Seminal plasma is the cell free fluid that transports sperm cells into the female reproductive tract at insemination. However, during AI seminal plasma is either removed or significantly diluted to facilitate an increased number of insemination from a single ejaculate, one ejaculate is enough to provide for 300 breedings. Previous work in our laboratory has shown the benefits of uterine seminal plasma exposure in promoting healthy pregnancy outcomes by increasing embryo development and changing the maternal immune system during early pregnancy. We hypothesize that exposure of uterine tissues to seminal plasma at the time of AI in cows promotes cellular changes that increase pregnancy success. In addition, we aim to identify the active proteins in seminal plasma that induce these changes and supplement them back into semen for AI.

Using an explant model of isolated endometrium (the lining of the uterus) we have demonstrated that seminal plasma does indeed drive acute changes in the expression of key molecules important in early embryo development. We observed significant time and dose dependent increases in the expression of CSF2, PTGS and IFNε in response to seminal plasma (15-, 5- and 10-fold, respectively). Upregulation of these molecules in the uterus at the time of AI may help establish healthy embryonic development, and subsequently improve pregnancy outcomes.

Investigations in women, pigs and mice suggest that the seminal plasma protein TGFβ is integral in initiating the changes in uterine protein expression that may assist in embryo development. As such we profiled semen for TGFβ content in 33 bulls. Interestingly we identified two isoforms of TGFβ in bovine seminal plasma. Seminal plasma TGFβ-1 was measured at very high concentrations with an average concentration of 7108 ±1553 pg/ml (range of 156 - 33,311 pg/ml). Seminal plasma TGFβ-2 was measured at an average concentration of 6067 ± 1157 pg/ml (range of 0 - 27,358 pg/ml). The wide variation of both TGFβ isoforms between bulls may be a source of variable pregnancy rates observed in bulls at different locations or different times of year. It has been suggested that diet, environment and stress can all modulate TGFβ expression in biological fluids.

The preliminary studies discussed here are the first to describe the presence of TGFβ in bull semen and the role in which it can modulate the uterine environment at the time of insemination to potentially improve embryo quality. We have recently completed an experiment where we have infused seminal plasma into cows at the time of AI to identify specific changes in the uterus in a whole animal model. The fact that seminal plasma proteins are lacking, or significantly diluted during AI provides a unique opportunity to improve AI pregnancy success.
Improving efficiency of microbial growth in order to reduce protein feed costs for cows

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**Objectives:** The majority of protein metabolized by the cow comes from microbes growing in the rumen, but microbes use as little as 1/3 cellular energy (ATP) on growth. If we could elucidate why microbes grow so wastefully, we could increase microbial protein supply to the cow and decrease need for expensive feed protein. We know that microbes waste energy on storing energy inefficiently (synthesizing reserve carbohydrate) and burning off excess energy as heat (energy spilling), but we do not know the relative importance of these energy sinks. The objective of this study was to compare how protozoa and bacteria, two major microbial groups in the rumen, waste energy on reserve carbohydrate synthesis vs. energy spilling when given excess energy (glucose).

**Methods:** Rumen fluid was collected from one of two cows, and bacteria and protozoa were prepared by filtration and centrifugation. Microbial groups were resuspended in nitrogen-free buffer (to limit growth), transferred to anaerobic flasks, and then given a large dose of glucose (5 mM). Glucose, reserve carbohydrate, and total heat production were monitored after dosing glucose. Energy spilling was calculated as heat not accounted by synthesis of reserve carbohydrate or endogenous metabolism (heat production prior to dosing glucose). Experiments were repeated six times per microbial group.

**Results:** Protozoa consumed glucose rapidly (within 50 min) and synthesized large amounts of reserve carbohydrate, with over half of glucose carbon (53%) being directed towards this carbohydrate. They did not spill energy, as all heat production (104%) was accounted by reserve carbohydrate and endogenous metabolism. Bacteria, by contrast, consumed glucose more slowly (¼ the rate of protozoa). They synthesized only half as much reserve carbohydrate as protozoa. Instead, bacteria spilled large amounts of energy, with spilling accounting for >50% of heat production once glucose was exhausted.

