



Live, Learn and Thrive.

Extension Forage Program



Collaborations

New Mexico Hay Association

Program is responsible for publication of market news-letters and aiding with annual Southwest Hay & Forage Conference. Aimed primarily at the state's premium alfalfa production, New Mexico's #1 cash crop.



United Sorghum Checkoff Program

Grant participation, production guide publications and research projects. Educational events to show sorghum growers the outcomes of their checkoff contributions.



Other Commodity Groups

- New Mexico Sorghum Growers Association
- New Mexico Wheat Growers Association

Work with to secure funding and promotion of research and education directly related to statewide growers of these crops. Wheat and sorghum are ranked #1 and #3 in acreage in NM.

University Collaborations

- Kansas State University
- Oklahoma State University
- Texas A&M University
- Texas Tech University
- Washington State University



Extension Forage Programming

Educational Presentations:

- Grower/Commodity Conferences
- Regional/National Conferences
- Field Days and Workshops
- Alfalfa Hay Management
- Corn, Sorghum & Wheat
- Water and Other Resource Use

Applied Research:

- Forage Production Systems
 - Irrigated and Dryland
- Alternative Crops and Strategies
 - New Technologies

Public Outreach:

- Publications
- Radio, and News Releases
- Website Resources (<http://forages.nmsu.edu>)

New Mexico State University

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Urgency in Eastern NM

The High Plains of eastern New Mexico is the largest contiguous agricultural region in the state. While comprising only 30% of the state's total land area, the counties of Chaves, Colfax, Curry, DeBaca, Eddy, Guadalupe, Harding, Lea, Quay, Roosevelt, and Union account for 60% of all agricultural cash receipts.

Over 350,000 dairy cows are present in the eastern NM-W. Texas area. Forages constitute a large proportion of the dairy cow diet and are necessary for high milk production.

Underground water resources used for irrigation are declining. Current forage production systems are not sustainable and new, alternative crops and cropping systems must be developed to maximize water-use in order for farmers to maintain a level of productivity necessary for continued feed, food and energy supply.

Sorghum is a water-conserving crop that shows potential as an alternative to traditional corn grown for silage, particularly in limited irrigated situations.

Extension and research programs involving silage and alfalfa hay management, lowering inputs, marketing, and variety selection are necessary in all areas of NM so that continuous crop improvement information can be supplied to growers, dairies and horse owners.



New Mexico Forage Facts

Alfalfa Hay

- **220,000 acres of hay grown**
- **Over 1 million tons harvested**
- **Value: \$250 million every year**



Corn Silage

- **80,000 acres grown each year**
- **Over 2 million tons harvested**
- **Value: \$80 million every year**



Sorghum Silage

- **35,000 acres grown each year**
- **Over 600,000 tons harvested**
- **Value: \$18 million**



Curry & Roosevelt Counties

- **Rank 2nd and 3rd in silage production in NM**
- **300,000 acres of wheat grown**
- **30,000 acres of corn silage grown**
- **16,000 acres of alfalfa hay**

Forage Production



Nearly half a million acres of forage crops, including alfalfa, corn, sorghum, and small grains, are grown in New Mexico every year.

Program Impacts

Awareness of water conservation has increased as the landscape has changed, particularly in eastern New Mexico, to include more water-conserving sorghum crops (both silage and hay) and management. As a result, water consumption has potentially been reduced in these forage systems and profitability has been maintained or increased. If 10% of crops are conserved in the region, greater than \$30 million is conserved annually for the state of NM. If the livestock that are dependent upon these crops are considered, then over \$175 million is preserved annually.

Sorghum grown for silage has increased 75% and statewide production has nearly doubled over the past 6 years from 210 to 400 thousand tons.

Research from this program has shown that inputs such as fertilizer and seed can be reduced and alternative forage sorghum can be profitable, and in many cases, necessary in limited irrigated silage systems. Acceptance of this alternative crop continues to grow.

Average yields of forage crops in NM are nearly 10% greater now than in 2005, and this increase in productivity is likely due to the Extension and research programs conducted throughout New Mexico and disseminated through various means including publications and presentations.



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