SUMMER '26

NPFA UPDATE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE NORTHERN PLAINS FORAGE ASSOICATION

WHO ARE WE?

NPFA is a grassroots association open to forage growers, buyers, industry partners, and anyone with an interest in forages. We are creating a networking and education group focused on annual forages/cover crops, alfalfa, silage, grazing systems, and more!

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WHERE TO FIND US

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GROWING WARM-SEASON SUMMER ANNUALS FOR FORAGE

By Jeff Jackson, Croplan Alfalfa and Forage Specialist

As winter annual crops come off and producers evaluate forage needs for the coming year, warm-season summer annuals can be an excellent option. These crops can produce high tonnage, use water efficiently, and deliver strong forage quality with good palatability and digestibility. Below are three key warm-season annual forage options to consider.

1. **Single-Cut Forage Sorghum:**
   Single-cut forage sorghum is a strong option for producers looking for high tonnage. It is typically managed much like a corn silage crop and is generally harvested by chopping the standing crop for silage. For best silage harvest results, target 65–70% whole-plant moisture. Forage sorghum can still pack and store well at up to 72% whole-plant moisture when a quality silage inoculant is used to support proper fermentation and stability.In many areas, forage sorghum is generally planted after June 1 when soil temperatures reach 60°F or warmer at about 1 inch deep. Research data from locations in South Dakota over multiple years suggests expected yields in the range of 20 to 28 tons of silage per acre, although actual production will vary depending on location and seasonal moisture availability. Recommended planting rates can range from 60,000 to 120,000 plants per acre, depending on the variety and the characteristics of the hybrid being planted.

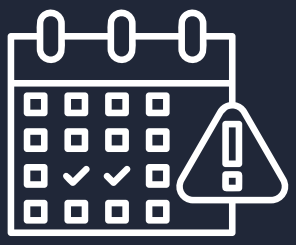
Key Management Points:

- High-tonnage warm-season forage option
- Best suiited for chopped silage use
- Plant after soils reach 60°F
- Target 65-70% whole-plant moisture at harvest
- Use silage inoculant when harvesting at higher moisture
- Yield potential depends on moisture and growing conditions

STILL NEED TO RENEW YOUR DUES?

As a friendly reminder, please consider renewing your membership by paying your dues at www.npforage.com under the Become a Member tab.

Checks can be made out to "Northern Plains Forage Association" and mailed to: Northern Plains Forage Assn. c/o Sara Bauder, 421st Ave, Tyndall, SD 57066



GROWING WARM-SEASON SUMMER ANNUALS FOR FORAGE CONT.

2. **Sorgum-Sudangrass Hybrids:**

Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids are a flexible, multi-cut warm-season annual option. These products fit well in forage systems where producers value multiple harvest opportunities and flexibility in how forage is used throughout the season. Like forage sorghum, sorghum-sudangrass should be planted when soils are 60°F or warmer at approximately 1 inch deep. These hybrids are typically seeded with a grain drill or air seeder. They can sometimes be broadcast and incorporated successfully, but this is generally not considered a best management practice.A general planting recommendation is 20 to 30 pounds per acre, depending on soil type, field conditions, and available moisture.
One of the biggest advantages of sorghum-sudangrass is harvest flexibility.
This crop can be:

- Swathed and chopped for silage
- Swathed and baled as baleage
- Swathed and dried for dry hay
- Grazed multiple times

This flexibility allows producers to adapt to changing conditions during the season. For example, a first cutting may be mechanically harvested around **45 days after emergence**, followed by regrowth that can be grazed or harvested again about **30 days later**. This makes the crop especially valuable for producers who want to make in-season decisions based on forage inventory, pasture needs, and weather conditions. For best regrowth potentials, evaluate your stand and manage the cutting height to leave 2 growth nodes above the ground. This may vary depending on the type of variety you plant. Brachytic dwarf plants will give you a lower cutting target due to the shortened, compacted internodes. Where regular style plants might have a cut height 3-4” higher (6-7”).

Key Management Points:

- Multi-cut warm-season annual
- Excellent flexibility for silage, baleage, hay, or grazing
- Plant at 20-30 lb/acre
- Dril or air-seed for best results
- First harvest often around 45 days after emergence
- Regrowth can support a second harvest or grazing event

3. **Hyrbid Pearl Millet:**

Hybrid pearl millet is another warm-season annual forage option that is highly efficient in water use and well adapted to hot, dry growing conditions. It is known for producing large amounts of highly digestible forage with strong protein potential. As with sorghum-sudangrass, hybrid pearl millet offers excellent harvest flexibility and can be managed for silage, baleage, dry hay, or grazing. This crop should ideally be drilled, but unlike sorghum-sudangrass, the seed should be planted shallower – about 3/4 inch deep. Because pearl millet seed is very small, planting too deep can limit emergence and reduce stand establishment. Typical seeding rates are 10 to 15 pounds per acre, depending on moisture availability and the amount of tillering desired. At lower seeding populations, hybrid pearl millet tends to tiller aggressively, which can help compensate for lower stand density. Suggested cutting height on Hybrid Pearl Millet is 5” when the plant is about 45 days or 40”tall to ensure that you are not cutting the growing points off. Failure to follow these recommendations could result in poor regrowth for the subsequent harvest.