**Conclusions:** Both protozoa and bacteria can waste energy from excess glucose, with protozoa doing so by synthesizing reserve carbohydrate and bacteria largely by spilling energy.

**Implications:** These results could guide feeding strategies that decrease energy waste by microbes, increase microbial protein supply, and decrease feed protein. Specifically, results could improve prediction of microbial protein supply by diet formulation software, which in turn would guide those strategies. Diet formulation software, such as the Cornell Net Carbohydrate and Protein System (CNCPS), predicts microbial protein supply but imperfectly, owing to poor representation for how microbes waste energy on reserve carbohydrate and energy spilling. Our results will improve this representation, improve prediction of microbial protein supply, enable software to formulate diets that maximize microbial protein, and reduce expensive feed protein.
GENETIC AND NON-GENETIC EFFECTS ON MATERNAL ABILITY TO SUPPORT EMBRYONIC SURVIVAL AND MODIFY SUBSEQUENT PERFORMANCE OF THE OFFSPRING

Peter J. Hansen, Serdal Dikmen, Raluca Mateescu, and John B. Cole

Dept. of Animal Sciences, University of Florida (PJH, RM), Uludag University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Bursa, Turkey (SD), and USDA Animal Improvement Laboratory, Beltsville MD (JC)

Objectives
We analyzed a unique dataset of embryo transfer recipients and their calves from a local dairy in north Florida to achieve two goals:
1) Identify genetic markers for ability of cows to produce embryos, of cows to become pregnant after embryo transfer, and of the embryos to establish pregnancy after transfer to recipients
2) Determine whether embryo transfer and parity have effects on the offspring that affect its subsequent production when it becomes an adult.

Genetic markers for embryo transfer. Reproductive technologies such as superovulation and embryo transfer allow superior females to produce many more offspring than in traditional breeding programs. In addition to high cost, these technologies are also associated with variable animal response. Heritability of number of structures recovered and number of good embryos for superovulation were moderate (0.27 and 0.15, respectively). Values for number of good embryos from in vitro fertilization (IVF) were 0.21. Thus, there is genetic variation in embryo production in both systems. In contrast, the heritability of recipient (0.03) and embryo (0.02) pregnancy success after transfer were low. A genome wide association study was performed to identify regions of the genome associated with embryo production traits. Several regions were identified including several similar to regions previously associated with other fertility traits. These regions might be useful in increasing accuracy of genetic selection for reproduction.

Postnatal function as affected by embryo technology and maternal parity during gestation. This study tested the hypothesis that postnatal function of cattle is influenced by the environment experienced by the developing embryo and fetus during gestation. Accordingly, we evaluated survival, growth, and production traits of offspring derived by IVF, multiple ovulation and embryo transfer (MOET), and artificial insemination (AI). IVF calves were born heavier and had an altered growth trajectory compared to AI calves, in addition to having higher mortality rates during the first six months of age. Traits of MOET offspring were intermediate and not different from AI or IVF. Moreover, the altered phenotype of IVF offspring extended to adult milk production. Cows derived by IVF produced less milk and fat in their first lactation compared with dairy cows derived by AI. Additionally, females born to heifers had a distinct postnatal phenotype compared with offspring from cows. In conclusion, we provide evidence that the microenvironment of the embryo and fetus can affect development in ways that have an impact on adult performance. Some benefits of IVF in livestock for genetic improvement could be offset in certain circumstances by adverse programming events.
Promoting testing and surveillance for bovine viral diarrhea virus in Florida and Georgia Dairy herds using bulk tank milk samples

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Funding to support this research was provided through the Florida Milk Checkoff program, May 1, 2015

