Success Story: Winter Forage Field Day

Event was held May 8 at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station in Hazel Green, AL from 6-8 PM. Meeting facility and site for field day were provided at no charge with an estimated value of $450 including light food, snacks, and drinks. Field day was attended by 20 adults with 7 being representatives from Alabama A&M University, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and USDA: NRCS. This event was made possible by: a Southern SARE Grant, an AMRV RC&D Education Grant, and support from ACES and AAMU. The forage site was at the Small Ruminant Outreach Center grazing paddocks, and winter forage seed money ($400) was provided by a Southern SARE Grant. Two of the attendees were new to farming.

The goal of this event was to demonstrate a few options on cool-season forages that could provide nutrition for large and small ruminants during a time of the year when grazing material tends to be sparse. Failure to provide sufficient nutrition during winter months can result in poor body-condition, lackluster vigor and productivity, and complications with health and reproduction. This event used a combination of site-visits to view wheat, rye, clover, winter peas, and a mix of the fore mentioned; grazing and forage experts to discuss options and management; questions and answers among attendees and experts, and hand-outs with relevant information. Other topics included Renewable Energy Program for farmers and small businesses, and availability of Southern SARE Grants.

Topics, speakers, and respective agencies included:

- Greetings & Orientation – Robert Spencer, Extension Specialist, ACES
- Renewable Energy Program – Mike Roden, Executive Director, AMRV RC&D Council
- Cover Crop Seed Provided by SARE Grant – Rudy Pacumbaba, Extension Specialist, ACES
- Site Visit – Blake Garner & Wade Hill, Field Technicians, NRCS; Gerry Thompson, Extension Agent, ACES; Robert Spencer
- Q&A and Evaluation – Robert Spencer

Diversity of 20 attendees included:

- All adult
- 17 Male, 3 Female
- 3 American Indian, 1 Asian, 4 Black, 11 White, & 1 Other

At the end of event each attendee was provided an evaluation form, 92% of evaluations were completed. Post event evaluation showed:

1. Is your farm already registered with local USDA Service Center? 10-Yes, 2-No
2. Is this the first time for you to attend an Extension event? 2-Yes, 10-No
3. Are you interested in the renewable energy program? 3-Yes, 4-Maybe, 5-No
4. Did you find the site visit to winter forages of interest? 11-Yes, 1-Somewhat
5. Did you learn more about winter grazing options? 11-Yes, 1-Somewhat
6. Will you implement some of these practices next fall? 7-Yes, 5-Maybe
7. Do you believe this would increase nutrition for livestock and reduce feed costs? 10-Yes, 2-Somewhat

8. Would this maintain or increase body-condition of your livestock during winter months? 7-Yes, 5-Somewhat
9. Would this increase the vigor or productivity of your livestock? 5–Yes-,7- Maybe
10. Do you feel tonight's information would make improvements/efficiencies on your farm? 9-Yes, 3-Maybe
11. Do you feel these type practices would increase the likelihood for long-term sustainability and/or profitability? 11-Yes, 1-No.
12. Would you recommend this type of program to friends? 11-Yes, 1-No
13. As a result of attending various Extension programs in the past year have you experienced increased: animal productivity-5, production effeciencies-4
14. If yes, how much? 1-5%-2, 11-15%-1
15. How many livestock do you have on your farm?
16. Goats-25, 7, 6; Sheep-4; Cattle -21, 7, 25; Chickens-20; Hogs-14
17. Do you farm: Part-time-8, Full-time-3, Not at all-1
18. Do you feel your operation is profitable? Yes-2, No-4, Breakeven-6
19. Rate your overall opinion of this event. Satisfied-11, Satisfied-1
20. How did you learn about this event? E-mail-7, Friend-5
21. Other topics for future events: orchard pruning and management, cattle and sheep grazing study, cattle and livestock health, farm tax records, small ruminants and weed control, and livestock nutrition without winter feeding