

Development of Grazing Recommendations and On-Farm Decision Tools for Managing Alfalfa-Grass Mixtures in the Southeastern U.S.

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This integrated research-extension project is a collaboration between three southeastern universities (University of Georgia, Auburn University, and the University of Florida) to address alfalfa management strategies in the Southeast related to the development of grazing parameters and decision tools to support efficient forage utilization and stand survival in mixed alfalfa-bermudagrass pastures. Recently, there has been growing interest in interseeding high-quality legumes, like alfalfa, into existing bermudagrass stands as a step towards improving forage, animal, economic, and ecosystem sustainability in the Southeast. Since expansion opportunities are limited for cattle operations, the utilization of alfalfa will provide producers with a needed tool to improve production efficiency and minimize traditional inputs with current land resources. Limited work has evaluated the use of alfalfa-bermudagrass mixed swards under grazing conditions, and these evaluations have primarily used either fixed residual height or rest periods to determine grazing period end points. It has been noted that both grazing intensity and frequency impact overall stand; however, no published work has evaluated the associated relationship between harvest height and frequency to better define grazing parameters to be later implemented in research grazing evaluations. The objectives of this work are to (1) define alfalfa grazing metrics in alfalfa-bermudagrass mixed swards, (2) develop extension tools to help producers better manage their alfalfa mixed stands, and (3) ultimately increase alfalfa knowledge and awareness, utilization, and acreage in the Southeast. This project utilizes six locations on university research stations in three states (Figure 1). We are currently in the establishment phase of this work.

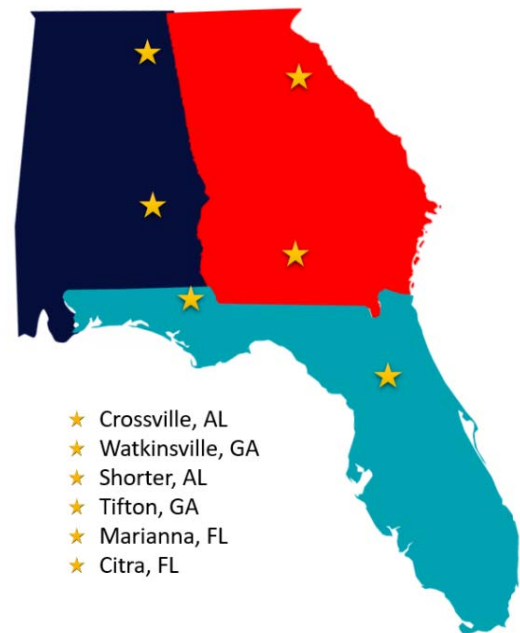


Figure 1. Map of evaluation locations

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