The following hand out was distributed to various retail locations throughout the area so local producers could pick up a copy.

Marshall Ryegrass Test Plot

Annual ryegrass has several features that make it popular with livestock producers. When planted late summer or early fall annual ryegrass can produce 2-3 tons of high quality feed per acre before December and an additional 3-4 tons in the spring. Annual ryegrass is able to obtain these yields because it continues to grow after the first killing frost. In addition the lack of true dormancy in annual ryegrass allows it to resume growth earlier in the spring than many perennial cool season grasses. In addition to rapid growth the forage quality of annual ryegrass is outstanding; with crude protein levels that exceed 20% and dry matter digestibility that approaches 70%.

Marshall Ryegrass is one variety of annual ryegrass that seems to be out performing the other varieties. During the past year a test planting of marshall ryegrass was conducted in the Elk Conservation District on the Roy Metheney Farm in Clay County.

The marshall ryegrass was seeded no till at a rate of 30 pound per acre on August 17th of 2004. On September 20th the ryegrass was approximately 10 – 12 inches tall and had a nutritional value of 22.7 crude protein and a 70 percent total digestible nutrients (TDN). On

November 20th the ryegrass was approximately 22-24 inches tall; with a crude protein of 18.3 and a TDN of 69. On this date 40 head of beef cattle turned into the field, they grazed the field for five days and then removed. The field was then left alone until the spring of 2005.

In the spring of 2005 fertilizer was applied according to soil test results. In late May samples were taken to calculate total dry matter production The ryegrass had produced 5663 pounds of dry matter per acre. The ryegrass was harvested in June and round baled as dry hay. Due to wet weather conditions the ryegrass was past maturity when it was cut, but the nutritional values were still good, crude protein of 12.6 a TDN of 65.

This test planting shows that marshall ryegrass is very useful in this area. It grew very fast, produced good quality forage, and produced almost three ton of dry matter per acre. If you would like further information about this test planting contact the USDA office in Gassaway, 364-5103 ext. 110.