



Southern Cover Crops Council  
Regional BMPs for Cover Crops in Grazing Systems –  
A Case Review from Bleckley County Georgia

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# Overview

- Grower and Site Review
- Why? – Hay vs. Grazing
- Establishment
  - Species / Varieties / Establishment timing and methods



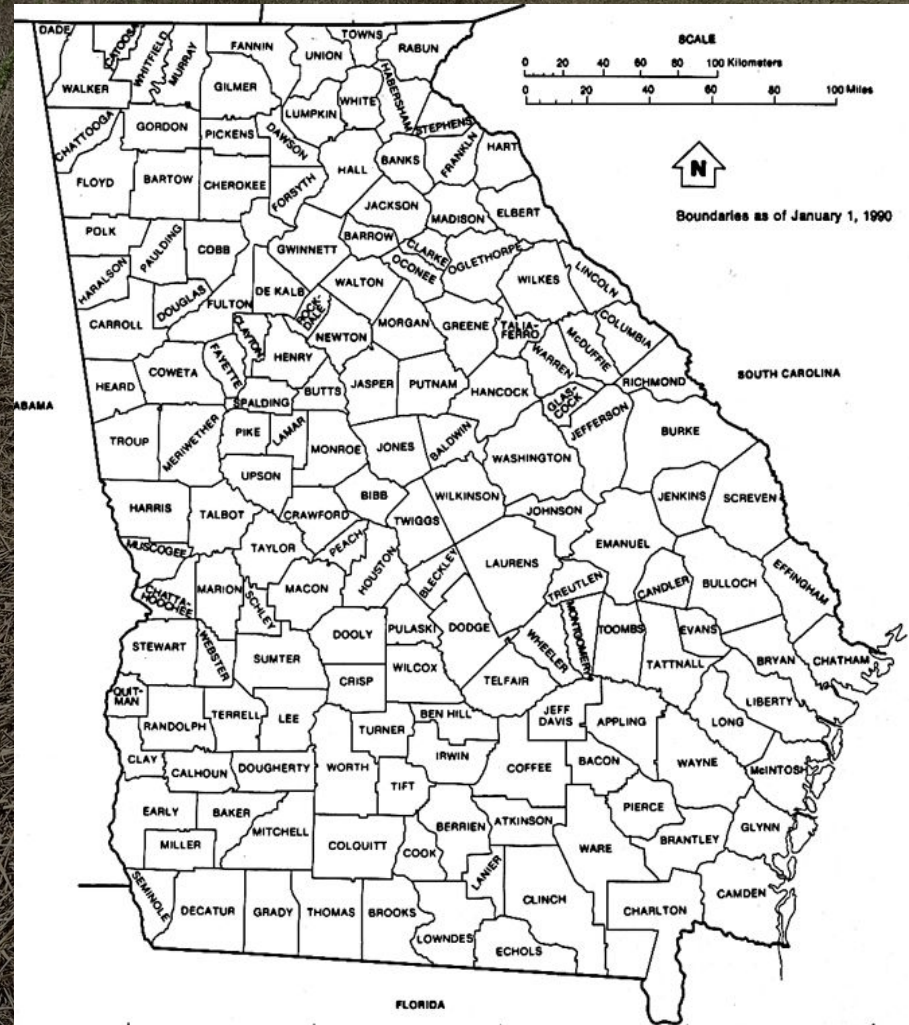
# Grower

- Mike Lucas
- Acres
  - 500 Row Crop
    - Mix of dryland and irrigated
  - 150 Perennial Pasture
- Cotton – Peanuts – Corn
- Initial Goal – More Grazing Days
- Soil Health Goals arrived later



# Bleckley County

- First Killing Frost  
– November 21<sup>st</sup>
- Last Killing Frost  
– March 8<sup>th</sup>



# Grazed Cropland - Mike Lucas

- ± 20 Acres Bahia Grass Pasture
- ± 38 Acres Grazed Cropland - 2025 Crop = Corn
- ± 40 Acres Grazed Cropland - 2025 Crop = Peanuts

Dominant Soil Map Units -  
Dothan - Loamy Sand  
Nankin - Loamy Sand  
Tifton - Loamy Sand

