

# The Fenceline

September 28, 2020

## Too Much Fescue?

### From Now Until Spring There's No Such Thing.

*Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension*

Most people realize that late fall/winter is tall fescue's time to shine. Here are some of the facts about tall fescue that help to articulate why we put up with it the rest of the year.

- **Cold weather growth:** Tall fescue grows best when air temperatures are 68-77°F, however, they can continue growth as low as 39.2°F (Tall Fescue Monograph). This means that tall fescue can continue growing later in the fall than many other grasses, and even through mild periods of the winter. And what about fescue toxicity during this period? The endophyte that produces toxic alkaloids associated with fescue requires temperatures around 65°F in order to grow, so fescue toxicity tends to decline with the onset of cold weather even when plants continue to grow.

- **Resistance to decomposition:** Tall fescue growing in cool weather tends to accumulate sugars; and you've probably heard someone refer to fescue becoming "sweet" after it gets frosted. Livestock can indeed taste subtle differences in sugar content and probably enjoy it. However, the real benefit of a higher concentration of plant sugars is that it helps protect plant cells from freezing and allows it to continue growing in colder weather. High sugar content along with the tough composition of its leaves makes tall fescue particularly resistant to decomposition in the late fall and winter. This is a big reason why it is so good for stockpiling and winter grazing.
  - **Forage quality:** There have been many forage analyses done recently on stockpiled fescue in VA. Crude protein values in December typically begin at around 13-14% and energy values range from 67-70% total digestible nutrients (TDN). To give you some idea of how this meets animals' needs, consider that a cow in early lactation will require a diet around 10% crude protein and, 59% total digestible nutrients. A quick comparison will show that fall calving cows grazing stockpiled fescue are getting better nutrition than those being fed just about any first cutting hay and most second cutting hay out there. Stockpiled fescue will lose some of its quality if left to sit over the winter months, but in most cases it will still test at around 12% crude protein and 60% total digestible nutrients in January.
  - **Durability:** Tall fescue is just a tough plant all around. With its short rhizomes and sod-forming tendencies, tall fescue can handle a lot of abuse and still come out of winter OK. This makes it a particularly good fit for Virginia's muddy, compaction-prone winters.
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## Basal Bark Treatments for Fall and Winter Tree Control

*Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension*



A **basal bark treatment** is simply a herbicide sprayed on the *base of a tree*. More specifically, the herbicide is applied to the bottom foot or so of the tree around the entire circumference of the trunk. Typically diesel fuel, fuel oil, or a basal oil is used as a herbicide carrier rather than water, and the concentration of herbicide is usually a lot higher than normal. The fuel or oil helps take the herbicide through the bark and into the vascular tissue of the tree. Basal bark treatments can be very effective all year, even in fall and winter. Most tree species are effectively killed with a basal bark treatment (one notable exception is the thick-barked black locust).

Some landowners prefer to save the work of basal bark treatments until winter when they are less busy. In this case many people will mark trees with spray paint ahead of time--for example, in summer when they can still identify the

species. It can be difficult when making a basal bark treatment to remember which trees you've already treated. There are dyes available that can be mixed with the herbicide to allow you to see where you've sprayed, or you can carry a can of spray paint and mark trees as you treat them.

**Per gallon (basal bark treatment on trees <6" diameter)**

**1 part Remedy Ultra**

**3 parts diesel fuel or fuel oil**

\*Apply basal bark treatment to lower 15" of trunk

\*Soak trunk until thoroughly wet but not to point of runoff

\*If must apply to point of runoff, use 1 part Remedy Ultra to 20 parts diesel or fuel oil

A good, universal basal bark spray can be made with 1 part *Remedy Ultra* to 3 parts diesel fuel, fuel oil, or a basal oil. *Remedy Ultra* can be substituted with *Garlon 4 Ultra*. Another alternative is to purchase *Pathfinder II*, a ready-to-use basal bark solution that already includes a basal oil.

## **CFAP 2 Offers Direct Payments to Farmers**

*USDA seeks to help farmers dealing with market disruptions*

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CFAP 2 follows the first round of CFAP, and applies to many categories of crops and livestock. Ruminant livestock payments will be as follows:

**For beef cattle, payments will be equal to:**

- The producer's maximum owned inventory of eligible beef cattle, excluding breeding stock, on a date selected by the producer from April 16, 2020, through August 31, 2020,

- Multiplied by the number of payment limitations for the producer, multiplied by the payment rate of \$55 per head.

**For lambs and sheep, payments will be equal to:**

- The producer's highest owned inventory of eligible lambs and sheep, excluding breeding stock, on a date selected by the producer from April 16, 2020, through August 31, 2020,
- Multiplied by the payment rate of \$27 per head.

I've heard good reports that many farmers found CFAP 1 to be a painless process, with direct payments promptly deposited. For more information or to apply, contact your local FSA office or apply directly at <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>.

***CFAP 2 applications will be accepted from September 21 through December 11, 2020***

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**Have issues or topics you'd like to see addressed? Please email me at [mrbooyer@vt.edu](mailto:mrbooyer@vt.edu).**

Questions? Feel free to contact me.

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