Disease caused by bovine viral diarrhea virus (BVD) produces significant economic loss to the dairy industry. Studies have shown a BVD outbreak in a lactating herd can cost $35 to $410 per lactating cow depending on the severity of the disease. Diseases observed in infected herds include: reproductive failure (failure to conceive, embryonic loss, abortion, congenital defects and stillborn or weak, unthrifty calves) and respiratory disease and diarrhea in young calves. The effect of BVD infection on the developing fetus varies depending on the stage of pregnancy. Exposure of the fetus to the non-cytopathic BVD biotype prior to 125 days of gestation can result in the development of a persistently infected (PI) calf. PI calves shed large numbers of the virus throughout their lifetime and continually expose other cattle to the virus. Management practices to control the disease include vaccination of all members of the herd, biosecurity procedures to prevent introduction, bio-containment to interrupt the spread of the virus and laboratory testing of samples for the presence of the virus in a herd, with the final goal of identifying and removing PI animals from the herd.

A polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay to detect BVD antigen has been validated for use in bulk milk samples (Idexx VetMAX™ Gold BVDv Detection Kit). This test has been shown to be highly sensitive and can consistently detect a single PI cow in a group of up to 800 lactating dairy cows. Samples from each truckload of milk from 39 dairies in GA and 39 in FL delivered to Southeast Milk, Inc. laboratories in Belleview or Okeechobee, FL were collected by SMI employees and shipped to the TVDIL for testing over a 6 month period. Somatic cells were collected from the milk samples and BVD RNA was extracted.

The cumulative incidence of BVD 38.4% [14/39 (35.9%) farms in FL and 16/39 (41%) farms in GA had at least one positive test during the 6 month period]. A follow up survey asking dairy owners or managers about their management practices was sent to all the dairies tested. Twenty one surveys were returned (13 from BVD negative herds and 8 from positive herds). Surveys included questions about replacement management or source, vaccination practices, degree of veterinary involvement and owner knowledge about BVD. Responses from positive and negative dairies were compared using Fisher’s Exact statistical test. Overall, 95% of farmers had some knowledge about BVD. Management activities such as purchasing or raising replacement heifers, vaccination programs and vaccines used, BVD testing, etc. were not significantly different between farms with a positive or negative BVD test. However, negative BVD farms were more likely to have consulted a veterinarian on a weekly or monthly basis than BVD positive farms (81.8% vs 14.3% respectively; P=0.033).

These results indicate a whole herd BVD testing plan may be warranted in some herds. BVD is likely causing health and reproductive problems.
Evaluating new sensor technologies and breeding lines for mitigating forage yield decline

Cheryl Mackowiak and Ann Blount: NFREC, Quincy Florida

Field and crop surveying (sensor-based) technologies are being developed to better assess crop health from plant- to field-scale. The Veris® on-the-go sensor technology provides a platform to collect real-time soil electrical conductivity (EC), pH, and organic matter measurements comprised of hundreds or more samples per acre (significantly greater than is typically performed with grid sampling). Additionally, spectral imaging sensors can detect canopy visible and near visible radiation to calculate a Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI for estimating crop productivity) or thermal radiation, used to detect crop development and stress. Canopy sensors can be used on the ground or via drones. The NDVI can also be calculated from satellite imagery. The potential production benefits derived from these technologies have yet to be realized or demonstrated across many commodities or production systems. We soil mapped sections of fields at three different dairies across Florida. The question was: Can we use soil mapping and other data collections, such as canopy sensing via hand-held or aerial methods, to aid in forecasting crop productivity in cool-season forages?

Our project began in late fall, 2015, with cool-season forage plantings at three Florida dairies. We tested commercial varieties and experimental lines of triticale, oat, wheat, rye and ryegrass. We included N calibration test strips (56 kg N ha⁻¹ in a 6 m wide band across the forage types), used for the canopy sensing. Additionally, a quinine-based, bird-repellent seed treatment (Avipel, Arkion Life Sciences, LLC., New Castle, DE), was demonstrated. Bird damage, particularly on central and southern Florida dairy operations, remains a serious problem to silage seed plantings.

