

Fact Sheet: Hay & Forage



- Forages are plants and plant parts, other than separated grains, which livestock eat.
- Forages can be consumed straight from the pasture or harvested and stored as hay or silage (fermented plant material).



- Over 4 million acres are devoted to forage production in Alabama. This is the second-highest commercial land use of a commodity in Alabama, trailing only forestry.
- Alabama farmers harvested 810,000 acres of hay in 2016.
- The Alabama hay crop was valued at \$2.26 million in 2016.
- Forageland acreage in Alabama exceeds acreage of all other crops combined.
- Tall fescue, Bermudagrass, bahiagrass, dallisgrass, white clover, ryegrass, rye, wheat and oats are some of the most popular forages grown in Alabama.
- On average, forages comprise 84 percent of beef cattle feed consumption.
- Forage crops provide nutrients for many wildlife species.
- Forage crops are an important source of pollen and nectar for honeybees.
- Forage crops are one of the most effective erosion-preventing groundcovers and help protect water quality.
- Forage crops are often planted in rotation with row crops such as cotton or peanuts to replenish soil nutrients.
- One acre of forages protects 2 million pounds of soil.
- Over 40 non-native forage crops are commonly planted in Alabama.
- The forage-based livestock industry contributes more than \$60 billion to the U.S. economy annually.
- The U.S. hay crop is valued at \$11 billion, making it the third most valuable crop in the U.S. after corn and soybeans.
- Begin grazing tall fescue pastures at a target height of 4-8 inches, and end at a height of 2-3 inches. For bahiagrass, begin grazing at 6-10 inches and end at 1-2 inches. For white clover, begin grazing at 6-8 inches and end at 1-3 inches.

Sources:
AFGC.org
Encyclopediaofalabama.org
GeorgiaForages.com
USDA.org