

## Orchardgrass Strategy Round-Table Davidsonville, MD August 27, 2010

Area farmers met with faculty from the University of Maryland Extension and NRCS colleagues to participate in the **Orchardgrass Strategy Round-Table** on August 27th. They came together to develop hay and pasture strategies that address the continued orchardgrass decline in our region.

Farmers shared their current hay and pasture seeding practices that have been successful or unsuccessful, with the goal of answering the following questions:

- 1) Do we need to develop a grass based forage rotation that relies less on orchardgrass to break the current disease and insect cycles in our fields?
- 2) Should we strive to incorporate other forage species that may be productive in our hay and pasture systems such as: bluegrass, smooth bromegrass, fescues, oats, timothy, millets, sorghums, lespedezas, clovers, alfalfa and others?
- 3) What strategy do we need to develop that especially focus on the following key pests?

**Key Insect Pests:** white grubs, wireworms, billbugs, curculio, mites, thrips, aphids and nematodes.

**Key Diseases:** anthracnose, septoria leaf spot, brown stripe and yellow barley dwarf.

### **Summary of Shared Observations:**

- ✓ Older established stands of orchardgrass are still surviving well, while newer establishments are failing at establishment or within a year or two.
- ✓ Everyone agreed that they were still planting the same old orchardgrass varieties: Hallmark, Benchmark and Potomac.
- ✓ Newly seeded orchardgrass fields seem to be growing better and surviving along the fence edges and field borders that are not cut or trampled.
- ✓ The group of farmers preferred fall seeding, however, often overseed in the spring. All agreed that the severe heat in April of this year was especially damaging to young stands.
- ✓ It was often observed that low organic matter soils and compaction led to poor root system development of newly established orchardgrass. One grower stated that manure application seemed to stimulate plant vigor.



## Orchardgrass Strategy:

- ✓ Persist a new variety from King's AgriSeed of orchardgrass may be a viable option. Also be sure to buy certified tagged germination tested seed like Benchmark<sup>+</sup>.
- ✓ Seed orchardgrass mixtures that include novel endophyte tall fescues such as Max Q and BarOptima Plus E34 a new leafy type from Barenbrug Seed, with Kentucky bluegrass, Timothy and a legume.
- ✓ Treat the seed with Captan<sup>®</sup>, Thiram<sup>®</sup> or Allegiance<sup>®</sup> for control of the seedling damping-off diseases: Phytophthora, Pythium and Rhizoctonia.
- ✓ Choose your best fields with deep well drained soils that have organic matter and are friable for the expensive seeding packages. Make manure applications to increase organic matter, combined with sub-soiling, chiseling or no-till ripping may be advantageous. Green manuring, the practice of turning down a lush cover crop for soil building may also be valuable.
- ✓ Watch the root development of the newly seeded orchardgrass stand, not just the top growth. Allow the roots to establish deep into the plow layer before heavy cutting or grazing pressure is applied.
- ✓ Monitor for the key insects and diseases of orchardgrass, have them laboratory identified, and rotate out of orchardgrass for at least a year before re-establishing using rotational crops like oats, rye, millets and sudax.
- ✓ Consider applying labeled fungicides and insecticides to orchardgrass stands that economically producing such as Kumulus<sup>®</sup>, Fosphite<sup>®</sup>, Malathion<sup>®</sup>, Sevin<sup>®</sup> etc. A recent Section 18 emergency label has been approved for Quadris<sup>®</sup> in some states applied at 10 oz/A for disease management in orchardgrass clover stands.
- ✓ Always keep the cutter bar height high, mangle harvests to reduce compaction and provide 45-day rest and regrowth interval between hay harvests; Adjust grazing intervals to allow visible plant recovery.



## Orchardgrass Billbug Injury

Although billbugs have been a significant problem in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia fields for the last few years, this is



the first season that we have documented significant damage from

this insect in the Delaware/Maryland Eastern Shore region. Dr. Rod Youngman from Virginia Tech has taken the lead in developing sampling and treatment timings for this insect. He has just posted a presentation on his website that gives good information on the biology of this pest, sampling methods, treatment timing and control options.

<http://connect.ag.vt.edu/billbugipm2>

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