

The Fenceline

September 21, 2020



Weather-related Forage Update

Matt Booher, VCE

Cool daytime temperatures and a couple freezing nights have put the brakes on the growing season, so I thought it might be time for a few thoughts about some of the work folks are still trying to get done:

- **Fall planting:** Here in the mountain/valley part of Virginia the time for seeding perennial pasture and hay is quickly coming to an end. September 15th* has long been the recommended planting deadline (for my part of the state) to be certain these crops have time to develop adequately before winter. While we have had increasingly mild falls and winters that provide more growing degree days than has historically been the case, our first frost dates have not changed. Recent cold temperatures are a good reminder that seeding from now on carries increased risk of failure. *My best guess is that the September 15 planting deadline could probably be stretched to Oct 1 in the Piedmont and perhaps Oct. 15 in areas further East and South.
- **Herbicide applications:** Cool temperatures have really started to zap our perennial weeds, creating poor conditions for leaf uptake and translocation of herbicide. It seems a little bit early to be shutting down fall herbicide applications for the year, but I'm afraid that's where we're at. The exception would be applications on biennial or winter annual weed seedlings or rosettes (e.g. thistles); these can still be successfully sprayed as long as daytime temps are consistently hitting the 50's and 60's.
- **Fall fertility:** I think the opportunity is past us to push our fall pasture growth with nitrogen. If you need to put down potash or phosphorus,

adding some nitrogen will definitely help to promote good grass root growth and development of next year's tillers. (In fact, fall fertilization used to be a common recommendation from Virginia Tech because of its importance in strengthening the plant). I probably wouldn't go across the field just to apply nitrogen at this point in the game. Now would be a good time to put down a moderate amount of poultry litter or other manure if the nutrients are needed.

- **Grazing:** Continue to exclude livestock from pasture that's being stockpiled. If grazing starts to outpace pasture growth, consider starting to feed a little hay along with grazing. Postponing turnout onto stockpiled pasture will allow it to continue growing to maximize yield (a thick stockpile is an effective insulator to help buffer temperatures and keep things growing longer than grazed pastures). Postponing turnout onto stockpiled pasture also gives time for toxic fescue alkaloids to decline in the plant. Lastly, stockpiled grass pasture is excellent nutrition, which will be a superior alternative to hay for our later calving fall herds.

Dealing with Bovine Footrot

John Benner, Extension Agent, Augusta County

Footrot, an infection most frequently caused by bacteria such as *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, and others including *Bacteroides melaninogenicus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Actinomyces pyogenes* can often be a grazing season scourge of cattle herds. Footrot incidence can vary year to year but seems to be connected to

environmental conditions. The wetter and warmer conditions are, the more likely a higher number of footrot cases may manifest in the cow herd.

Some of this may be due to the pathology and method of infection of footrot causing bacteria on cattle hooves. *Fusobacterium necrophorum* is a normal resident microbe of the cattle rumen. There it serves an important function of metabolizing lactic acid and degrade various proteins. It is found in the environment in cattle manure. *F. necrophorum* and additional pathogens need an avenue to access foot tissue to cause an infection. Typically, a very minor injury, cut or scrape, or soggy moist conditions may dampen skin and allow bacteria to intrude into the foot. Wet ground and hot and humid conditions are thought to cause skin around cattle toes to crack, much the way our hands will crack due to conditions changing from wet to dry, (or high use of alcohol hand sanitizer). This explains why we likely see more footrot in a wet year, such as 2015 and 2018.

It is worth mentioning that many other conditions exist to cause cattle lameness other than footrot. This includes leg or foot injury, snakebites, laminitis, and certain genetic conditions, such as screwtoe. Therefore, it always pays to check and verify that footrot is the cause. Hooves affected by footrot will normally be swollen (Figure 1) and may have an off-putting odor. It is also worth mentioning that it has been observed that as much as 75% of lameness in cattle could be ascribed to footrot.



Figure 1. Swollen calf hoof with footrot

Footrot should be checked for daily when conditions are favorable. Early detection can prevent the infection from spreading beyond the foot area and present a quicker response to treatment. Many antibiotics are labeled for treatment of footrot so always check with your veterinarian on recommended treatment products and methods. Prevention is a great tool as well. Various studies have shown a reduction in footrot incidence through mineral supplementation, particularly of zinc, selenium and copper. Check with your Extension agent, nutritionist, or veterinarian if you feel your mineral supplement program could be improved.

In summary, footrot can be occasional but serious plague of the grazing season. No matter the conditions, it pays to be prepared, so take action to minimize the effect it may have in your herd.

References omitted but available upon request.

CFAP 2 Offers Direct Payments to Farmers

USDA seeks to help farmers dealing with market disruptions

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

Have issues or topics you'd like to see addressed? Please email me at mrbooyer@vt.edu.

Questions? Feel free to contact me.

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