

# Model Cattle Farm Demonstrates '300 Days Of Grazing' System

**BATESVILLE, ARK.**

A model cattle farm at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville demonstrates how producers can manage pastures to reduce the feeding of hay.

The model farm project, called "300 Days of Grazing," was the topic of an April 21 field day at the research station. It demonstrates practices that can increase profitability, said Keith Lusby, head of the division's animal science department. The department conducts research

a-half hours a day."

Many producers have contacted him about the model farm, Hubbell said, and the field day crowd of about 100 persons was more than the usual turnout.

With three months remaining in the first year, the model farm was on target to return a small profit from its first crop of 38 calves, said Professor Tom Troxel, extension animal scientist. Future years should be more profitable since some startup expenditures will not be repeated, he said.

The model farm focuses on forage manage-



**Dirk Philipp, Assistant Professor of Animal Science, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, discusses a project to evaluate legume forage types during a field day tour of research plots recently at the Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville.**

and extension programs and the academic program for the animal science major in Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences on the Fayetteville campus.

"Producers are welcome to stop by any time to see what we are doing on the model farm," said Don Hubbell, director of the division's research station at Batesville.

The average Arkansas producer, with 35 to 37 cows, feeds hay most of the winter and at other times when pastures do not provide enough grass. Heavy use of hay and other feed supplements makes forage management less critical, Professor John Jennings, an extension animal scientist, said at the field day. But it may cut into profits, he added.

The model farm is a demonstration of practices to manage pastures and the herd so that the cattle can graze for at least 300 days a year. The system reduces expenditures for cutting, storing and feeding hay. It includes the practice of stockpiling fall pasture growth for winter grazing.

"Why 300 days?" a producer asked Jennings. He replied that feeding hay can be virtually eliminated. However, he added, "Most people don't believe you can go 365 days without feeding hay, but you can convince them they can go 300."

The model farm was started in July 2008 with 38 cows on 140 acres of fescue and bermuda-grass pastures.

"These practices will work with any size farm," Hubbell said. "It is intensive management, but most of it can be done in about one to one-and-

ment, but herd management is also important, Troxel said. Basic practices are employed to try to achieve a 90 percent calving rate and a 550 pound weaning weight.

Calving in the model farm herd occurs in September and October. Short breeding and calving seasons are needed to assure proper use of forages to match the nutritional needs of pregnant cows, Troxel said. Forage analysis determines the proper type and amounts of supplemental feed to assure a high calving rate and calf weight gain, he said.

Jennings said a key forage factor is to have a mix of cool and warm season grasses and legumes to match the local seasonal weather pattern. A system of moveable electric fencing is used to frequently rotate cattle among paddocks to prevent damaging the pastures by overgrazing.

Jennings described herd and forage management practices for each season and how to transition from one period to the next.

"Grazing 300 days a year doesn't require a long list of forages," Jennings says. "You can do it with fescue and bermuda by rotational grazing, managing fertilizer timing and stockpiling." Adding legumes and annual grasses will increase the chances for success, he said.

Information about 300 Days of Grazing and other projects is available on the Livestock and Forestry Research Station's Web site at <http://batesvillestation.org>. Results from each project year ending June 30 will be published, Hubbell said. Δ



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