

# The AmpacImpact

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## In & Around AMPAC

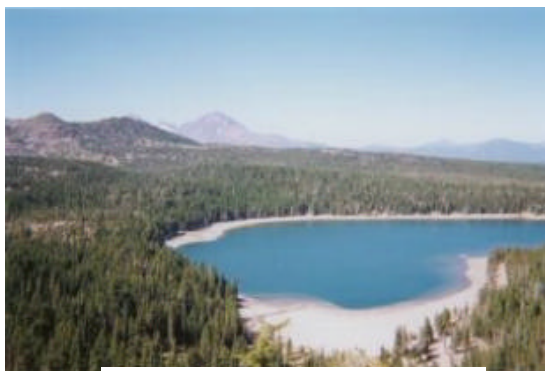
By Aaron Kuenzi

What a beautiful March for the Willamette Valley. It sure has helped in convincing my wife that she made the right choice in moving out to Oregon. As far as her choice of husband, well, I'm still working on that one.

We had some of the nicest weather for this time of the year these last few weeks. In fact we even set some record high temperatures. Up until a few days ago things were actually getting dry around here. Yep, dust was starting to fly in March! But it looks like we are back to a typical Oregon spring with temperatures in the 50's and a misty rain.

With the spring season in full swing things have been very busy around Ampac. Some days it would be easy to complain but I guess this industry is either feast or famine. We are very thankful for the business and appreciate every customer we have.

We continue to see a strong export market, which has helped keep things busy. It looks as



Three Creeks Lake, near Sisters, Or.  
September of 2001

if the export business will continue too. A weak dollar and very poor harvest in Australia and New Zealand mean countries will continue to draw from the US. The EU is in the process of changing its subsidy program, which should have a positive effect on the US production companies. Denmark, which is the largest exporter of grasses, is expected to adopt the decoupled option according to the ASTA. This will increase the price of seed out of the EU and with a weak US dollar this should mean more seed will continue to be drawn from US production.

Just an FYI for those of you buying tetraploid perennial ryegrass: Make sure you are getting a true perennial and not a hybrid. Unless of course that is what you are wanting.

Thanks again to everyone for keeping Ampac busy. We look forward to these next few months and wish each one of you success for the duration of the season.

# Dave's Corner

This month I will provide several tidbits of information that I've learned over the "grazing conference" season.

Soybeans hit a 15 year high in March and corn is higher than in some time...so the better producers are going to take out their remaining fences and sell all of the livestock right? Well, maybe not! With higher grain prices many of the progressive livestock producers continue to look to grazing as a profitable alternative to crop farming or feeding livestock in confinement.

## **Grazing enhances profitability.**

Over the past three months I have met with hundreds of beef, dairy and sheep producers who are profitable and looking for better ways to "tweak" their grazing system to enhance their profitability. Driving tractors and combines can be fun but the bottom line that producers have to ask is "what is my bottom line"? Dairy producers Bill Dix and Stacie Hall from Ohio (featured in Jan 2004 *Ampac Impact*), Dave Forgey and Kenny Bontrager from Indiana, Bill Patterson from Virginia, and Dan Vosburg and Dan Trutman from Wisconsin are living proof that dairy farmers can make a "better" living even when many conventional dairy producers have lost money the past few years.

Why have these previously mentioned producers seen improved profits? They are grazing their animals and feeding less stored feeds (hay, grain, silage, etc...). Work done by former extension men Jim Gerrish (MO) and Ed Ballard (IL) has shown that every day the animals are grazing the producer is saving and

(usually making) money. If producers can (and will) utilize their corn stalks, stockpile Tall Fescue, and graze Appin Turnips and oats in the fall/winter there should be many "extra" days of grazing available. More fall/winter grazing = less hay fed = more profit.

