Abstract

The Northeast Florida Beef and Forage Group is a multi-county collaboration of Extension Agents representing Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Madison, Nassau, Suwannee, and Union counties, in addition to Extension Specialists at the University of Florida. A major goal of this program is to coordinate Extension and Research activities for enhanced forage and cattle production in North Florida. Programs are designed and planned based on recommendations from an Advisory Committee. One program that has had success is the Annual Hay Field Day. This field day is rotated each year throughout Northeast Florida. For the past ten years this field day has averaged 85 participants per year. Topics at the field day have included: forage establishment, forage quality, herbicide updates, pesticide updates, forage yields, haylage production, soil testing, and equipment demonstrations.

Based on evaluations from the field day and post visits with the producers the following outcomes have been achieved: Fifty-percent of those in attendance understand the importance of estimating dry-matter forage availability in pastures and plan to use a simple method that was taught to assist producer in determining forage dry-matter availability. In addition, sixty-four percent of hay producers plan to make changes to their fertilization program as a result of having a better understanding of the economic returns resulting from recommended rates of N, P and K in Bermudagrass. This Annual Hay Field Day has proved to be a successful Extension educational program, with agent presentations, specialist interaction and participation, research plots, and equipment demonstrations.

Program Impacts/Results

- 64% of hay producers plan to make changes to their fertilization program as a result of having a better understanding of the economic returns resulting from recommended rates of N, P and K in Bermudagrass.
- 55% of those in attendance understand the importance of estimating dry matter forage availability in pastures and plan to start determining tonnage in their pastures using the methods presented.
- 50% of producers will start using agricultural weather websites to help reduce economic risks.
- 52% of producers will adopt establishment guidelines when establishing new hay fields.
- 34% of producers will implement soil sampling and testing to ensure that soil fertility is monitored properly. The remaining 66% reported conduct soil testing on a regular basis.
- 32% plan to plant high quality summer forages that adapt to Northeast Florida after seeing plots established at the field day site and listening to the presentation offered.

Education Activities/Teaching Methods

- 12 Hay Field Days have been conducted over Northeast Florida, reaching approximately 1200 clientele.
- Input from the Northeast Florida Beef & Forage Group Advisory Committee was used in determination of field day topics, along with collaboration with State Extension Specialists.
- Research Plots, equipment demonstrations, classroom instruction, and hands-on activities have been implemented.
- An average of 12 local agribusiness sponsors the Annual Hay Field Day and provides equipment demonstrations.
- Newspaper articles, newsletters, websites, and businesses were used as publicity.

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