Key Management Points:

- Water-use efficient and drought tolerant
- Strong digestibility and good protein potential
- Excellent fit for silage, baleage, hay or grazing
- Plant at approximately 3/4" deep
- Avoid planting too deep due to small seed size
- Seed at 10-15 lb/acre depending on moisture and management goals

NPFA UPDATE

FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2026 OFFICERS

The Northern Plains Forage Association extends its sincere appreciation to all members and supporters for their continued commitment to the organization. We are pleased to formally announce the officers elected to serve the Association for 2026. Following action by the Board, Jeff Jackson has been elected to serve as President, and David Elliott has been elected to serve as Vice President. Mark Rogan will continue to serve as Treasurer. In addition, Mike Barber has been appointed as a new member of the Board of Directors. *Any additional newly appointed board members will be announced once confirmed.*

Jeff Jackson, President
Jeff Jackson, a native of northwest Iowa, spent nearly 27 years in South Dakota, where he attended college and began his professional career as a forage specialist. He now resides near Kansas City, Missouri, in the town of Plattsburg. Jeff played an integral role in the formation of the Northern Plains Forage Association and has previously served the organization as Vice President.

David Ellitott, Vice President
David Elliott, the Association's newly elected Vice President, previously served as President of the Northern Plains Forage Association. David and his family own and manage several dairies in eastern South Dakota and are highly engaged in the dairy industry. He is a strong advocate for the educational and networking opportunities made possible through membership in the Association.

Mark Rogan, Treasurer
Mark Rogan remains an important leader within the Northern Plains Forage Association and the dairy community. He works with a dairy enterprise that manages multiple dairies across South Dakota. As one of the founding members of the Association, Mark has been instrumental in the development of the organization, including the establishment of its nonprofit charter and the written bylaws that continue to guide its operations.

The Northern Plains Forage Association is grateful for the willingness of these individuals to serve in leadership positions and for their continued dedication to the organization's mission. Their service will help strengthen the Association's focus on education, networking, and community in support of forage production throughout the Northern Plains.

CURRENT NPFA BOARD MEMBERS

- President: Jeff Jackson, CroPlan Alfalfa and Forage Specialist/Forage Producer, Plattsburg, MO
- Vice President: David Elliot, Drumgoon Dairy, Lake Norden, SD
- Treasurer: Mark Rogen, Boadwine Farms, Baltic, SD
- Justin Fruechte, Renovo Seed, Director of Sales/Forage Producer
- Paul Hahn, Arkansas Valley Seed, Outside Sales Manager
- Eric Tieszen, Producer, Canistota, SD
- Al Lenhart, KWS Cereals Regional Sales Rep/Forage Producer
- David Skaggs, Agrovive Biologicals, Dairy Product Manager
- Aaron Swanson, Forage Producer, Lake Norden, SD
- Colin Geppert, Forage Producer/Sales Account Manager, Hubbard Feeds
- Mike Barber, Rock River Lab, Inc./Forage Producer

NPFA UPDATE

FROM THE BOARD: CENTRAL PLAINS DAIRY EXPO RECAP

By: Jeff Jackson, President of NPFA

The 2026 Central Plains Dairy Expo in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, held March 17–19, 2026, was once again an extraordinary event that brought the dairy community together in a meaningful and memorable way. As part of its 25th year, the expo drew thousands of attendees from across the country and delivered an experience centered on education, innovation, fellowship, and appreciation for dairy producers. Central Plains Dairy Expo Sioux Falls, SD. [AgProud.com].

With more than 3,500 dairy enthusiasts representing 38 states, the event showcased the strength and reach of the dairy industry. Attendees enjoyed a welcoming atmosphere that included impressive hospitality, highlighted by 69 gallons of ice cream and 2,500 grilled cheese sandwiches served during the event. These details reflected the warmth and energy that have become hallmarks of the expo and helped make the gathering feel both large in scale and personal in spirit.

The Northern Plains Forage Association was proud to participate once again, hosting a booth that created opportunities to connect with friends, families, producers, and young people whose daily lives are shaped by forage production and livestock agriculture. The expo provided a valuable space to engage with the people who rely on forages in one form or another to raise livestock and help feed families across the nation and around the world. The event began Tuesday evening with a Welcome Reception that honored dairy producers and set the tone for the days ahead. A hearty buffet and evening entertainment brought the community together in celebration, and the reception once again reminded attendees why this event is so special. Reporting on the expo also noted the opening-night concert as a highlight of the kickoff festivities. BlackHawk headlined the concert portion of the event.

