

# POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

June 6, 2022



*An eNewsletter by the Rich Mountain  
Conservation District*

**Thanks to Jeremy Huff, Arkansas NRCS Grazing Specialist, for this week's article which originally appeared in the May 2022 issue of the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association magazine.**

**Click [here](#) to go to the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association web page.**

We wanted to share some thoughts from around Arkansas. Below are a series of questions asked to producers who are progressive in grazing and forage management. The intent of the article and questions is to bring different perspectives from producers around the state. There is not a right

or wrong answer nor is one response better than the other. My goal is to keep the questions open-ended and subjective to the producers' experiences. I would like to thank the producers for taking time out their schedules to provide feedback. I hope you enjoy this feature.



*Jonathon Baxter is a cow/calf producer in Independence County. He is a board member for the Independence County Conservation District and Arkansas Grazing Lands Coalition as well as being the Pastor for Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church in Bethesda, AR.*



*Matt Flynt is a cow/calf producer in Lonoke County. He is a producer-director for the American Forage and Grassland Council and a past president of the Arkansas Forage and Grassland Council.*



*LeVonna Uekman is a cow/calf producer in Faulkner County. She is a long-time grazing educator and advocate. She and her husband, Tony, have hosted many grazing field days of their farm.*

## **How have pasture conditions been on your farm so far this year?**

**Baxter:** We have had many cold rainy days that have resulted in slow grass growth. It seems like spring is slow to arrive this year.

**Flynt:** Pasture conditions on my farm so far this year have been slow to develop you might say. Seems like everything has been two to three weeks behind. I always plant a fair amount of ryegrass and cereal rye but

the performance on both have been less than what I would have normally gotten by mid march but they are really starting to get going now. I have established some novel endophyte fescue the last few years and it has done fine this winter. I am really thankful to have had it. It totes the mail and saved my bacon!!

**Uekman:** Due to the weather, the pasture seems to be 2 or so weeks behind. Our ryegrass took a big hit in the fall due to a hard freeze when the previous weather was warm and dry. Our stockpile was not as good as hoped due to the dry fall.

**Webb:** Pasture conditions here have been dryer than normal for this time of year. We are getting good green up though and started back grazing around the first of April. It hasn't been too muddy. I try to keep the cows moving and spread out (even when feeding hay) when it does rain so it doesn't get pugged so bad.

## **Fertilizer prices have remained at record high prices. Many producers are unable to justify applying fertilizer at these high prices. What are your thoughts and advice to other fellow producers?**

**Baxter:** With fertilizer being so high, this is the opportunity to look at better soil health. Focus on P.H. of soil and inter-seeding with legumes for nature's way of fertility. The more daily rotations of cattle closer together will also result in a better manure distribution. With correct grazing and rest periods the results will be healthier soils which require fewer outside inputs.

**Flynt:** As most of you know fertilizer prices lately have been so high it's all but impossible to make it pencil out. I have backed off a bit on my grazing pastures, but I think what I've always said remains true. If you went to the expense to plant it, you might as well fertilize it. Or stated differently, if you don't plan on fertilizing it, you may as well just not plant it. That may not be the situation for those of you blessed with good soil fertility, but it's

what I deal with in my low fertility part of the world. Even though prices are very high I would be careful backing off your normal fertilizing regime too much especially while we are still getting rainfall. It may even be temporarily unprofitable but in the big picture this is not the time for animal performance to slip. If you get behind in your forage program and then it turns out to be a hot, dry summer that may be a tough hole to get out of. That's why it's even more important than ever to be practicing good grazing management. You need to get good utilization of that forage you have spent high fertilizer dollars on.

**Uekman:** Our fescue/orchard grass/clover/spring weeds are growing well without any added fertility at this point. Fertility appears to be highest on pastures that we tightly strip grazed stockpiled forages this fall and winter due to good manure distribution. We also unrolled hay to supplement the stockpile, which further increased fertility. Our pastures typically get ahead of us in the spring, so we use little to no fertility at this time – no point in spending money on fertilizer if you are not able to fully utilize it. As our grasses start to transition from cool season to warm season grasses, we will assess at that time and apply fertilizer if needed. We purchase our hay, and with the expectation of high hay prices, we will use fertilizer in order to stockpile forages to extend the grazing season and reduce hay needs.

**Webb:** I have been working toward weaning our pastures off of synthetic fertilizers the past two years. We still use poultry litter since we have a poultry farm. My belief is if we can have a healthy functioning soil, our need for fertilizer decreases greatly. However, if we are removing nutrients by making hay, then we need to replace them by applying nutrients back to the pasture. This can also be done by putting livestock on the field or feeding hay back on the field. If possible, rotate our hayfields every year.

