



DUBOIS COUNTY CONSERVATION NEWS

Dubois County
Soil and Water Conservation District
May 2007

Pasture Walk Scheduled on Tuesday, June 5

Colt VanNatta, Livestock Specialist, is planning a pasture walk with Vic Shelton, NRCS Grazing Land Specialist for Southwest Indiana. The date is set for Tuesday June 5th at 5:00 P.M. CDT at Jerry Whitsitt's home farm. Whitsitt's farm is located north of Duff on County Road 600 W. Signs will be posted the day of the pasture walk.

Topics to be discussed at the pasture walk include forage types, rotational grazing, watering systems, and good management practices. Colt VanNatta is encouraging landowners to attend with plenty of questions about their pasture concerns!

Space is limited to the first 18 people, so register soon! No meal will be provided but refreshments will be available. Please call Colt VanNatta at 482-1171 Ext. 135 to register.

The pasture walk is sponsored by the Four Rivers RC&D, the Dubois and Pike County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Dubois Co. Cattlemen's Association.



Nominate a Neighbor for the River Friendly Farmer Award

Nominations are being accepted for the 2007 River Friendly Farmer Award. This state recognition honors farmers, who through good production management, help keep Indiana's rivers, lakes, and streams environmentally healthy and clean.

"This award is a great opportunity to recognize and reward farmers who do an excellent job of managing their farms in an economically and environ-

mentally sound way," said Jim Droege, President, Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Almost 300 farmers across the state have been honored with this award since its creation in 1999, and eight of them are from Dubois County. "We're proud to honor local farmers who protect and improve our soil and water resources for future generations,"

added Droege.

Contact the SWCD to nominate your neighbor...or yourself for this award. The deadline to submit nominations is Friday, June 22.

River Friendly Farmer awards are presented on ag day at the Indiana State Fair. Award recipients receive a sign to post on their farmstead and a denim shirt, recognizing them as a River Friendly Farmer.

Check Your Conservation Plan If You Add Corn to Your Rotation

Ag Corn prices have gone up, and farmers all over Indiana are thinking about adding corn to their crop rotations. One consideration for producers with highly erodible land should be staying eligible for USDA benefits.

“Don’t forget to check your conservation plan when you make planting decisions this spring,” says Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). “If your conservation plan requires a crop rotation to protect against erosion, you will have to continue the same level of protection to stay eligible for USDA programs.”

The 1985 Farm Bill put conservation compliance issues in place. Farmers with highly erodible soils are required to have a conservation plan that reduces erosion in order to stay eligible for USDA benefits. “If the conservation plan is based on a particular crop rotation or specified tillage decisions, they’ll want to be sure that changes to add corn don’t put fragile soils in jeopardy,” says Barry Fisher, State Agronomist for NRCS.

“This is an important issue for farmers. USDA program benefits can be substantial because they include Conservation Programs, the Farm Loan Programs and Disaster Assistance, in addition to Commodity Price Support Programs.” Management decisions play a role too, and Fisher offers the following list of considerations to farmers:

- There is a reduction in yield when corn follows corn instead of soybeans. If additional tillage is planned to reduce that yield loss, there are additional costs for those operations. And, make sure tillage operations don’t bury too much crop residue.
- Corn after corn takes 40-60 more pounds of nitrogen than corn after soybeans.
- There is added risk for insect and disease problems with corn after corn, so additional pesticides and/or stacked-trait resistant hybrids may be needed.
- Shifting to more corn will likely add to the time needed for planting, and that can push more acres of corn outside of the optimum planting window.
- At harvest, trucking, drying and storage costs are considerably higher for corn than soybeans.
- The additional inputs can be expected to add at least \$62 per acre and can be as high as \$150 per acre.

“Farmers can certainly make their own choices about cropping rotations and what they plant, however, we ask that you check your conservation plan when considering management decisions in order to remain eligible for USDA program benefits.”

