

Genetics, Cow Pastures And Animal Husbandry

BENTONVILLE, ARK.

Nearly six decades ago, a young man came home to the Ozarks from his tour of duty in Korea. Tired in body and spirit, one item used to maintain enthusiasm was provided by a Georgia buddy who told him about Coastal Bermuda grass.

The first Bermuda hybrid, Coastal served to unite the efforts of agronomist, animal, soil and other scientists from around the world, providing a phenomenal spark in research that continues today.

The inheritance of his Granddad's hill farm and a new bride occupied most of his time, but the goal of establishing an abundant field of green remained. As was common at the time, most families had a milk cow and small pasture, but excellent spring growth would soon turn brown under summer's heat, causing a loss of forage and milk production.

A trip that spring to the county seat provided an opportunity to visit the old County Agent who had known the family for years. Sharing his thoughts and in search of ideas on how best to accomplish his goal, the young man waited patiently as this sage of farm, family and community information quietly contemplated.

"Son," the agent finally replied, "I hate to bust your bubble, but Coastal Bermuda simply won't tolerate our cold winters. We've had a lot of time and money wasted on it already. Right now,

we're hamstrung as far as having access to a grass with that kind of potential." He watched as the young man's reaction indicated that a long-time dream had evaporated.

In an effort to provide something worthwhile, the agent suggested, "Son, for now, just go down to the farm store and get a couple pounds of Bermuda seed. Every morning and evening when you get your cow up for the milking, mix a tablespoon in with her sweet feed. That way she'll do the seeding for you, and in a couple of years you'll have a fair amount of Bermuda in that pasture."

A dejected look on his face, the young man got up to leave, commenting, "Well, I really wanted to get it done a little faster than that!" Recognizing his disappointment, the agent quickly reacted, "Now hold on! Sit back down and let me think on this a minute."

Finally breaking the silence after considering the effect of lush, spring pasture on a cow's digestive system, the agent advised, "I tell you what, buy the seed like I suggested, but this evening you mix it all in with her feed. After the morning milking when you get ready to turn the cow out to pasture, just sic the dogs on her!" Til next week! Δ

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