

2017 Forage Fiesta Field Day

Public Value

Forages are a vital component of ruminant livestock as well as agronomic production systems. We have seen a resurgence in the interest in cover crops and grasses being incorporated into Ag production systems, while simultaneously fine tuning management skills of traditional crops such as alfalfa and grass. Presently, in 2017 there is an estimated 1.6 million head of beef cattle, 117,000 head of milking dairy cattle, and an estimated 150,000 acres of alfalfa, 270,000 acres sorghum, 295,000 acres of oats, 48,000 acres proso millet, and 32,000 acres peas, being planted this year in South Dakota.

The Issue

As Extension Field Specialists, we have witnessed increased growth in planting of these crops, outside of the traditional row crops of corn and soybeans, professionals and producers need to rejuvenate and grow their personal knowledge base regarding the best management practices of these crops.



Figure 1: Forage Fiesta Field Day attendees view cover crop demo plots.

What was offered

Our field day, on August 24th, 2017 at the SE Research Farm near Beresford, SD provided a hands on experience of best management practices focusing on: planting, variety selection, harvest and crop quality management, grazing methods, plant identification, alternative forage cropping systems, and economics. We collaborated with the SE Research Farm and NRCS personnel to deliver the educational program.

Impact

We were able to expand the knowledge base of 35 total attendees which included: 7 Government/ Extension / Research professionals, 8- Agricultural Consultants & Ag Bankers, 18 -Agronomy and Livestock Producers and 2-students regarding best management practices (BMP's) for alfalfa, cover crops, and grasses.

Attendees were asked to rate their level of understanding of the topics before and after the sessions offered: the scale: 1= no understanding, 2=slight understanding, 3 = some understanding, 4=moderately understood the topic, 5=extremely understood the topic.

Topic	Before	After
When & How to Plant Forages - Sara Berg	3.06	4.19
Forage Variety Selection - Karla Hernandez	3.00	4.06
Harvest Management and Forage Analysis - Tracey Erickson	2.44	3.75
When to Graze What - Taylor Grussing	3.00	4.25
Cover Crop ID & Demo of Grazing Periods	3.19	4.25
Economics of Raising High Quality Forage, Crops and Animals - Eric Barsness	2.77	3.92

A predominant change that attendees indicated they would be willing to make was utilization of more cover crops within their production systems.

Industry attendees indicated that they better equipped with management strategies for cover crops.



Figure 2: Karla Hernandez, Sara Berg, Tracey Erickson & Taylor Grussing



Figure 3: Forage Fiesta Field Day attendees examine alfalfa variety plots.

For more information contact:

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