Forestry Tour: From Woods to Grave

The Indiana Division of Forestry’s Project Learning Tree and Forest Resources Information programs will host a forestry tour on Thursday, June 14. “From the Woods to the Grave” is designed specifically for teachers and other educators, but any interested landowner is invited to attend. The tour will follow a tree from the woods to its final product, a handcrafted casket.

The tour departs from the Ferdinand Community Center at 7:30 AM, and includes stops at Ferdinand State Forest, Werner’s Sawmill, Hurst Cabinet, and the Abbey Casket show-room.

To register, contact Donna Rogler at (317) 549-0354, or by e-mail at plt@dnr.IN.gov.

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Contact one of these county
officials with your
conservation questions,
comments, and concerns!

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SWCD Technical Specialist
Colt VanNatta
Livestock Management Specialist
Bart Pitstick,
NRCS, District Conservationist

SWCD BOARD MEETINGS

The Dubois County SWCD Board of Supervisors meets on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings begin at 7:00 PM Nov. through March, and 7:30 PM April through October, and are located in the in the USDA Service Center in Jasper IN. Anyone interested in local soil and water conservation issues is encouraged to attend.

**The Dubois County Soil
and Water
Conservation District
promotes to all citizens
- both agricultural and
non-agricultural -
the vital benefits of
protecting and
preserving natural
resources, especially
soil and water.**

All programs and services of the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, relation, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Managing for Hay Quality & Quantity

Colt VanNatta, Livestock Specialist

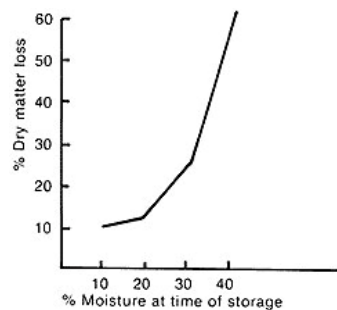
As local forages green up and unstable weather rolls in, the same question that you try to answer every year pops up: When will I cut hay to get that perfect balance of quantity and quality? Spring and summer storms often force your hand into cutting at less than the perfect time.

The first step to analyzing the proper time to cut your hay is knowing what types of forages are in each of your fields. Each species has its own unique growth patterns and strengths. Hopefully you have planted a combination that works well together to minimize complications. In preparing for the first cutting knowing the growth patterns can have a major impact on your management options. If you have an annual that needs to reseed itself you should wait until after the plant reaches its inflorescence stage (seed production). If you cut it earlier, you could possibly deter the plant from reproducing and fail to let it reseed for the following year. Any cuttings after the seed production stage can be based on quantity vs. quality, unless you are closing in on the first killing frost of the fall. The rule of thumb for most species is to allow one month of rest before this frost to allow the build up of carbohydrates and hardening of plants for the upcoming winter. In this case quantity is often sacrificed to get an additional cutting in time, but the upside is that quality is increased due to lack of lignified stems and other fibers.

Another challenge with hay is how to manage it after it has been cut. The primary factors that affect hay quality are weather, species characteristics, handling practices, and storage.

Weather factors affecting hay quality are solar radiation, air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and soil moisture. Although each factor has its own unique effect on hay several of them act together

to change conditions. For example higher solar radiation levels usually increase temperatures and these in turn decrease relative humidity. Relative humidity can drastically change any hopes of obtaining a quality cutting by rising above 65%. If above 65% humidity, baling should be delayed until satisfactory drying days have occurred to allow moisture content of 20% or lower for small square bales and 18% and lower for larger round bales. Wind speed also increases drying rates along with lower soil moisture content (Collins M. and Owens V. N. Forages: An Introduction to Grassland Agriculture. Edition 6. 2003).