**Last year's army worm infestation throughout Arkansas caused havoc on Arkansas pastures and hayfields. What was the experience like on your farm?**

**Baxter:** We never had a problem with army worms, but the dry hot August and September made for a terrible stockpiling season. The stockpile volume was cut in more than half.

**Flynt:** Last year's army worm infestation started out being the worst and earliest I have ever experienced. I have a vast experience with army worms because a part of my operation is producing and selling high quality bermudagrass horse hay. Those tender heavily fertilized monoculture fields are a magnet for army worms. The cereal rye fields I plant early fall are as well. So, I'm used to spraying my bermuda fields 3 or more times and my cereal rye a couple times each year. However, as surprised as I was at how early they started and how bad they were, it surprised me more how early it was over. They did not heavily persist late summer and fall like usual. Overall, they were less of a problem than in most years for me.

**Uekman:** Army worms were all around us, however we did not experience problems with army worms. We think that it may be due to having very diverse pastures that were more mature and by leaving more residual forage in our pastures after grazing. Maybe we were just lucky.

**Webb:** I have sprayed for armyworms almost every year the past few years except for last year. We had armyworms but they weren't devastating the pasture. The pastures weren't heavily fertilized and being set aside for hay, which is usually where the armyworms hit. This thought goes back to my comment on healthy soil. If we can get this right, there will be things that nature takes care of without us applying inputs

## **What forage/grazing management strategies are you doing right now?**

**Baxter:** We are currently rotating the cows on two daily moves to not let the cows overgraze the plants. With grazing nothing is the same. From pasture size to natural fertility of soil, grass changes from field to field. Our goal is to keep the grass in the vegetative state as long as we can.

**Flynt:** My forage/grazing management strategies lately have been rotationally limit grazing the yearling calves on cereal rye and ryegrass and

rotating the calving cow herd through the novel fescue that I stockpiled last fall and winter. I've been on that since early February. I'm about to start rotating faster through the spring flush of more native perennials.

**Uekman:** We began our rotation in mid- March – earlier than we would have preferred since we didn't have much hay left. We rotate on at least a daily basis. Our pastures have enough growth with some paddocks having enough residual from last year to provide roughage in order to slow digestion and keep their stools from being too runny. We have also supplemented with small amounts of good square bales when needed. We try not to overgraze which slows down future growth except on some areas where we purposely overgraze in order open up the soil to sunlight and hoof action to encourage crabgrass growth. With temperatures beginning to warm and as our grass gets more mature and closer to the boot stage, we will make larger pastures and move them quickly, allowing them to top graze about one-third of the plant. Larger pastures and improved nutrition of grass will coincide and complement calving season.

**Webb:** Right now we are trying to manage the spring flush. We are spring calving right now, so we are moving cows once a day or every other day. We use electric fencing and portable fencing(reels, polywire, step in posts) to accomplish this.

## **What advice in regard to pastures would you provide to fellow producers going forward in 2022?**

**Baxter:** Keep learning and be willing to try something new. The worse mistake I always make is over complicating things. Grazing does not need to be hard. The more enjoyable the more you will want to expand it. The first years are the toughest with getting the infrastructure put in place. With everything going up in price this will be the opportunity to look at doing things differently.

**Flynt:** Going forward into 2022, my advice is to get lean and very efficient. If that's what your already doing then good job and stay the course. I know things look pretty bleak for the bottom line in our industry

right now but dig in and stay productive. If you can do that you should be able to benefit from some higher calf prices that should be coming our way.

**Uekman:** Grow as much grass as economical as possible and increase the utilization rate. Keep a cover on the soil and provide adequate rest for your forages. Plan for the season ahead. Take care of your soil and pastures and they will take care of you.

**Webb:** Learn about how soil functions. If we take care of the soil, the soil will feed the plants, and the plants will feed the livestock. Try to move livestock (rotate pastures) as frequently as possible. Allow pastures to rest. I have seen the most benefit to pastures by letting them rest. Always keep learning and be willing to try something different. Start small and build from there.

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

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# Plant of the Week

## Bahiagrass



- Bahiagrass is a perennial warm season grass native to South America brought to the United States in the 1930s.
- It has naturalized in south Arkansas and is primarily used for pasture, hay, and turf and is very drought tolerant.

- It thrives on poor shallow soils with low fertility and provides a dense sod that helps prevent weeds and erosion.
- It has good forage quality but is generally considered to be lower quality and have lower production than bermudagrass and some other summer grasses.
- It is more shade tolerant than bermudagrass and works well in a woodland pasture (silvopasture).
- It will tolerate short grazing but provides more production and better quality with rotational grazing and fertilization.
- Deer, Turkeys, and other wildlife will utilize the plant for food, especially the seed heads.
- (Bahigrass photo by University of Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service)

You can learn more about plants at the USDA – NRCS PLANTS Database ([USDA Plants Database](#)).