## **Alfalfa is a great profit crop too.**

Alfalfa hay is still a profitable option for producers. With Ampac's Attention with StandFast™, Radiant, Big Wheel Traffic Brand, and Freedom PLH Brand Alfalfa line-up, producers have great varieties to choose from. One big key for producer profitability is NOT using Vernal or cheap VNS products. By selling "cheap" alfalfa seed we are actually taking money away from the producer. Each of Ampac's Alfalfas have averaged 23-27% greater yield over and above Vernal in university and private trials. When top quality dairy hay or horse hay brings \$150-225/ton (depending on location) you can't afford to sell less than the best to the producer who needs more profit points on the farm.

## **Plan now for fall sowings of Appin Turnips in corn.**

Producers planning to inter-seed Appin Turnips into their 2004 corn crop should be planning now! If a farmer is sowing brassicas after corn then he needs to not use more than 1# Atrazine/acre. He could also use an earlier season corn; harvest it a week or so earlier, then have more grazing season on his brassicas. This not only helps the turnips but also the oats and or cereal rye sown with the

## Dave's Corner

Appin. It is also important to wait until the bottom 1/3 of the corn plants are starting to turn brown before an aerial application or Appin Turnips and annual ryegrass or cereal grains. This allows for more sunlight to penetrate the canopy and reach the ground to help get the seedlings growing.



*“This looks great but please wait until the bottom 1/3 of the corn plants are turning brown and starting to drop leaves”*

### **Graze spring oats early for longer grazing season:**

If a producer sows spring oats with Pasja or Appin this spring one of the most vital grazings is the first one according to Terry Gompert, Ag Extension Agent out of Center, NE. If the goal is to have oats to graze past the normal heading time then the producer needs to graze the oats when they reach 10” tall and take them down to 4” to cause them to tiller more. This causes the plant to “think” more like a forage plant and less as a grain crop. This does not guarantee that the producer will graze oats from May-December but it certainly gives greater palatability and more forage for the cattle. Each grazing

afterwards should also be started at 10-15” and grazed down to 4-5” for best opportunity for re-growth and multiple grazings.

### **Spring means busy:**

I am always thankful for the opportunities that I am given to work with agriculture. Whether I am “on the farm” or “on a lawn” I am amazed at what God has created for us to enjoy. Take some time this spring to enjoy the birds and the beautiful flowers and the newly sown lawns and pastures! Have a safe and profitable spring 2004.



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## Pastures Benefit From White Clover

By Jane Fyksen,  
Crops Editor



White clover is said to be New Zealand's competitive edge in international livestock production. Wisconsin graziers are discovering what white clover can do for their pastures.

Ken Albrecht, UW-Madison agronomist, says white clover is high-quality forage able to support high levels of intake by grazing cattle and sheep and fix nitrogen. In fact, it's thought of as the "ideal pasture plant," he notes, because livestock only consume its leaves and flowers. White clover's growing points on stolons (prostrate stems) remain intact and for regrowth in the spring and after grazing.

Albrecht says there's a lot of volunteer white clover in Wisconsin pastures already. Unfortunately, this "naturalized" white clover isn't particularly productive, shutting down during hot, dry summer weeks. Though studied a half-century ago in Wisconsin, there's been little research since, probably because Wisconsin's winters and summer slumps are responsible for unpredictable persistence and productivity of white clover.

Because the original taproot of white clover survives only one, maybe two, years, the plant depends on stolon growth and survival to maintain its presence in a pasture. Those horizontal stems lie on the soil surface and are subject to winter extremes. trampling.

and summer drought and heat. When the taproot dies, smaller shallow roots originating at nodes on the stolons must compete with pastures grasses for moisture in the upper six inches of soil. Stolons die back and productivity is minimal during dry periods. Albrecht says that although natural reseeding also occurs, long-term survival is what maximizes yield of white clover in a pasture.

Albrecht and others at the UW felt if they could find improved varieties, white clover could do for Wisconsin what it's done for New Zealand graziers. At the Lancaster Ag Research Station in recent years, they compared experimental lines of intermediate types (which grow to about 10 inches), naturalized populations (very short wild types), and Ladino clovers (which are a type of white clover that's not very persistent, very large and very productive until it dies, usually in the first winter, Albrecht notes).