The Veris MSP3 EC mapping helped forecast crop response, where greater relative yields tended to correspond to higher EC values. It is interesting to note that the lowest EC values also coincided well with lighter colored areas depicted in online Google Earth maps. These lighter colored swaths were likely derived from spatial variability in pivot emitter performance over time. Soil pH helped to identify where alkalinity was increasing. The soil organic matter was not as well understood, as it tended to be greater in areas with greater EC, but not always.

Aerial thermal imagery coincided with the NDVI results in that cooler temps were found with forages that were less mature or having greater coverage and growth. Cooler canopy temperatures were likely due to increased canopy transpiration. However, high transpiration rates might also be a sign that a plant is less water efficient and therefore one might consider thermal imagery as a useful field screening tool in drought tolerance research and breeding. A combination of imaging and mapping tools, along with strategic sampling, can be used towards developing productivity indices, but much further research and testing is required in this area.

Our on-dairy mapping and surveying efforts coincided with the testing of different cool-season grass forages over the past few years. Recent releases include rust resistant forage oat varieties, “Legend 567” and “FL 0720” that is under commercial production contract (available Fall, 2017). We are anticipating the release of a new forage triticale, FL08128 for cool-season silage production and excellent disease resistance. The on-farm testing has served also as sentinel plots to indicate new disease or insect outbreaks, like sorghum and oat aphids, crown rust on oat, and gray leaf spot on ryegrass.
Title: A High Manure Uptake Bermudagrass/Stargrass for Dairy Production

Authors: P.R. Munoz, J. Dubeux, and L. Sollenberger

Agronomy Department - IFAS - University of Florida

Objectives
In the process of developing new forage cultivars, selection is carried out under recommended or reduced fertilizer rates to produce nutrient efficient cultivars. However, in dairy operations, each cow generates significant amounts of manure every day that must be used or disposed. Usually dairy producers apply this manure in bermudagrass and stargrass pastures. This takes advantage of manure as a fertilizer but is also a way to dispose of this large amount of “waste.” The amount applied is restricted by the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) to the amount of nutrients, especially nitrogen, removed by the pasture. The objective of this work was to develop a new variety of bermudagrass aimed at the problem of nutrient uptake, thus the new variety should not only yield well, but also be able to remove more nutrients than the current varieties. With this new variety the dairy producer could increase the manure applications per acre per year in their NMP.

Methods
Starting in early summer 2014, we established a large collection of 287 bermudagrass and stargrass lines in three Florida sites: Ona, Citra, and Marianna. This collection was evaluated for yield, diseases, pest and nitrogen content. We calculated the amount of nitrogen needed for unit of biomass produced and selected the four with the higher nutrient uptake per unit of mass and three with the lowest, with the addition of two controls (Florida 44 and Tifton 85). A greenhouse experiment with increased levels of nutrients was established. Once the response of the selections was confirmed we established a field experiment, summer 2015, under four nutrient fertilization rates: 1/2X, 1X, 2X, and 6X, where X=recommended fertilization for hay production of bermudagrass. Yield was evaluated six times during in 2016, the first year of evaluation.

Results and Implications
Out of the seven selections six produced more biomass than the controls. Response to nutrient fertilization was observed in four of the selections, with higher biomass production usually achieved when fertilized with 2X. Three of the selections showed good efficiency potential with production of a similar amount of biomass with1/2X as with higher nutrient rates. One selection performed the best under low and high nutrient fertilization rates, reaching over 22,000 lb/acre during the season. As a reference, the control Tifton 85 produced an average of 15,000 lb/acre and did not respond significantly to nitrogen fertilization. These experimental lines will be established at three Florida sites during 2017, evaluated under low and high nutrient fertilization for two years to collect the data needed for release to Florida producers as cultivars. Additionally, one or two collaborators would be needed to evaluate their performance under manure applications. With this procedure we expect to have an improved cultivar for Florida dairy producers in the near future.
Effects of dietary 25-hydroxyvitamin D on activation of antimicrobial defenses of dairy cattle

