

Pasture Research and Outreach in Progress – UMass Amherst

Selection of Forage Species/Varieties for Testing:

- The objective is to provide improved information on forage species, varieties and blends, and through their adoption in pasturing, thereby bringing increased economic benefit to farmers.
- Pasture specialists in other states and farmers provided input on pasture species and mixtures to be evaluated. Commercial companies were also contacted to determine the current varieties and mixtures available to farmers and to gather recommendations. Funding is from SARE and Mass. Dept. of Ag Resources Ag. Innovation Center funds.
- Twenty eight pasture seed mixes/blends were seeded in August 2007 in Massachusetts. Species included were legumes – white clover, red clover, birdsfoot trefoil and alfalfa, and grasses – orchardgrass, perennial ryegrass, meadow fescue, tall fescue, festulolium, brome grass, timothy, and Kentucky bluegrass. In Massachusetts these species were seeded as two to seven species mixtures. Eighteen of these were commercial blends and 10 were mixtures of either perennial ryegrass and Alice white clover or orchardgrass with the same Alice white clover.
- This experiment will be managed under grazing in 2008 and beyond. Similar large studies with 25 or more pasture blends or mixtures were seeded in Vermont and Pennsylvania as part of another project supported by SARE funds.

On-Farm Pasture Evaluations:

- Pasture blends were established in late summer in on-farm studies in New England. In each farm three to five pasture blends were selected as a subset of the larger evaluation at the UMass site. Participating farmers will work with Extension staff to collect information on establishment and productivity of the pasture blends. On-farm trials are part of the SARE funded project.

Management Intensive Grazing Studies:

- Intensive grazing management and other grazing studies are in progress, and will be used for extending the grazing season. Also, during 2007 a summer grazing study was conducted for internal parasite control in sheep.

Summer Annual and Fall Seeded Crops for Supplementary Forages:

- Two plantings of summer annual crops were made at the UMass farm and on one dairy farm comparing normal hybrid field corn, brown mid-rib field corn, feed-run shelled field corn, brown mid-rib hybrid sorghum sudangrass, Japanese millet, and oat. All crops were seeded at high densities in narrow (7 inch) rows.
- Brassica forages for fall grazing by sheep and cattle will also be established and evaluated.

Demonstration of Fencing and Watering Systems:

- Tumble wheels were demonstrated and other electric fencing options have been established and watering system will be demonstrated. These are part of grazing studies in 2008.

Massachusetts Pasture Walks:

- NOFA/Mass, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of Massachusetts Extension organized Grazing Workshops in 2007 as a continuing education resource for Massachusetts farmers. Topics varied, but included pasture management, organic transition and herd health, forage species, soil fertility, fencing and water systems, and summer and winter grazing.
- Similar pasture walks are being held in 2008 and a grazing school is being held in August. More information is available at massgrass.org

Equine and Education:

- Pasture and non-point source pollution education at Mass Aggie and other seminars are ongoing.
- For more information go to massaggie.org or contact Stephen J. Herbert or Carrie Sears (www.umass.edu/cdl)