Henning J.C. and Wheaton H. N. 2005
University of Missouri

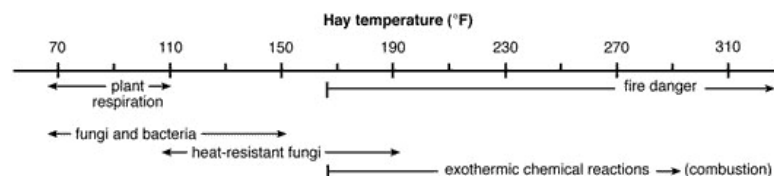
Often the conditions are less than optimal, creating overheating, spoilage from molds that appear, lower digestibility, and increased shattering loss from excessive raking. Even perfect conditions can lead to mishaps if forages are left in the field too long and plants are so dry that leaves shatter when baled

Species characteristics affecting hay quality are species type, maturity stage, yield, and initial moisture. Evaluating species can be as complicated as looking at the differences between the legumes red clover and alfalfa; red clover gen-

erally takes longer to dry due to thicker and hairier stems or the simple differences in legumes vs. grasses. Grasses tend to dry quicker since they lack the stem area that legumes have and because of open swaths when the hay is cut.

The handling of the hay by mowing, conditioning, tedding/raking, and baling affect the quality of the hay, as does hay storage methods. Storage can be categorized by each type: hay mow/barn, tarps, net wrapping, outside storage, and plastic wrap. When stored outside round bales can lose up to 40% dry matter when in contact with the ground. Even placing bales on crushed stone to allow draining can drastically reduce dry matter loss.

The variables involved with the species differences, handling, and storage can create instances of overheating, spoiling, and lower digestibility, much like the ones mentioned for weather factors (Collins M. and Owens V. N. Forages: An Introduction to Grassland Agriculture. Edition 6. 2003). The most common problem is wet hay creating a suitable habitat for growing bacteria. These bacteria then reproduce and become more active causing excessive heating and further damage. One common practice to stop this is salting. Many producers think salting hay will aid in drying but this is a misconception. The hay is often still damaged but the salt increases palatability by covering up molds and enticing animals to eat. If all aspects are managed to the best of your abilities then the battle of quantity vs. quality should come out in your favor.



Henning J.C. and Wheaton H. N. 2005 University of Missouri

Dubois County SWCD
1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A
Jasper IN 47546
(812) 482-1171 Ext. 3
judi.brown@in.nacdn.net

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

NEWSLETTER

SWCD Provides Conservation Items

- **No-Till Drill**

Great Plains No-Till drill has a seeding width of 10 feet, and can be used to plant soybeans, wheat, legumes, grasses, etc. It can also be used to plant native, or warm season, grasses. Rental fee is \$7/acre.

- **Stapler**

Installing erosion control blankets? This stapler makes completing the job easy! The plunger simply pushes the staples into the ground. Cost is \$10/use.

- **Spinning Jenny**

Use to install high-tensile wire fences. Load with wire and set on the ground. Walk away pulling the end of the wire and it will spin, preventing your wire from tangling. Slow down gradually before stopping to prevent over-spinning and tangling. Can also be used to rewind wire in the field. No charge.

- **Geotextile Fabric**

Black fabric can be used to keep rock from being pushed into the ground by cattle, or on driveways. Cost is \$1.40/running foot; 15' wide.

- **Tile Flags**

Flags on 36" wire staff can be used to mark underground power lines, or surveying jobs. \$6.00/bundle of 100.

Educate Yourself Before Signing an Oil or Gas Lease!

For the past few years, landowners in Dubois County have been contacted by representatives of various companies seeking to purchase oil and gas leases. These leases allow for the exploration to locate oil and gas, and also to drill a well and place any needed pipeline and structures to store and transport the oil or gas. Payment to the landowners ranges from \$5 to \$25 per acre, generally for a five year period. Additional royalties are made to the landowner if a well is placed on their property.

In April, the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service hosted a workshop sharing information for landowners and their lawyers as these leases are negotiated. The workshop presenters shared information about the location of the gas and oil fields in southern Indiana, how the oil is obtained, and general information about what is in the leases.

Landowners who are looking into signing an oil or gas lease should learn about their options prior to signing a lease. The Indiana Division of Oil and Gas has a website with a wealth of information about the process, and can be viewed at www.in.gov/dnr/dnroil. Landowners are also encouraged to work with their lawyers as they negotiate the lease to be sure their interests are protected.