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Previous research funded by the Milk Check-Off showed that intramammary administration of the active vitamin D metabolite, 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3, enhanced expression of antimicrobial genes in immune cells of the udder. Objectives in this experiment were to determine the effects of feeding supplemental 25-hydroxyvitamin D3, the precursor to 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3, compared with conventional vitamin D3 on concentrations of 25-hydroxyvitamin D and minerals in serum, mammary immunity, and mastitis resistance in dairy cows. Sixty Holstein cows (multiparous, pregnant, lactating, SCC < 165,000/mL) were blocked by milk yield and, within each block, randomly assigned to receive a daily dietary supplement containing 1 mg vitamin D3 (1mgD, equivalent to 40,000 IU), 3 mg vitamin D3 (3mgD), 1 mg 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 (1mg25D), or 3 mg 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 (3mg25D) for 28 days (n = 15/group). Blood and milk were sampled at 0, 7, 14, and 21 d for measurement of vitamin D metabolites, minerals, and energy metabolites in serum. At 21 d, cows fed 1mgD and 3mg25D received an intramammary Streptococcus uberis challenge. Data were analyzed by analysis of variance. Significance was declared at P < 0.05. The cows fed the 1mg25D and 3mg25D treatments had greater concentrations of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in serum at 7, 14 and 21 d compared with cows fed 1mgD and 3mgD treatments (62 ± 7, 66 ± 8 ng/mL, 135 ± 15, and 232 ± 26 ng/mL for 1mgD, 3mgD, 1mg25D, and 3mg25D, respectively, at 21 d). The 3mg25D cows had greater concentrations of calcium and phosphorous at 21 d compared with other treatments (Ca = 2.38, 2.4, 2.37, 2.48 ± 0.02 mM; P = 1.69, 1.87, 1.88 and 2.10 ± 0.08 mM for 1mgD, 3mgD, 1mg25D and 3mg25D, respectively). Milk yield, dry matter intake, bodyweight, and energy metabolites (NEFA, BHBA, glucose) did not differ between treatments. Expression of inducible nitric oxide synthase and beta-defensin 7 antimicrobial protein genes in milk somatic cells sampled from 0 to 21 d was positively correlated with concentrations of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in serum. For the mastitis challenge, the 3mg25D cows had less severe mastitis at 60 and 72 h after challenge with Streptococcus uberis compared with 1mgD cows. The 3mg25D cows also had slightly lower (P = 0.06) rectal temperature compared with 1mgD cows during the challenge period (38.9 vs. 39.1 °C). Inducible nitric oxide synthase gene expression, when adjusted for vitamin D 1α-hydroxylase gene expression, was greater in 3mg25D cows compared with 1mgD cows during mastitis. In conclusion, feeding 25-hydroxyvitmain D3 increased serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D more effectively than supplemental vitamin D3, resulting in increased serum calcium and phosphorous concentrations and less severe mastitis in lactating dairy cows.
Effect of Level of Dietary Cation-Anion Difference and Duration of Prepartum Feeding on Calcium and Energy Metabolism in Transition Cows

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Department of Animal Sciences, University of Florida