The test sites were permanent pastures with spotty winter snow cover and varied grazing intensity histories. The white clovers were planted into Kentucky bluegrass/orchardgrass mixed swards and rotationally grazed by beef cattle for several years. Kopu II rose to the top under these Wisconsin grazing conditions, Albrecht reports, noting Kopu II excels in stolon density and vigor based on three growing seasons of research in southwest Wisconsin.

He says it seems to perform as well, if not somewhat better, than the popular Alice white clover.

Although white clover doesn't do particularly well in droughty soil, newer, adapted varieties "deserve another look in Wisconsin pastures, especially those with moderately to poorly drained soils.

It likes a pH between 6 and 7. It can tolerate a lower pH than alfalfa, but it's "not quite as forgiving as trefoil," he notes.

Albrecht, who collaborated in Kopu II's early evaluation in Wisconsin, says this new variety first became commercially available last year, from Ampac Seeds in Oregon. There are also distributors in Wisconsin, he notes. Albrecht says that in side-by-side comparisons with Alice, Kopu II showed slightly better yield and persistence, even in the face of the open winter of 2002-03. However, he cautions they don't have enough data yet for a conclusive comparison of the two varieties, which he stresses are "pretty similar."

However, Albrecht stresses that no other variety of white clover other than Kopu II has undergone similar rigorous scientific testing under Wisconsin conditions. "I say that about Alice, too," he notes of an imported variety with which many Wisconsin graziers are happy to have in their pastures.

White clover grows basically anywhere red clover does. Where white clover - as well as Kura clover - outshines other clovers is with their ability to propagate vegetatively by stolons - white clovers above ground, Kura's under ground.

There are very short upright stems on the initial plants, and then the stolons trail out shooting up petioles, similar to the way strawberries grow and spread. "The growing points are rarely consumed because they're on the soil surface," he reports. "So white clover tolerates close and frequent grazing." That's its "edge" in the pasture world.

As for compatible grasses for this legume, Albrecht says. "The more nitrogen-deficit

your pasture is - regardless of the grass - the better white clover grows." He recommends less-competitive grasses, noting that producers can make just about any grass less competitive by reducing N fertilizer.

The new improved white clovers do well with orchardgrass, smooth brome grass, tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. One grass he wouldn't try it with is reed canary. It's a tall-growing grass, which would need to be managed to keep it short with the white clover, in which case you'd lose the reed canary productivity. However, pastures that hold moisture well will be those in which white clover will be most productive.

White clover isn't necessarily tough to establish, according to Albrecht, who thinks it could be done by frost-seeding, even though he doesn't have any research to back that up. In New Zealand, they use drills to no-till it into existing sod.

If producers want to give frost-seeding a try, reduce nitrogen applications the year before seeding in the white clover. Open up the pastures some with tight and vigorous grazing. The same advice applies if you're going to use a no-till drill. You could run into establishment trouble if the grass in the pasture is overly competitive. Albrecht suggests a seeding rate of 2 to 3 pounds per acre.

Although Kopu II has small seedlings, they develop quickly. He thinks producers can put some relatively hard grazing pressure on new seedlings the first season to open that canopy up. Livestock are generally going to be grazing the taller, established grasses and not the white clover. In general, he remarks that the tighter you tend to graze your pastures, you'll increase the proportion of white clover present.

He says many New Zealand pastures have reached an equilibrium of 15 percent white clover and 85 percent ryegrass. But he's hearing reports now that some producers over there don't think that's enough clover for the N needs of the pasture.

He's planting 16-acre pastures this spring to Kopu II with Vulcan soft-leaved tall fescue at Arlington this spring, for trials with beef cattle. Vulcan is the only soft-leaved tall fescue that's survived Wisconsin winters in testing.

In his small plots, Albrecht says nitrogen-fertilized grasses always yielded more than mixtures of Kopu II and Kura clovers and grasses. Three-hundred pounds of N was applied, providing a 10 to 20 percent yield advantage over 50/50 grass/legume pastures. But despite that biomass yield advantage, the white clover (and Kura) generated high field value, for bottomline animal performance on the mixtures that was equal or better than N-fertilized grass pastures.

