

DR. G's ADVICE COLUMN RETURNS

*Dr. Gary Bates, Director
UT Beef and Forage Center*

Dear. Dr. G - I have a lot of broomsedge in my pasture. I have tried everything to get rid of it, but have had little success. Can you give me some help? *Weedy in Waverly.*

Dear Weedy: This seems to be a common question this time of the year. Controlling broomsedge in a tall fescue pasture is similar to that time I tried to lose weight. It can be done, but it isn't fast and it isn't easy. It takes work. There are about three steps to the process. First, take a soil test and correct any soil fertility issue. Low pH, potash or phosphate levels will favor broomsedge. Second, check to see if you need to thicken up the stand of tall fescue. Remember, we are trying to outcompete the broomsedge. You have to have a good stand of tall fescue to do this. Third, clip the field in early September, mowing the broomsedge seedheads. The plants will try to reproduce another seedhead, using up valuable root carbohydrates in the process. This will weaken the plants going into the winter. These steps will help reduce the amount of broomsedge over time.

Dear Dr. G – I am tired of having to feed hay so many days during the winter. Is there any advice you can give me? *Tired in Tellico.*

Dear Tired: I totally understand your situation. There are many times I am too tired to get up and get my chores done. Usually I tell my son to work on my chores after he finishes his. If you don't have a wife or child to do your work for you, I guess we need to find a way to reduce how many days hay is needed. The best way to do that is to stockpile tall fescue this fall. Clip the fescue in late August to remove all the old growth. When soil moisture is good, fertilize with up to 60 lb of nitrogen per acre. That would be about 150 lb of urea per acre. It will be helpful to get the fertilizer coated with Agrotain to reduce nitrogen loss. Don't fertilize until you get a good rain. Then just keep animals off the field as long as you can. You can extend your grazing season significantly by saving the fall growth of some of your pastures to be used later in winter.

Dear Dr. G – My brother-in-law is a big deer hunter, and wants to plant food plots for deer this fall. He says you need special varieties designed specifically for deer. Do you agree with him? *Confused in Carthage.*

Dear Confused: My first piece of advice is to always disagree with your brother-in-law. I have three of them, and my experience is that 97.2% of the time, they are wrong. And par for the course, in this case your brother-in-law is wrong. The same forages can be used for cattle and for deer. Research by Dr. Craig Harper at UT has indicated a few species that deer prefer and some they avoid. You want to select oats, wheat, white clover or brassicas (or possibly a mixture of these) for food plots this winter. Avoid tall fescue, orchardgrass and annual ryegrass. These are species that deer do not prefer. Whichever species or mixtures you decide to plant, you can use the same varieties as you would if you were planting for cattle forage.

Dear Dr. G – I am going to drill a field with orchardgrass this fall. Do you have any tips to make sure I am successful? Planter in Parsons.

Dear Planter: You have come to the right place if you want advice. Here's one – Don't wear a white shirt if you're gonna eat barbeque. Also, don't fall sleep in church if your parents sing in the choir. I've got tons of these little gems. But specifically about planting, here are a couple of tips to pay attention to: First, plant at the right time. September/October is the best time to plant cool-season grasses. Second, plant the right amount of seed. We recommend 15 lbs of orchardgrass per acre. Third, plant at the right depth. It is best to plant shallow, no more than ¼ inch deep. Be sure to check seeding depth in the field prior to planting. Good luck with the planting.