

Coshocton County Forage and Pasture Management Program

David L. Marrison, The Ohio State University, marrison.2@osu.edu

Background

The development of county-based Extension programs are tied closely to local needs assessments and to the commodities raised by producers. This educational program emphasis was undertaken by the Educator after a program review in 2019. The 2017 Census of Agriculture reports that 68,997 acres or 49.7% of the cropland in Coshocton County, Ohio is dedicated to pasture or forage production. The 2018-2019 Coshocton County Needs Assessment also revealed the top educational need as expressed by producers was forage, hay & pasture management. Sixty-five percent (65.5%) of the respondents to the survey listed this area as the top educational need.

Coshocton County Needs Assessment – Top Ten Extension Program Topics	Topic	Number Respondents	Percentage
Forage, Hay & Pasture	Crop Management	93	65.5%
Fertilizer & Nutrient Management	Crop Management	82	57.7%
Weed, Insect & Disease Management	Crop Management	79	55.6%
Beef Cattle	Livestock Management	77	54.2%
Row Crop (corn, soybeans, wheat)	Crop Management	65	45.8%

Educational Initiative

To help address this need, the Educator has worked to increase the programming emphasis in forage production over the past 3 years. Education and research included:

- Pasture Walks
- Forage Quality Testing
- Forage Quality Workshops
- Increased Education via Extension Publications



There are over 39,000 acres of pasture in Coshocton County.

Pasture Walks

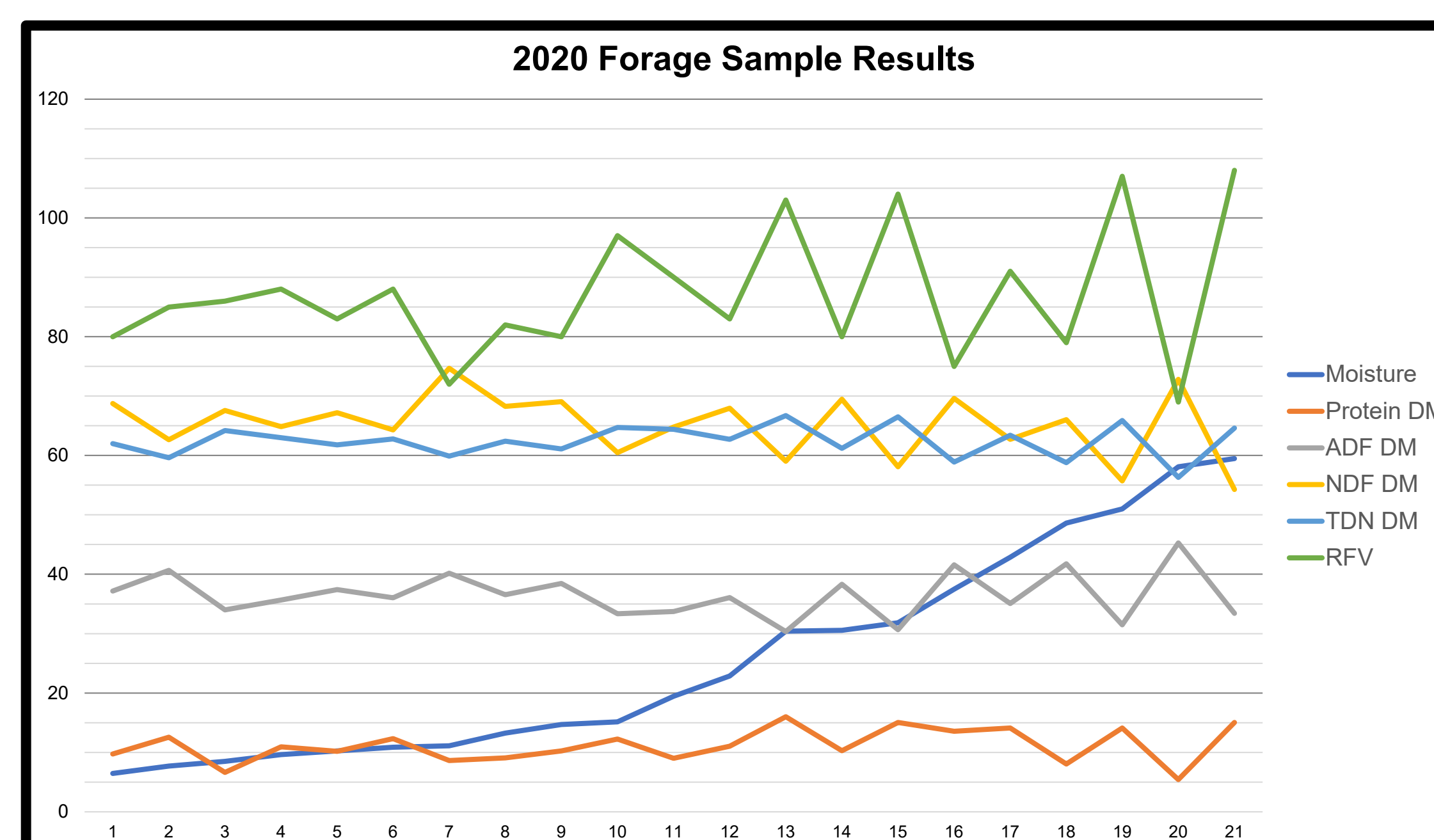
The Educator continued the long-standing tradition of holding summer pasture walks in conjunction with the Coshocton Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Since 2019, four pasture walks were held in which 112 producers attended.



OSU Extension Educator Christine Gelley teaches on warm season grass management at a pasture walk held in 2020 (left) and Bob Hendershot, retired Natural Resource Conservation Service Grazing Specialist teaches at a 2019 pasture walk (right).

Forage Quality Testing

- ✓ Thirty-two free forage samples were taken in 2019-2020 by the Educator.
- ✓ Extension cost recovery funds were used to fund the testing project.
- ✓ Each producer received a written individual instruction/analysis letter of their forage test.



Forage Quality Workshops

Two forage quality workshops were held in 2020-21 in which 35 producers attended. The goal of these workshops were to help producers learn about forage sampling, how to interpret forage analysis reports, and how to account for poor quality hay when feeding livestock.



Dr. Ted Wiseman teaches at the Forage Quality Workshop in March 2020.



As a result of the programs:

- ✓ 100% of attendees reported they felt more confident on how to take a forage sample.
- ✓ 81.3% reported they felt more confident on understanding the results of the test.
- ✓ Only 11.8% reported taking a forage sample of their hay. Of the 88.2% who have not hay tested previously, 50% reported they would test their hay in the upcoming year.
- ✓ As a result of the program, the Educator allocated program money to conduct free forage testing for area farmers.

Future Plans

Some of the Educator's future plans include offering a summer forage field day, expand the summer pasture walk program, and to seek additional funding sources to expanding the forage testing program.