He notes that white clover will cause bloat, as do all legumes except for birdsfoot trefoil.

In terms of persistence, Kopu II white clover "will be there indefinitely" if it's properly managed and isn't done in by extended drought or an extremely frigid open winter. He's witnessed severe winterkill of Kopu II, where the ground was laced with virtually dead stolons in early April. With 95 percent dead plant material in early spring, the white clover was able to fill in, so that by mid-summer, the stands were 100 percent recovered.

Albrecht actually thinks both Kopu II white clover and Kura look "much better" and "more constant than alfalfa" in terms of

feeding value. Again, that's because you don't graze stems, but only petioles and leaf blades; the fiber level is lower.

Albrecht says graziers can expect the improved white clovers to come in with 25 percent protein, 30 percent NDF. Mixed with a grass (that's, say, 50 percent NDF and 15 percent protein), you'll have "some very good feed" - "alfalfa quality forage," he notes.

Most graziers hay their pastures, especially during the spring flush. White clover isn't especially easy to make hay out of. The legume will likely be below the cutting bar, so your hay from mixed pastures is apt to be more grass than legume. It's also wetter than alfalfa (remember, no stems). He says improved white clover "behaves in the windrow somewhat like dandelions," tending to be rather limp and matted in the windrow.

White clover isn't good for stockpiling for late-fall grazing as it doesn't grow all that tall. However, the newer white clover varieties like Kopu II and Alice, though they may shut down some during the hotter dry portion of summer, will "take off when the moisture comes."

To Wisconsin producers who already have pastures riddled with "wild" white clover, Albrecht says, you know white clover can already thrive on your farm, under your grazing management. He suggests interseeding those pastures with an improved white clover, like Kopu II, and enjoy much more productivity from those same pastures.

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# Crop Report

It's that time of the year again when things are in full bloom and everyone is awakening from the winter hibernation. These last few weeks (3/8/04-3/19/04) in Oregon's Willamette Valley have been gorgeous, no moisture and temperatures in the 60's and 70's. Those farmers who had not already applied fertilizer are out and doing so now.

Because of the extra nice weather things are a little on the early side as we begin our spring season. For the most part the crops look pretty good. However, there are a few negatives to mention.

In the southern part of the valley fall plantings are a little weaker and weedier than normal. This is largely due to the dry fall and colder winter we had. Third year perennial ryegrass fields were also affected by the long spell of dry weather. Most of these three year old fields in the southern half of the valley look thinner and weaker than normal. In the northern half where there is typically irrigation things look better off.

Last year's spring plantings of tall fescue, orchardgrass and fine fescue were affected by the weather as well. Our long, hot, and dry summer combined with a colder December & January hurt the new seedlings. We have already seen some replantings this spring and we'll no doubt continue to see more.

Orchardgrass producers are fighting choke and rathayi diseases in their fields. Both of which seem to be becoming more of a problem. These diseases will lessen the yields of the affected stands. Again the long dry spell last summer and fall did not help the orchardgrass any.

Reports from Washington are that on dry-land production the new stands of bluegrass do not look very good and many may have to be replanted this spring.

Of course a lot can happen between now and harvest, as we saw last year, but we are cautiously optimistic at this time.

## Scott's Corner

I would like to take this time to thank AMPAC for giving me a great opportunity to be a part of the company and extended family. The Northeast has great potential for AMPAC and I am going to work as hard as I can to create a distributor network that will focus on using our seed in both turfgrasses and forages. I look forward to meeting the current customers and maintaining that great relationship. AMPAC seed has high-ranking varieties in both turfgrass and forages and many more in the future to be released! It is my goal to be able to provide you with information, customer service, and a quality product. Living in State College, PA and having great access to Penn State's Agriculture Department, I can provide up to the date information on the varieties that are being tested in research conditions as well as relying on the "real world" information that will be provided by both you, the distributor, and the end user. Please feel free to contact me to discuss the varieties, availability, and pricing.

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