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## **Upcoming Grazing Meetings and Seminars:**

⇒ **June 7, 2022 – Woven Wire: Knots Matter (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**.

⇒ **June 14, 2022 – Pasture Productivity Considerations with Current Fertilizer Prices (1PM—online seminar)**

Next week's online seminar by Jeremy Huff. The sessions are normally every Tuesday at 1pm so **see the attached flyer**.

⇒ **June 20, 2022 – Wild Turkey and Bobwhite Quail Field Day Tours**

The Arkansas Game & Fish Commission has planned several field day tours around the state with one of those being near Mena on 6/20/2022 at 10 am. A flyer is attached that

show the other dates and locations around Arkansas. For more information contact the West Central Arkansas Private Lands Biologist for AGFC, Michelle Furr, at 479-478-1043 or by email at [michelle.furr@agfc.ar.gov](mailto:michelle.furr@agfc.ar.gov).

⇒ **July 29-30, 2022 – 2022 Arkansas Cattlemen’s Association Convention & Trade Show (Hot Springs, AR)**

This 2 day convention will be held at the Hot Springs Convention Center. Click here to register: [2022 ACA Convention & Trade Show | arbeef](#)

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Take a picture with your cell phone to  
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**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://rmcd.org)

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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

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newsletter.*

# The Tuesday Pasture Talk

Learn about Pasture  
Topics with us



Anyone is  
welcome to join



June 7, 2022 1:00pm CST	June 14, 2022 1:00pm CST	June 21, 2022 1:00pm CST	June 28, 2022 1:00pm CST
Woven Wire: Knots Matter	Pasture Productivity Considerations with Current Fertilizer Prices	Brush Identification in Pastures	Herbicide Sprayer Technology
Presenter: Matthew Bean, NE Area Grassland Specialist, Arkansas NRCS	Presenter: Jeremy Huff, State Grazing Lands Specialist, Arkansas NRCS	Presenter: Greg Watkins, NW Area Grazing Lands Specialist, Arkansas NRCS	Presenter: Jason Davis, Application Technologist, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

## Expect to Learn:



Learn how simple details can save livestock producers time, money, and stress when establishing woven wire.



Get back to basics with animal/forage balance, adjustments, and management tips with high fertilizer prices.



What brush species are most present in Arkansas and how to accurately identify each species.



We know herbicide sprayer calibration is important. Do you want to know further details that will improve herbicide efficacy on plants? Tune-in!

## Join by these Methods:

Direct Link:

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Meeting ID: 821  
5143 0904  
Passcode: 881222

Questions or  
Comments:

jeremy.huff@usda.gov  
or (501) 413-0527

## BAHIAGRASS

### *Paspalum notatum* Flüggé

Plant Symbol = PANO2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Center  
Golden Meadow, Louisiana



Johanna Pate  
USDA NRCS Alexandria, Louisiana

#### Alternate Names

bahia grass, bahia,

#### Uses

**Erosion control:** Bahiagrass is used for the NRCS conservation practices Grassed Waterway and Critical Area Planting. It is planted on critical areas such pond banks, levees, and gullies in agricultural fields.

**Turf:** This grass is suitable for low-maintenance lawns and public areas, and is recommended for infertile soils and heavy traffic areas. It is more shade tolerant than bermudagrass.

**Livestock:** Bahiagrass, with proper management, provides fair to good pasture and hay, and can be used in woodland pasture systems (silvopasture). Forage quality depends on soil fertility and grass stage of growth. Bahiagrass hay is leafy, but difficult to make because of bahiagrass' prostrate growth habit.

**Caution:** Seed heads of the cultivar 'Argentine' are often infected by ergot (*Claviceps paspali*). Pregnant mares can experience abortion problems if they eat large quantities of infected seed heads. Also, ingestion of infected seeds can produce toxic effects in cattle. The occurrence of toxic seed heads can be managed through mowing or by keeping pregnant horses confined.

**Wildlife:** Bahiagrass can be grown with other species that are more beneficial for wildlife. Deer, birds and small mammals will utilize the plant—especially the seeds—for food.

#### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

#### Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site at [plants.usda.gov](http://plants.usda.gov). Please consult the Related Web Sites on this species' Plant Profile for further information.

#### Description and Adaptation

Bahiagrass is a deep-rooted perennial adapted to a wide range of soils. It is low-growing and spreads with stolons and stout, scaly rhizomes. Stolons are pressed firmly to the ground, have short internodes, and root freely from the nodes forming a dense sod. Bahiagrass is a prolific seed-producing plant. The flat, tough-textured leaves are usually hairless; with blades 1/8-1/4 inch wide and 8-20 inches in length. Leaves are flat, folded, and in-rolled, tapering to a fine point. Stems usually reach 8-30 inches tall. The seed head usually consists of a dual racemes with each attached to the top of a slender stem. Occasionally there may be a third seed head present below the terminal ones.