The objectives were to evaluate the effects of two levels of negative dietary cation anion difference (DCAD), -70 vs. -180 mEq/kg, and two durations of feeding, 21 vs. 42 days, on performance and metabolism in parous Holstein cows. One-hundred and fourteen (n = 114) Holstein cows at 230 d of gestation were randomly assigned to one of four treatments with two levels of negative DCAD (-70 vs. -180 mEq/kg) and two durations (Dur) of feeding the negative DCAD, short (S; 21 days) or long (L; 42 days). Cows in S received a diet for the first 21 days of dry period that was similar in nutrient content to the negative DCAD diets, but had a positive DCAD of +110 mEq/kg. Therefore, during the first 21 d of the experiment, cows were fed one of three DCAD diets, +110, -70, or -180 mEq/kg, whereas during the last 21 d of gestation they were fed either -70 or -180 mEq/kg. Measurements included intake of dry matter, yields of milk and milk components, body weight, body condition, and blood samples analyzed for minerals, metabolites and measures of acid-base status. Reducing the level of negative DCAD induced a more exacerbated compensated metabolic acidosis that increased concentrations of ionized calcium (iCa) during the prepartum period (1.26 vs. 1.29 ± 0.01 mM). Prepartum dry matter intake decreased (P=0.02) approximately 1.2 kg/d in the first 21 days of the dry period in L compared with S. Also, reducing the level of negative DCAD reduced (P<0.01) dry matter intake approximately 1 kg/d in the last 21 days of gestation. Yield and composition of colostrum was not influenced by treatments (means of 4.2 kg, 4.60% fat, and 12.4% true protein). Extending the period of feeding the negative DCAD, particularly the -70 mEq/kg, reduced milk yield in the first 42 DIM (Table 1); however, yields of 3.5% fat-corrected milk (FCM), energy-corrected milk (ECM), fat and true protein were unaffected by treatments.

Table 1. Effect of level of DCAD and duration of feeding on lactation performance in Holstein cows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>-70 mEq/kg</th>
<th>-180 mEq/kg</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk, kg/d</td>
<td>43.1ᵃ</td>
<td>39.1ᵇ</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5% FCM, kg/d</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECM, kg/d</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield, kg/d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactose</td>
<td>2.00ᵃ</td>
<td>1.82ᵇ</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solids not fat</td>
<td>3.64⁴</td>
<td>3.34⁵</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net energy, Mcal/kg</td>
<td>0.731ᴬ</td>
<td>0.757ᴴ</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ᵃᵇ Values with different superscripts differed (P ≤ 0.05); ⁴⁵ Values with different superscripts

Initial results suggest that reducing the negative DCAD from -70 to -180 and extending the period of feeding from 21 to 42 days had minor effects on cows during the postpartum period. In fact, yields of 3.5% FCM, ECM and milk components were unaffected by treatment.
Title: Jiggs Bermudagrass and Mulato II Brachiariagrass: Are They Viable Options for Use on North Florida/South Georgia Dairies?

Authors: Lynn Sollenberger (Agronomy Dept.), Joe Vendramini (Range Cattle REC), Marta Kohmann (Agronomy Dept.), Leonardo Moreno (Agronomy Dept.), and Jose Dubeux (North Florida REC)

Abstract:

Productive and high quality forages are critical to the success of dairy operations, but the combination of high yield and excellent quality has been difficult to find among warm-season perennial grasses adapted to the Gulf Coast region. Mulato II brachiariagrass and Jiggs bermudagrass have characteristics that make them attractive to dairy enterprises, but additional research station and on-farm evaluation is needed before they can be recommended to producers. Jiggs bermudagrass establishes rapidly, has fine stems for rapid wilting/drying, is persistent under frequent defoliation, and tolerates poorly drained soils. Mulato II is a productive grass with high nutritive value, but persistence in cooler climates is not documented. For both grasses, it is important to know if they provide advantages over currently used hybrid bermudagrasses in North Florida/South Georgia, environments that are cooler than where they have been most widely tested and used.

The objective of this project was to assess the potential of Jiggs and Mulato II for use as warm-season forages on dairies by measuring yield, persistence, and nutritive value in research station experiments and on-farm demonstrations carried out at three dairies. At each dairy, Jiggs and Tifton 85 bermudagrasses and Mulato II brachiariagrass were planted in side-by-side 0.5-acre strips between July 24 and August 6, 2014. Establishment was monitored during the 2014 growing season. On-station, one experiment compared Jiggs and Tifton 85 bermudagrasses, harvested every 28 days during summer at two stubble heights (3 and 6 inches) and fertilized at three levels of K2O (0, 20, and 40 lb/acre/harvest). The second experiment compared Jiggs and Mulato II harvested every 28 days and fertilized at two nitrogen rates.

