

Adding Legumes to Your Pasture

John Cothren, Livestock Extension Agent, Wilkes County



One of the best management practices that beef producers can utilize is the addition of legumes into their pastures. For example, a stand of 30% clover will provide all the nitrogen needed to allow the grass component to yield at its optimum. This saves the producer the cost of supplementing nitrogen. Legumes are also higher in protein and other minerals, thus providing a healthier diet that can lead to improved gains, improved body scores and better rebreeding.

Legumes provide much needed forage during the summer months when grass growth slows. Legumes can offset the summer slump of grasses, which can allow animal numbers to maintain. Since most pastures have fescue as the grass component, having a legume included can help deter the effects of fescue endophyte, leading to reduced weight gain and conception rates.

Frost seeding is the usual method that clover is introduced into pasture and now is the time to consider that. The cost of clover seed is much cheaper than applying supplemental nitrogen to the pasture with the same results. Many producers who apply nitrogen in the spring aren't getting the most of their dollars. Rarely do pastures need growth encouragement in the spring. Pastures are more often lacking in the summer, when growth slows down and that time of year is when inter-seeded legumes can really provide a benefit.

The usual recommendation is to frost seed 3-4 pounds of inoculated red clover each year or 6-8 pounds every other year. If you are using white or ladino clover a 1-2 pounds rate will be sufficient. The white and ladino should last much longer than the red, so annual reseeding shouldn't be necessary once they become established, although they will not persist indefinitely. The past few years' excessive rains have been hard on legumes. Cattle traffic on excessively wet pastures hasn't improved legume stand either. In some cases, most legumes have been lost in pastures. So many pastures probably need some improvement, and legumes should be one of the first considerations.

Success of frost seeding of legumes can be increased if the pasture has some bare soil showing. The seed needs to land on bare soil so that the freezing and thawing of the soil incorporates the seed. So the more "abused" the pasture is, the better the establishment. Also, since the grass stand is mature and has a good root system, it can really outcompete the just seeded legume. Try and give the legume as much help as possible. You might consider heavily grazing fescue pastures now to eliminate top growth and leave some bare soil.

Don't fertilize with nitrogen, as you'll only encourage the grass. Remove the cattle off the pasture if the grass stand is really short when the legume emerges and remember that continuous grazing will prevent the clover from maintaining, so be sure to allow 30 days between grazing.

Need Hay?

Allison Brown, Livestock Agent, Alexander County

Just a reminder to livestock producers that if you are running low on hay or think you will run low, start looking now to purchase additional hay if you haven't already. The Hay Alert website is a resource for farmers in need of hay to connect with those that who have hay or forage for sale, for arranging transportation if needed and/or transport with suppliers. This site will list names, addresses, and other pertinent information.

The website is www.ncagr.gov/hayalert/.



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Cattle Call



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VFD: What You Need to Know

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Are cattle producers ready for the already implemented U.S. Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD)? More than 550 days ago, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced its updated regulations for the VFD, and now they are in effect. Some producers are struggling to get clarity on this critically important new directive.

The Veterinary Feed Directive, or VFD, will restrict the use of medically important antibiotics in animal feed. As of Jan. 1, 2017, it will be illegal to use certain antibiotics without a veterinary prescription, and affected antibiotics will only be available to prevent, control or treat a specifically identified disease.

Functionally, it will work as follows:

- Feed companies and distributors must register with the FDA if distributing veterinary feed directive feeds.
- Veterinarians will be prescribing veterinary feed directive drugs and must have pre-existing veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR); more on that below.
- Veterinary feed directive prescriptions may be sent to distributors by veterinarians or by hard copy delivered by clients.
- Drug manufacturers will be allowed to assist veterinarians and feed companies with the processing.

A full list is available through the FDA website, but some of the most commonly affected drugs are listed below by their generic names.

Chlortetracycline	Sulfadimethoxine	Hygromycin	Lincomycin	Oxytetracycline
Sulfamethazine	Ormetoprim	Tylosin	Virginiamycin	Penicillin

Information on the VFD can be found easily, but misinformation and incorrect rumors about what the VFD is can be just as common. The following are some of the most common rumors:

- *Rumor: Feed-grade antibiotics are going away for good.*
- **That's false.** What is going away is the ability to use feed-grade antibiotics for growth promotion and other off-label uses.
- *Rumor: Injectable antibiotics will be banned.*
- **That's false.** These are still be available over the counter as needed.
- *Rumor: The VFD will affect both small and large producers.*
- **That's true:** Large or small, all producers who are found non-compliant will face a wide range of penalties ranging from fines to jail time.
- *Rumor: Water-soluble antibiotics are not affected.*
- **That's false.** A prescription, not a VFD, will be necessary for medically important antibiotics used in drinking water.

Staying up-to-date on the latest information is key. There are several comprehensive resources available online:

- The FDA website. Here you can find brochures outlining the requirements for producers, veterinarians and feed distributors, whether or not they manufacture feed.
- The Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University has created free modules on the VFD.
- In this webinar, Dr. Darrell Johnson from the University of Kentucky speaks in depth about the unique challenges faced by beef and dairy producers affected by the VFD.

Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD)