http://www.MSCNews.net/news/index.cfm?nk=65492

Cow Poop

Not so long ago, I wrote about my youngest son. He was making me proud, when he noticed the difference in cattle poop in our lots! I think his question was, "why does the bull manure, look different than the cows?". Of course, the pregnant cows were getting the very best hay and feed, and the bulls well, they were on vacation (you know they only work 60 days a year) and getting some poorer quality hay.

Now, I'm excited to hear about a cow poop analyzer is a free app. Some graduate student in Texas has come up with this! Blame it on Texas! Now you can pull your smart phone out and determine how nutritious your forage is.

The app is a series of photos taken to compare your cattle's manure with the library of cow poop pictures. Then you will get the estimated crude protein and digestibility. The app is available for iPhones, iPads and Android phones. To get the app, go to your App store and search for Cow Poop Analyzer, where you can install it on your device. If you aren't that tech savvy Texas A & M has a "Forage Quality Photo Guide", I can supply you with. We've usually talked about reading cow manure at the Eastern Kansas Grazing school. Unfortunately, with some circumstances out of our control, we are postponing the school until spring or fall of 2019.

We will be having a tour about Native Grasses, mostly looking at Old World Bluestems and their nasty cousins, Broomsedge Bluestem and Tall dropseed grass. At this time, save the date for the evening of September 11th. Time and place to be determined later.

With our blessings of having native grasses, comes the responsibility to care for them to make them as productive as possible and prevent the invading species.

Old world bluestem is a plant that is becoming increasingly prevalent in native grasslands commonly used for cattle grazing, particularly in drier regions. The grass that was brought to the United States as a soil-stabilizing plant has come under fire due to how it affects the surrounding ecosystem. Because old world bluestem can become invasive and reduce the growth and vigor of other grasses that are more nutritious and palatable for livestock, the plant can negatively affect plant biodiversity, insects and wildlife.

"As temperatures warm up we will start to see more old world bluestem," said Keith Harmoney, range scientist at the Kansas State Agricultural Research Center – Hays, one of four units in the Western Kansas Agricultural Research Centers.

The plant is easily distinguishable, because its color is typically pale with a yellowish-green tint. The seed heads can be seen from a distance due to their pinkish or purplish tint. These grasses grow quicker than native grasses and also produce a seed head quicker, Harmoney said.

Harmoney noted that it is an extremely persistent plant that does well under dry and arid conditions. Old world bluestem has actually performed better than some native grasses under arid conditions.