

Mark Your Calendar For The Illinois Forage Expo

URBANA, ILL.

Forage producers should plan to attend the 2011 Illinois Forage Expo on Thursday, July 21, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the University of Illinois Dixon Springs Agricultural Center in Pope County.

Attendees will learn about the latest research findings in forage management through educational sessions and field demonstrations of forage harvesting equipment.

Ron Atherton of Agri-King will give an educational presentation on hay and forage sampling. Richard Hungerford of the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources and Conservation Service will inform producers about warm season grasses. Tips for feeding and storage of hay and forages will be presented by Dan Faulkner of the University of Illinois Extension. An annual warm-season grasses plot tour will conclude the education presentations.

"The Illinois Forage Expo is the only field day in the state that is solely focused on forage production and includes equipment field demonstrations," Extension Educator Dale Braid said. "The field demonstrations are always a big draw for forage producers."

The field demonstrations will highlight mowing, raking, tedding, baling and more. In addition, forage-related products and equipment will be on display.

Forage producers are encouraged to enter 2011 harvested bales and haylage into the Quality Hay and Haylage Contest. The contest includes one haylage class and four hay classes: alfalfa, grass, alfalfa-grass mix, and other.

There are no entry fees and competitors will receive a free of charge near infrared spec-

troscopy (NIRS) analysis. Additionally, class winners will receive a certificate.

"Visual analysis is an educated guess while NIRS, more commonly known as NIR analysis, is a quantitative measurement of forage quality," Braid said. "NIRS provides a nutrient analysis of crude protein, digestible protein, total digestible nutrients, acid detergent fiber, neutral detergent fiber and several other quantitative measurements."

These measurements are used to calculate the relative feed quality (RFQ) of the sample. Producers can compare the feeding quality one hay lot to another using the RFQ values.

Entries must be delivered on-site between 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Bales weighing more than 100 pounds will need an official scale weigh ticket. For more information about the contest, interested producers can contact Atherton at 815-622-2734 or ron.atherton@agriking.com.

The event is co-sponsored by the Illinois Forage and Grassland Council and U of I Extension. Additionally, the event is supported by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area.

The Dixon Springs Agricultural Center is located on Illinois Route 145. It is roughly 25 mile south of Harrisburg, Ill., 15 miles east of Vienna, Ill., and 25 miles north of Paducah, Ky.

For information concerning the Illinois Forage Expo, visit <http://www.illinoisforage.org/>. Those interested in exhibiting a commercial display should contact Dave Gentry, GROWMARK, Inc., P.O. Box 2500, Bloomington, IL 61702-2500, phone 309-557-6397. Δ