The on-farm demonstrations showed that under producer conditions Jiggs bermudagrass consistently established easier and faster than Tifton 85 or Mulato II. Through two years, on-station experiments showed no evidence that Jiggs is less cold tolerant than Tifton 85 in North Florida, but Jiggs forage is less digestible than Tifton 85 and Mulato II. Mulato II stands survived the first winter after planting with virtually no stand loss and produced higher yields than Tifton 85 in the year after planting due to strong late-season production. However, an average to slightly colder than average second winter killed most of the Mulato II stand indicating that it will not function as a long-lived perennial in North Florida. Based on these studies, we conclude that Jiggs provides rapid establishment and earlier spring growth than most bermudagrasses. Additionally, it has persisted under frequent cutting in North Florida for at least two years, but its forage is less digestible than Tifton 85. Mulato II is not well suited to systems requiring a long-lived perennial, but because it is a seeded forage, it may have some potential as a high digestibility, short rotation forage crop. It could be seeded in spring of one year and produce high yields of high quality forage that growing season and the next.
Inoculant Effects on Mycotoxins, Fermentation Characteristics, and Nutritive Value of Bermudagrass Silage – Year 2

Joe Vendramini¹, Lynn Sollenberger², and Jose C. Dubeux Jr.³

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² Agronomy Department, Gainesville, FL
³ North Florida Research and Education Center, Marianna, FL

Year Funded: 2015

The objective of this research project was to evaluate the effects of commercial silage inoculants on mycotoxins, fermentation characteristics, and nutritive value of bermudagrass silage. The data is referent to the second year of this research project. The experimental area was located at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center, Ona, FL. A Jiggs bermudagrass hayfield was subdivided in 36 plots of 10 x 10 ft each plot. The plots were staged on September 15 2015 at 3 inches stubble height and fertilized with 80 lbs N/ac. The harvest occurred on October 15 2015 with target regrowth interval of 4 weeks. Treatments were 7 commercial inoculants and control (untreated treatment) in a randomized complete block design with 6 replicates. The inoculants tested were B500, Biotal Plus II, Early Sile Advance, Promote HQ, Promote VS-3, AS, and XC. The mini-silos (PVC pipes with rubber caps with capacity of 2 lb of green forage) were filled immediately after harvest with the target 20-30% forage dry mater concentration. The inoculants were applied with a hand sprayer before ensiling. The silos were opened on February 19 2015. There were no effects (P > 0.05) of the inoculants on silage nutritive value. The mean values of nutritive value measurements were: DM = 25%, DM recovery = 91%, CP = 12.1%, NDF = 68.1%, ADF = 39.7%, IVTD = 49%, and NDFD = 25%. In addition, there were no effects (P > 0.05) of inoculant on fermentation characteristics. The mean values for the fermentation characteristics were: pH = 5.0, Lactic acid = 2.0%, Acetic acid = 1.4%, Propionic acid = 0.5%, Butyric acid = 0.3%, and Ammonia = 19.3% CP. Aerobic stability (120 h) and mold and yeast counts pre- and post-aerobic stability measurements were similar among treatments. In addition, there was no presence of aflatoxin (< 5 ppb), zearalenone (< 500 ppb) and T2 (< 500 ppb) on the silage in any of the treatments tested. Commercial inoculants were not effective to improve nutritive value, fermentation characteristics, and aerobic stability of Jiggs bermudagrass silage. The results differed from the first year of the research trial (2014) despite of similar forage characteristics in 2014 and 2015. There is a need to develop management practices to make the use of inoculants in warm-season grass silage more consistent and predictable.