCE Renss Co.

Cover crops and winter forages play an important role in soil health. Always having living roots in the soil is necessary to maintain important soil microbe populations. Winter annuals (rye, triticale, vetch, clovers, summer-sown forages) fill that roll in our region. Another key to soil health is to always keep the soil surface covered. Crop residue, a low growing plant (white clover sown before row crop harvest), sod crops, all protect the soil surface from the sun and the impact of rain. They keep valuable soil in the field by preventing erosion.

A key to keeping manure in the field and not leaching into tile drainage lines, is to keep the manure thick and apply it no more than 1 1/2” deep. Keeping manure (and the nutrients) on the field is a real challenge. We have a big environmental impact when manure leaves the field. We can not ignore this.

**Roots reaching into the slot created by a zone-builder set at 12”**.
Notes from the Valatie Research Farm Field Day:

Sorghum was a big topic. There are many types of sorghum and there is a ton of plant breeding happening to provide varieties that are highly digestible, high-yielding, and the proper moisture for silage harvest. Sorghum performs better than corn in dry soils. It should not replace all corn, but where corn does not perform, sorghum may be appropriate.

There is now one-harvest, BMR (brown mid-rib) forage sorghum. BMR varieties have less lignin and are more digestible. The seeds are produced on the tassel. Seeds mature from the top of the tassel to the bottom. When mature, the seeds are super hard and indigestible. So, harvest forage sorghum when the oldest grain (at the top) is in the soft dough stage. At the soft dough stage, the whole plant moisture should be ready for silage, 65% to 68%.

An older Cornell publication recommends that silage inoculants not be used. Sorghums have a lot of sugar in the stalks. However, a hetero-fermentive inoculant may be appropriate depending on your feed out situation. If you need extra stability at feed out (silage will be removed from storage and transported, or fed out over a couple of days), then this type of inoculant may be justified.

Red Clover was another hot topic at the field day. It has a better quality protein than alfalfa (less soluble), and when mowed into a wide swath, can be wilted quickly for haylage. It makes a great rotation for getting back into a corn crop quickly.

How could you go to the Valatie Research Farm and not talk about triticale? When treated like a crop, rather than a cover crop, triticale can produce two or more tons of dry matter per acre by mid-May. It needs to be planted in early September at 1 1/2” deep. Apply 30 lbs of nitrogen in the fall. It is a robust plant, that is shorter than rye, but can out-yield it. Of course if you can not plant until October, rye will make a decent crop as well.

Sorghum roots are very fibrous and very efficient at taking up nutrients. 200 lbs/acre of nitrogen spurred maturity but not yield.