

2017 AFRP Research Project Objectives

Development of Grazing Recommendations and On-Farm Decision Tools for Managing Alfalfa-Graass Mixtures in the Southeastern U.S. University of Georgia - Tucker

Project Award: \$250,000

Objectives:

- Our work aims to provide an alternative high-quality forage production system for producers in bermudagrass dominant areas of the Southeast. The incorporation of alfalfa can potentially provide an opportunity to add value to cattle produced in this system through reduced input costs and increased sustainability of current land resources. Specifically our work will focus on two main hypotheses: (1) interseeding alfalfa can improve yield, forage quality, and length of grazing in bermudagrass dominant forage systems of the southeast and (2) proper harvest height and frequency will increase alfalfa persistence in bermudagrass mixed swards and provide better grazing metrics for mixed stand management. Through this evaluation we plan to develop grazing management parameters, yield estimation tools, and interactive budget calculators to provide producers with better tools for understanding and guidance when managing alfalfa in mixed swards in the southeast. The specific objectives of this project are: 1. To determine the influence of harvest height and frequency on mixed alfalfa-bermudagrass stand yield, sward canopy characteristics, persistence, and nutritive value over time under simulated grazing. 2. To develop ready-to-use decision tools for 1) on-farm estimation of yield in mixed alfalfa-bermudagrass pastures for grazing management and 2) cost of production assessments in these systems. 3. To extend information obtained on grazing management practices for mixed alfalfa-bermudagrass stands in the Southeast to the scientific community, extension agents, and stakeholders through Extension and Outreach programs on a state, regional, and national level.