

POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

February 15, 2022



*An eNewsletter by the Rich Mountain
Conservation District*

If you did not plant winter, annual small grains for spring forage in the fall last year, there are not many opportunities remaining to produce forage for grazing or hay. The last remaining option to consider is spring-planted oats. Oats can be planted in early spring for pasture or hay. There are risks associated with this strategy, mainly due to weather and diseases. However, spring oats can be productive and are an option to increase a deficient spring forage supply.

Spring-planted Oat for Grazing or Hay Production

Source: Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
(Publication PSS-2160), June 2017
([Spring-Planted Oat for Grazing or Hay Production | Oklahoma State University \(okstate.edu\)](#))

Seasonal droughts are normal in the southern Great Plains. Droughts occurring during the fall and winter can be especially disruptive of a usually predictable supply of forage wheat. The two most common effects of drought are decreased forage availability for spring grazing and limited hay supplies. When wheat pasture fails due to drought, there are limited opportunities to recover lost forage production. The best option to offset forage losses from wheat pasture is spring-planted oat.

Oat can be planted in late winter through early spring for use as forage or hay and offer some help for increasing a short forage supply. However, this option can be somewhat expensive with substantial risk involved due to weather, insects and diseases. The most successful spring plantings occur when oat is drill-planted on a prepared seedbed and managed accordingly.

Currently, there is not a wide selection of oat varieties available. In Oklahoma, those varieties adapted for use in the southern U.S. are preferable to northern U.S. varieties. However, nearly all of the available oat seed is produced in the northern U.S. Feed oat has been successfully used and can provide excellent nutrition for many types of livestock. However, many of these have not been tested as seed oat and may contain weed seeds (noxious weed seeds in particular), have unknown seed germination and/or foreign material. Feed oat sources are usually relatively cheap, but they are rarely a wise purchase. In Oklahoma, seed law requires that seed being sold for planting purposes have a tag with a recent test result for germination, weed seed and foreign material.

Planting date and rate

The window for spring-planted oat is between February 15 and March 10. If dry weather and above freezing temperatures occur in late January and early February, the planting date can be shifted closer to February 15. However, if conditions are wet and cold during late January and early February, then planting may be delayed until early March. For best

results, oat should be drill-planted on a conventionally tilled seedbed at a seeding rate of 80 to 100 pounds of seed per acre.

Seeding depth can be as deep as 1½ inches, but a depth of only ½ to ¾ inch will increase the rate of emergence, establishment and forage production potential. If oat is being considered for failed wheat pasture, no-till planting should be successful as long as there is a minimal amount of residue. Seeding depth remains at ½ to ¾ inch. Forage production potential from a spring-planted oat crop will average 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of forage per acre. Based on the forage production of spring-planted oat, N fertilizer at a rate of 40 to 60 pounds actual N per acre should be applied after establishment, However, less nitrogen may be applied if the field was previously fertilized for wheat production. If the wheat crop failed, a good portion of the applied nitrogen might still be present in the soil and available for the oats.

Forage management

Spring-planted winter oat varieties will normally yield less forage than fall-seeded winter wheat. This happens because most spring-planted oat will produce a single stem rather than several tillers after emergence. Fewer tillers result in slow forage growth during early spring and less regrowth after defoliation either by grazing or haying. For this reason, spring-planted oats need careful grazing management for achieving successful forage production.

Grazing

Begin grazing when plants reach 6 to 8 inches tall. At this point, the stems have begun to elongate and will provide an adequate amount of forage for grazing. Keep in mind that grazing during this time will remove the reproductive points, not allowing plants to mature, but maintaining forage production for a longer period. Stop grazing when plants are 2 to 3 inches tall. The remaining 2 to 3 inches of green leaf tissue and stems are essential for pasture recovery if conditions allow. Consider rotational grazing with other pastures as to not overgraze the system. Doing this will ensure pastures will always be available with good forage availability, and it eliminates overgrazing of a single area.

Spring-planted oat matures quite rapidly once the spring temperatures begin warming. Each acre of spring-planted oat should provide between 35 and 60 days of grazing for mature cattle. Growing animals (750 pounds) can be stocked at approximately 1.5 animals per acre for 60 days. For more information on stocking rate, access fact sheet PSS-2871, *Stocking rate: The key to Successful Livestock Production*.

Hay production

Spring-planted oats harvested for hay should be cut at early heading. Once the seedheads begin to emerge, there will be no appreciable increase in forage yield. Likewise, once the seedheads begin to emerge, a substantial decrease in nutritive value occurs, due to the accumulation of stem tissue and also leaf loss. If harvested for hay, delaying harvest until early heading will maximize yield for that production method.