One of the most meaningful aspects of the Central Plains Dairy Expo is the networking and fellowship it fosters. Each year, when the dairy community gathers at the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center, the atmosphere feels more like a family reunion than a trade show. Producers, industry professionals, exhibitors, and supporters all come together to reconnect, exchange ideas, and strengthen relationships that carry through the rest of the year.

MEET THE EXTENSION SPECIALIST
PARKER WITT

Parker holds a bachelor's degree in Soil and Land Management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and a master's degree in Biological Science from South Dakota State University, where his research focused on developing predictors of forage growth and nutritional quality to support precision agricultural systems. He has worked as an Agricultural Conservation Specialist with Sand County Foundation in Madison, Wisconsin, and as a Soil Conservationist with the USDA-NRCS in southwest Minnesota, along with internships with agricultural cooperatives and state agencies along the way. Parker now serves as a Crop-Livestock Systems Field Specialist with SDSU Extension, where he focuses on expanding forage opportunities within cropland systems and advancing integrated crop-livestock management across the region.

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NPFA UPDATE

FROM THE BOARD: CENTRAL PLAINS DAIRY EXPO RECAP CONT.

By: Jeff Jackson, President of NPFA

A major highlight of the expo continues to be its outstanding educational programming. The breakout sessions served as a centerpiece of learning and innovation, with more than 50 sessions offered across two full days. According to the event schedule and post-event reporting, sessions covered a broad range of timely topics including herd health, nutrition, technology, artificial intelligence, immigration law, market outlooks, feed management, animal welfare, and more.

These smaller, focused sessions gave attendees the opportunity to dive deeper into specific areas of interest and hear directly from veterinarians, nutritionists, analysts, technical experts, and industry leaders. More importantly, they offered practical insights and real-world ideas that producers and agribusiness professionals could take home and apply immediately in their operations and organizations.

Another important strength of the expo was its commitment to serving a broader range of attendees. The inclusion of Spanish-language breakout sessions ensured that more individuals working in and supporting dairy enterprises could benefit from the educational content and participate more fully in the event experience. This addition reflected the expo's continued effort to be inclusive, practical, and responsive to the needs of today's dairy industry.

Overall, the 2026 Central Plains Dairy Expo once again proved why it remains one of the premier dairy events in the region. From the hospitality and entertainment to the educational depth and industry connections, the event delivered tremendous value for everyone involved. For organizations like the Northern Plains Forage Association, it was an excellent opportunity to celebrate agriculture, strengthen relationships, and support the producers and families who are at the heart of the dairy industry.

Please join us for next year's 2027 Central Plains Dairy Expo on March 23-25 in Sioux Falls, SD at the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

SDSU FORAGE VARIETY TRIAL RESULTS:

Check out the 2025 Forage Research Variety Trial Results! Forage trials including rye, triticale, warm and cool season forage trials, alfalfa variety trial, sorghum variety trials, and more are conducted on our research farms.

All SDSU Ag Experiment Station Reports

Southeast SD Winter Rye Grain 2025 Data

Southeast SD Winter and Spring Cereal 2025 Data

Southeast SD Alfalfa Variety 2025 Data

NPFA UPDATE

MEET OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Being a new, grassroots organization, we have relied heavily on sponsorships, goodwill, volunteers, and associate members. We would like to specifically recognize our associate members who have gone above and beyond to support the Northern Plains Forage Association in its infancy! If you would like to see your business or operation listed here- contact us!

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UPCOMING REGIONAL FORAGE-RELATED EVENTS

- **SD 21st Annual Soil and 42nd Annual Rangeland Days June 9-10 @ Belle Fouche, SD**
- **Summer Grazing Schools June 9-11 @ Anselmo, NE and McGinn Ranch**
- **SD Grasslands Coalition Grazing Schools June 16-18; Sept 9-11 @ Wall and Chamberlain, SD**
- **SDSU Extension Drought Meeting June 17 @ Winner, Yankton, and Hot Springs, SD**
- **West River Soil Health School June 24-25 @ Dry Creek Farm and Ranch, Caputa, SD**
- **Dakota Lakes Research Farm Field Day June 26 @ Pierre, SD**
- **Southeast Research Farm Field Day July 7 @ Beresford, SD**
- **Summer Forage Field Day (hosted by SDSU, UNL, NPFA, and I-29 Moo-U) August 18 @ Morris, MN**

*This is the best list available at time of publication- if you would like a forage-related event listed here, please contact Kim Ricardo via email @ kimberly.ricardo@sdstate.edu.