

AG DIGEST

Research helps farmers figure out what their cows are eating

Soon it will be easier to ensure cows get a healthy diet, according to a new study in Crop Science and a press release from the American Society of Agronomy.

Jerry Cherney, an agriculture professor at Cornell University, has developed a new method to confirm that cows get an appropriate balance of grass and legumes in alfalfa-grass mixtures.

When grass and alfalfa are grown together, it's hard for farmers to know if they're feeding their cows a balanced diet.

To determine the grass-to-legume ratio, scientists use a technique called near infrared reflectance spectroscopy. Although this technique works well, it is not standardized between machines. Different machines provide varying results, depending on how they are calibrated.

Cherney created a calibration system that will work across multiple instruments and successfully tested it with alfalfa and grass from different fields across New York counties.

— Sarah McQuate

New proposal from state board could affect water resources

Water regulation is already tight, but with a new proposal on the future of the Sacramento River from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), it could get even tighter, according to Christine Souza in the latest Ag Alert from the California Farm Bureau Feder-

ation.

Currently, the flows in the Sacramento and Delta estuaries are modified to support cities and irrigate farmland, according to the SWRCB. A recent science report showed that this modification is detrimental to several species of fish living in the Delta.

Based on these results, the SWRCB recommends unimpaired flow in the Sacramento River mainstream. This change would support wildlife but reduce the amount of water left for agriculture.

However, David Guy, president of the Northern California Water Association, fears that this plan would not be beneficial for fish, either. He suggests a "functional flow" approach, which would provide a more balanced approach for both wildlife and agriculture, according to Souza.

The SWRCB is seeking input on this proposal. Public comments must be received in writing by Dec. 16.

— Sarah McQuate

Farm Bureau calls on everyone to get out and vote this election

"Be sure to get out to the polls on Nov. 8 and vote," urges Casey Gudel, political affairs manager for the California Farm Bureau Federation. There are decisions on the ballot besides the presidential election that need California voters' attention, she says.

Seventeen statewide measures and countless local measures will appear on the ballot this year; the Farm Bureau provided Californians with their recommendations in a Voter Guide that can be

found online at <http://www.cfbf.com/voterguide>.

The Farm Bureau Board of Directors has taken the time to fully analyze these ballot measures before declaring their stance on each issue. Regardless of the next Tuesday's results, Gudel wants to make sure citizens exercise their right to vote.

— Aylin Woodward

Students at UC Santa Cruz win \$275,000 federal grant

Students at UC Santa Cruz have been awarded \$275,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to diversify food studies and promote food security for Spanish-speaking and farmworker families, according to Guy Lasnier at the UC Santa Cruz News Center.

The program, "Diversifying Food Studies and Fostering Community Food Security," is funded through a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture initiative. It builds off the existing work that UC Santa Cruz students in Colleges Nine and Ten have been doing at the community gardens at Calabasas School in Watsonville.

Ultimately, students hope to recruit, retain, and engage underrepresented undergraduates at UC Santa Cruz, particularly those who are the first from their families to attend university. The program will also benefit elementary and high school students in the communities of Watsonville and Gonzales.

— Aylin Woodward