Finally, do not consider spring-planted oat to be the fool-proof solution to remedy a short forage supply. There are potential risks involved due to weather, insects and diseases. With planning and a little luck, a spring-planted oat crop may add some additional forage to an already short or non-existent forage supply.

Keys for successful forage spring oat production

- Seed quality is crucial. A minimum germination of no less than 85 percent will ensure an adequate stand with reasonable growing conditions.
- Do not cut back on seeding rate. Because spring-planted oat forms a single stem with minimal tillering, it is necessary to have a high plant population.
- Apply 40 to 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre after establishment. An additional 30 pounds of nitrogen per acre can be applied after grazing, if conditions allow. Nitrogen amounts can also be reduced if there is carryover from the failed wheat crop.
- Plan a grazing strategy to allow plants to recover. Start grazing when plants reach 6 to 8 inches in height. Stop grazing when plants are 2 to

3 inches tall. Allowing plants to recover will increase overall forage production during spring and early summer.

- When harvested for hay, cut at early heading to optimize yield and quality.



When grazing spring oats, try to maintain grazing heights between 2" and 8" to keep the plants in a vegetative state. Once the seedheads begin to form, there is very little increase in forage growth and a decrease in nutritional value.

"Take Care of the Land and the Land will Take Care of You"

LOOK -----> The Rich Mountain Conservation District conducted our annual Poultry Producer Workshop on February 7th, 2022.

Local poultry producers were treated to a chili supper and some information about converting poultry houses to solar electricity. The main speaker was Mena native, Colton Hendricks, who is a rep from USA Solar. Matt and Jessica Debnar, who have already converted their poultry farm to solar power, also spoke about their experiences. Steve Swall, with the USDA/NRCS office at Mena discussed grant programs available from USDA to make the poultry farm more energy efficient.

A **big thank you!** from RMCD to all of the sponsors that allowed us to put on this meeting:

- **Diamond Bank**
 - **Polk County Farm Bureau**
 - **Farm Credit of Western Arkansas**
 - **First Financial Bank**
 - **Polk County Farmers Co-Op**
 - **Union Bank of Mena**
 - **Rich Mountain Electric Cooperative**
 - **Tyson Foods**
 - **James' Supersave Foods**
 - **Arvest Bank**
 - **Walmart**
 - **Shelter Insurance -Kenny Miller**
-

Upcoming Grazing Meetings and Seminars:

⇒ **TODAY! February 15, 2022 – How Dung Beetles Improve Pastures (1PM—online seminar)**

You are invited to attend the weekly grazing training sessions by Jeremy Huff, the USDA/NRCS state grazing specialist. He offers these training sessions as a Zoom meeting and the instructions for logging in are included in attached flyer. If you have the Zoom app on your phone you can just scan the QR code on the flyer. If you want to watch the presentation on your computer there is a link included in the attachment. The sessions are normally every Tuesday at 1pm so **see the attached flyer.**

⇒ **February 18-19, 2022 – Ark-La-Tex Regenerative Agriculture Conference (Texarkana, Texas)**

This is a 2 day conference and Greg Judy will be a speaker. For more information visit their website at: [2022 Conference | Ark-La-Tex-Regenerative Agriculture \(arklatexregenerativeag.com\)](https://arklatexregenerativeag.com), email: john@arklatexregenerativeag.com, or call: (903)650-7126.

⇒ **February 22, 2022 – Native Warm Season Grass Prescribed Burn Demonstration (1PM—online seminar)**

Next week's grazing training session provided by Jeremy Huff. See the attached flyer.

⇒ **February 22, 2022 - Arkansas Forage and Grassland Council Winter Forage Conference (9AM-El Paso, Arkansas)**

Topics include: Stretching out Ryegrass, Successful Crabgrass Establishment, Filling Forage Gaps to Fix a Short Hay Supply. Call 501-671-2171. Please see attached Flyer for more information.

⇒ **March 2, 3, 4, 2022 - Arkansas Grazing Lands Coalition Annual Conference (3 locations: March 2nd @ Hope, March 3rd @**

Dardanelle, March 4th @ Batesville) Topics include: Developing Grazing Systems, Practical Grazing Applications for Enhanced Marketing Programs, Mimicking Natural Ecosystems for Multi-Species Grazing. Visit the AGLC website at (www.ARGrazinglandscoalition.org) or call 501-944-7310. Please see attached Flyer for more information.