Bahiagrass is most productive on sandy soils with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5. It is more productive on drought prone, sandy soils with relative low fertility than other forages.

**Distribution:** Bahiagrass is a native to South America. Its current range in Central and South America extends from Mexico to northern Argentina and the West Indies. It was introduced to the southeastern United States primarily for forage, and erosion control and has since become naturalized. It is adapted from east Texas to the Carolinas to as far north as northern Arkansas. Please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

## Establishment

Bahiagrass can be established from seed or sod. It will grow on soils too poorly-drained for bermudagrass. The best time to establish bahiagrass is during the spring or early summer months when adequate moisture is available. Later plantings in the summer have severe competition from weeds. Fall plantings may be used in southern areas where cold temperatures are not a problem. Proper site preparation before planting is critical to ensure successful establishment. Bahiagrass should not be planted on high-pH soils (> 6.5). For pasture or hay, drill 15 pounds pure live seed (PLS) per acre at 1/4 inch depth or less. For turf, use 5-10 pounds PLS per 1000 square feet. Good seed to soil contact is essential for bahiagrass to germinate. Bahiagrass seed is slow to germinate and may take several months to fully establish. Grazing is not recommended during establishment because seedlings will be trampled and damaged. Crabgrass (*Digitaria* spp.) may become a problem on newly seeded fields. Mowing may be necessary to prevent the crabgrass from shading the bahiagrass seedlings.

## Management

Bahiagrass is a relatively low maintenance grass with fewer disease and insect problems than some of the other introduced warm season grasses. Its ability to survive periods of drought makes it adaptable for southern pastures. Bahiagrass will persist in pastures with a low level of management. Though it responds to fertilizer applications, it does not respond to the high rates commonly used on improved bermudagrass. Bahiagrass is well adapted to sandy soils due to its tolerance of drought and low soil fertility. Bahiagrass forage is slightly lower in quality than bermudagrass. Close grazing stimulates new growth and improves forage quality.

The dense, compact sod of bahiagrass inhibits the growth of intercropped legumes. However, white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and winter annuals such as crimson clover (*T. incarnatum*) and arrowleaf clover (*T. vesiculosum*) can be established and grown in bahiagrass pastures and hayfields.

## Pests and Potential Problems

Mole crickets (*Scapteriscus* spp.) have been known to cause problems in established stands. The only serious disease of bahiagrass is dollar spot fungus (*Sclerotinia homoeocarpa* F.T. Benn).

## Environmental Concerns

Bahiagrass can become a pest in bermudagrass hay fields and home lawns. Use caution when moving livestock that have grazed bahiagrass pastures. Undigested seeds can be transported and deposited in other fields.

## Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your

area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method.

## Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Common bahiagrass is a coarse-textured, light-colored bahiagrass. It has an open and sparse growth habit and is very susceptible to cold temperatures.

'Argentine' bahiagrass forms a relatively dense sod and has a dark green color, making it acceptable for lawn use. It has good insect and disease resistance. 'Argentine' winterkills more readily than 'Pensacola'.

'Pensacola' bahiagrass was released in 1944 by the Georgia Soil Conservation Service and the Florida Agriculture Experiment Station (AES). It is the most widely grown variety of bahiagrass. It has an extensive root system giving it excellent drought tolerance. It is tolerant to hot or cold temperatures. It produces an abundance of seed heads which limits its desirability for use as a lawn grass.

'Paraguay' is a short, course, narrow-leaved cultivar that produces less forage than 'Pensacola'.

'Paraguay 22' is a single selection, non-released variety chosen for its improved cold hardiness over the Paraguay types. Both types have lower cold hardiness than 'Pensacola'.

'Tifton 9' was released in 1987 by the University of Georgia and USDA-Agriculture Research Service (ARS) as an improved selection from the 'Pensacola' variety. It was developed for improved forage characteristics. It has more vigorous seedlings, longer leaves, and improved digestibility over Pensacola'.

'TifQuik' was developed to have quick seed germination and reduced hard seed. The variety also exhibits quick growth, excellent seedling vigor, and higher forage yields than 'Tifton 9'.

'UF-Riata' was developed for south Florida by the University of Florida. This variety was selected for improved cold tolerance over 'Pensacola' or 'Argentine'.

'Wilmington' is the most cold-hardy bahiagrass variety known. Released in 1971 by Mississippi AES and NRCS, it has narrow leaves of medium size, but is less productive than 'Pensacola' and 'Paraguay'.

## Prepared By

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For more information about this and other plants, please  
contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation  
District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the  
PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant  
Materials Program Web site <[http://plant-  
materials.nrcs.usda.gov](http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov)>