40 Brood Cows - Calving November to January

**Legend**



278

± 20 Acres Bahia Pasture

± 38 Acres Grazed Cropland - 2025 - Corn

± 40 Acres Grazed Cropland - 2025 - Peanuts

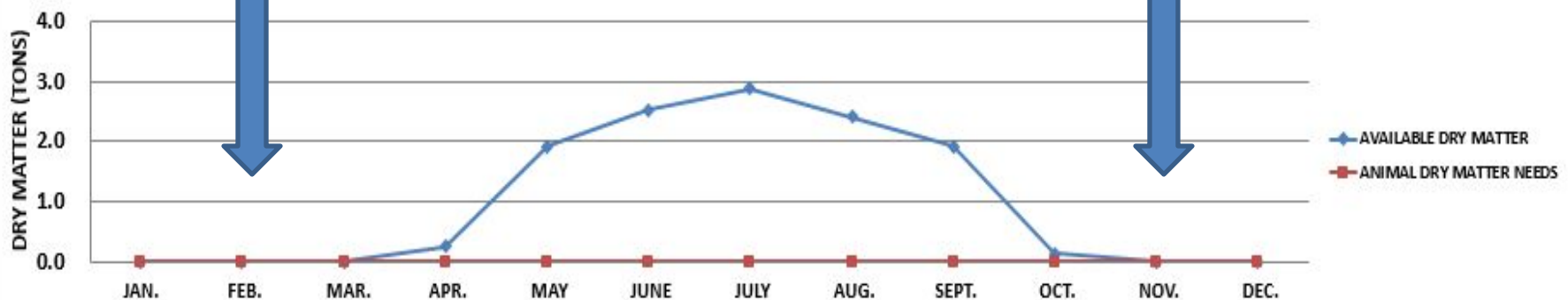
Lucas-Deer Corn



# Introduced Warm Season Perennial Grasses

- Bermudagrass – Base Forage for the Flatwoods, Coastal Plain, and Piedmont Regions
  - Common - 2-6 Tons/Acre
  - Hybrid – 4-8 Tons/Acre
- Bahiagrass – Best Adapted to the Flatwoods & Coastal Plain Regions
  - 3-5 Tons/Acre

FORAGE AND ANIMAL BALANCE WORKSHEET\*





What can reliably fill those gaps?

# Back of the Envelope Economics

- \$3.00 + per day to feed hay to a cow
- Grazing Winter Annuals - \$0.70 to \$1.50 per day
- Limit Grazing - 50% of winter needs were met through grazing
  - Temporary Electric fence – 4 paddocks
  - 50% of winter needs were met through grazing
  - \$5,400 savings over 90 days

# Seeding Mix

- Settled on this for our mix
  - 25 lbs./acre – Forage Oat (Canmore or Everleaf)
  - 25 lbs./acre – Cosaque Oat
  - 25 lbs./acre – Cereal Rye (Wrens Abruzzi)
  - 1 lbs./acre – Daikon Radish
  - 0.5 lbs./acre – hybrid forage turnip
  - 3 lbs./acre – Balansa Clover

# Seeding Mix

- Oats are palatable but have cold hardiness issues
- Forage varieties (Canmore and Everleaf) are good early producers
- Cosaque oats are more cold-tolerant – used a blend to cover the bases.
- Including Rye gives us more insurance.

# Seeding Mix

- Radishes and Turnips – quick availability but need early planting after first week of October is too late for best production
- Radishes and Turnips are not the most palatable – cattle have to learn to eat them
- Balansa Clover – small seed, broadcasts well, adds late winter production and Nitrogen
- 2026 Cost/- \$49 / Acre (or \$0.54 / day over a 90-day grazing period)



<= After Corn –  
September 19, 2025



After Peanuts =>  
October 22, 2025

- October 22, 2025 =>  
After Corn

“Will be grazing  
before long”





January 22, 2026



# Grazing Management

- Keep it simple
- Limit grazing works
- Mike rotates based on judgement and weather – don't graze it too close
- Temporary Electric fence is integral – improves efficiency and regrowth



# Establishment

- After Corn is the easiest
- September – 3<sup>rd</sup> – September 19<sup>th</sup>
- After Peanuts
  - Broadcasting ahead of digging peanuts has worked fine
  - Try for late September or early October
- Behind Cotton
  - Most Difficult
  - Got it seeded by drone as early as October 15<sup>th</sup>
- Diverse Crop Rotation provides different establishment opportunities



# Establishment

- Broadcast and lightly harrow in was the early approach
- Moved to “Broadcast and Water In”
- Communication
  - I focused on earliest establishment possible
  - Mike focused on communicating when he had time and what could realistically be accomplished considering equipment and context of each season

# Dig a Little Learn a Lot

- Became a “big” moment
- Tuned into Soil Health not just more grazing days
- Nitrogen Credits – 50 to 75 N credits taken (based on UGA Cover Crop Nitrogen Calculator)
- And consultant begins letting Mike know
  - “You aren’t having to water like my other clients”
- Mike begins saying “I can’t just see cover crops as a cost”



# Critical Control Points

- Early Establishment (easy with irrigation)
- Species and Varieties that produce early
- Avoided complication
  - Broadcast
  - Water In
  - Easy Grazing Management – only added Temporary Electric Fence
- Dig a Little Learn a Lot



A wide-angle photograph of a lush green field of tall grasses, possibly a meadow or a field of wildflowers, under a clear blue sky. The grasses are in the foreground and middle ground, creating a sense of depth. The sky is a uniform light blue, occupying the top third of the image.

# Questions?

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