⇒ **The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)** is a national organization started in 1976 to provide sustainable agriculture technology information to small farmers. Their events page includes many online and in-person agriculture training events from around the country: www.ncat.org/events/. Here is also a link to their very popular sustainable agriculture training program for military veterans: www.armedtofarm.org.

**Rich Mountain
Conservation
District**

Email:

richmountainconservation@gmail.com

Web: www.rmcd.org

Phone: (479)437-6054

Mail: 508 7th Street, Mena, AR 71953



DID YOU KNOW?

**Archived copies of the "POLK COUNTY
GRAZIER" are now available on the Rich
Mtn. Conservation District website at:
[Publications - Rich Mountain Conservation
District \(rmcd.org\)](http://Publications-RichMountainConservationDistrict.rmcd.org)**

Sent on behalf of the Rich Mtn Conservation District.
Thanks for your interest in grazing management and
conservation,

Steve Swall

District Conservationist

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mena Service Center (Polk & Montgomery Counties)

(479)437-6054

*Please reply to unsubscribe if you do not wish to receive this
newsletter.*

Learn about

PASTURE TOPICS WITH US



- ➔ **MORE
KNOWLEDGE**
- ➔ **IMPROVED
DECISIONS**
- ➔ **BETTER
GRAZING**

Expect to Learn:

- ✓ What are the plants with purple flowers that are present in February and March?
- ✓ What factors influence hay usage efficiency?
- ✓ How do you identify dung beetles?
- ✓ What to expect when burning native warm season grasses?

**Want to Join via
Cell Phone?**



Zoom
Meeting ID: 849 6722 2851
Passcode: 214794

**Want to Join
via Computer?**



[Click
Here to
Join](#)

**February 1, 2022
1:00 pm CST**

Cool Season Weed
Identification

Presenter: Greg Watkins,
AR NRCS NW Area
Grassland Specialist

**February 8, 2022
1:00 pm CST**

Hay Feeding Strategies
Demonstration

Presenter: Jeremy Huff,
AR NRCS State Grazing Lands
Specialist

**February 15, 2022
1:00 pm CST**

How Dung Beetles Improve
Pastures

Presenter: Xavier Price, AR
NRCS NW Area Grassland
Specialist

**February 22, 2021
1:00 pm CST**

NWSG Prescribed Burn
Demonstration

Presenter: Steve Haller, Acting
PMC Manager & Jeremy Huff,
AR NRCS State Grazing Lands
Specialist

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Employer,
Lender, and Provider

Questions or Comments:

Contact Jeremy Huff at jeremy.huff@usda.gov or (501) 413-0527 (Text or Call)

Take a Video Farm Tour!!



Winter Forage Conference and Video Farm Tour

Tuesday, February 22, 2022 – 9:00 a.m.
Crossroads Cowboy Church, El Paso, AR

•Video Farms Tours:

- Stretching out ryegrass
- Successful crabgrass establishment
- Reducing risk for early fall interseedings
- Filling forage gaps to fix a short hay supply
- How I manage forages after selling my hay equipment

•Plus new research:

- Field tests of nitrogen fertilizer products
- Results of spring planting dates for oats
- Outlook on fertilizer prices

\$25/person and \$ 10/student

*For more info or to pre-register for lunch, call Linda McCargo at 501-671-2171
Registration can be paid at the door by cash, credit or debit card, or check*

Location: *The Crossroads Cowboy Church is located at 3071 Arkansas 5, El Paso, AR 72045. To reach the church, take Hwy 64 from Conway or Beebe to El Paso, turn north on Hwy 5 for ¼ mile. The Church is on the right.*



Take a Video Farm Tour!!



Winter Forage Conference and Video Farm Tour

Tuesday, February 22, 2022 – 9:00 a.m.
Crossroads Cowboy Church, El Paso, AR

•Video Farms Tours:

- Stretching out ryegrass
- Successful crabgrass establishment
- Reducing risk for early fall interseedings
- Filling forage gaps to fix a short hay supply
- How I manage forages after selling my hay equipment

•Plus new research:

- Field tests of nitrogen fertilizer products
- Results of spring planting dates for oats
- Outlook on fertilizer prices

\$25/person and \$ 10/student

*For more info or to pre-register for lunch, call Linda McCargo at 501-671-2171
Registration can be paid at the door by cash, credit or debit card, or check*

Location: *The Crossroads Cowboy Church is located at 3071 Arkansas 5, El Paso, AR 72045. To reach the church, take Hwy 64 from Conway or Beebe to El Paso, turn north on Hwy 5 for ¼ mile. The Church is on the right.*

