



AMERICAN FORAGE &
GRASSLAND COUNCIL

MARCH 2025

FORAGE FEED



AFGC National Forage Week 2025

The American Forage and Grassland Council announces National Forage Week 2025 from June 15-21 in recognition of the vital importance of forage systems in sustaining our environment, economy, and food security.

National Forage Week is designed to increase public awareness of the importance of forages beyond the agriculture industry. National Forage Week is supported by a unique partnership of forage and agriculture organizations in the United States. These organizations include professional associations and educational institutions.

NATIONAL FORAGE WEEK!
JUNE 15-21, 2025

Use the hashtag #NationalForageWeek to share your forage stories on social media

AFGC
2026
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
JANUARY 12-15
ASHEVILLE, NC

AMERICAN FORAGE & GRASSLAND COUNCIL
www.afgc.org

This issue:

President's Corner
PAGE 02

2025 Annual Meeting
Review
PAGE 03

Meet your Forage
Spokesperson
PAGE 04

Affiliate Corner
PAGE 05

Meet your AFGC 2025 President



Your 2025 President of the AFGC is Alan Franzluebbers. He is a Research Ecologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service on the campus of North Carolina State University. Alan comes from a rural upbringing with grandparents who farmed in Nebraska. Soil became his passion after taking a soil microbiology course in the last semester of a degree in horticulture at the University of Nebraska. He later conducted an on-farm assessment of nitrogen requirements for corn and sorghum production during his master's degree at the University of Nebraska. With a PhD from Texas A&M University in soil science and a postdoc with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in northern Alberta, he embarked on a career devoted to understanding the diversity of soils and their functions in different environments. The first half of his professional career was engaged in understanding soil changes under long-term management in the Piedmont of Georgia. The second half of his career has been focused on farm management impacts on soil organic matter and nutrient cycling.

Agroecology with an emphasis on soil functioning has been a part of almost all investigations over Alan's career. Strong emphasis throughout his time with USDA has been on forage and grazing lands. This started when he arrived in Watkinsville Georgia and began sampling long-term land uses to assess their impacts on soil organic carbon and nitrogen storage and cycling. Rates of soil carbon sequestration were developed for a few management styles. Perhaps the most interesting finding of this early grassland research was discovering that endophyte-infected tall fescue had greater soil carbon storage potential than endophyte-free tall fescue. Long-term trials were conducted with (1) bermudagrass management varying by nutrient sources and forage utilization, (2) tall fescue management varying by nutrient sources and endophyte status in a watershed approach, and (3) pasture-crop rotation varying with grazing of cover crops and tillage management.

On-farm assessments of soil biological activity, nutrient cycling, and soil carbon sequestration have been a more recent emphasis in North Carolina and surrounding states. This research has led to the development of soil-test biological activity as a relatively rapid, reliable, and robust predictor of soil nitrogen availability from soil organic matter. Robust datasets based on several dozen field trials have been assembled for corn production and fall-stockpiled tall fescue in the region. Another research focus has been using the root-zone enrichment approach for separating the influences of natural long-term pedogenic processes from relatively recent management history on soil organic carbon and nitrogen. A growing database of information points to the important role that grassland management can play in affecting biologically active and long-term stable soil organic matter fractions. Much of this research is on-going and further developments are expected.

As 2025 President of the American Forage and Grassland Council, Alan hopes to foster peer networking across the many sub-disciplines of forage-based agriculture, as well as communicating the many benefits of grasslands on agricultural ecosystems and to society in general.

2025 AFGC Annual Meeting in Review

FROM IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT JASON TOWER

What a great opportunity we had this past January to meet as an organization in sunny Kissimmee, Florida. For those of us from the Midwest and more northern areas of the county, it was a great change in weather. The locals apologized several times for the weather not being warm. It's all a matter of perspective, as I felt it WAS great weather and warm temperatures compared to the weather, I was able to leave in SW Indiana when I headed south to the annual meeting.

The event was a big success by all measures. It was a sellout event with the general session room being full and often times the breakout sessions were standing room only. A big THANK YOU goes out to Dr Ann Blount and her local planning team to help with the event and organize a great tour of forage and livestock operations in Florida. Special recognition goes to Tina Bowling, AFGC Exec Secretary, for her dedication to the organization and her attention to detail. It is her often unseen and noticed work that allow these annual meetings to happen in a professional and organized way. Thankyou to each of our sponsors and exhibitors of the event. Without your support this event would be cost prohibitive for anyone to attend.

The competitions were outstanding this year. We had a great turn out of students to compete in the forage bowl event. It was great to see these future leaders demonstrate their forage related knowledge. The Forage Spokesman contest was another highlight event. We had a great set of producers share their forage stories and in what had to be one of the closest scoring events of all time. I would have hated to have been a judge of that event as each one of the participants could have been chosen as a winner. Their enthusiasm for forages and agriculture was infectious. The poster session highlighted the wonderful forage work being conducted all around the country. This is a great set of sessions to get ideas that can be taken back to our local areas to be implemented to improve farm operations.

The breakout sessions covered a wide variety of topics that not only shared new research but also proven practices that could be directly used by producers. It is this unique opportunity for folks in all areas of forage production (producers, academia and industry) to interact on a personal level. We all have gifts to give and knowledge to gain and the bringing together of all three segments of the industry under one roof is what really makes AFGC a special organization.

I look forward to the leadership that Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers will bring to AFGC in 2025 and I hope to see each of you in Ashville, NC for the 2026 annual meeting occurring January 12-15.

May your rains be timely, your forages green and your livestock well fed.

Getting to know your AFGC Forage SpokesPerson

My name is Jason Thompson, and I am a Christian first and foremost. Farming is in my blood, and I'm proud to continue the legacy while working alongside my parents, Jimmie and Phyllis Thompson, and my wife, Rhonda, in our commercial beef cattle operation in Tompkinsville, KY. We manage 400 brood cows, with 250 of those on our own land and leased land, and the remaining 150 are under the care of a cooperator. For us, the key to a successful operation is forage management. I am incredibly thankful to God for the opportunity to farm and to serve as a steward of His creation. We focus on fall-calving cows, and we wean our calves in May and June. Once weaned, the calves are backgrounded for 60-75 days before being sold off the farm. Our operation relies heavily on rotational grazing. We manage a diverse array of forages, including cool and warm season grasses, which help us maintain healthy pastures and efficiently use available forage. Cool-season grasses also play a crucial role in our system. Starting in August, we stockpile these grasses so that we can provide grazing for our cows starting in November when they're being bred. In addition, we plant annuals like ryegrass, cereal rye, crimson clover, and vetch to supplement our pastures. This combination of perennial and annual forages helps us maximize production while keeping our pastures in good health.



When the stockpiled grass runs out, we move to bale grazing and unroll hay. At first, I didn't realize the full value of unrolling hay. I always saw it as simply feeding the cows. However, after reading an article by Dr. Chris Teutsch, I learned that unrolling hay can contribute up to \$40 in nutrient value per bale. This revelation opened my eyes to the fact that by unrolling hay, I'm not just feeding the cows—I'm also enriching the soil. I now see it as a win-win: feeding the cows while investing in the long-term health of the land.

I owe a lot to my father, Jimmie Thompson, for introducing me to farming. He instilled in me a deep respect for the land and the animals we care for. I'm also grateful to be part of the broader forage community, where we continue to learn and grow together. We do Genomics on replacement heifer candidates to improve our herd genetics, and we practice fixed-time artificial insemination (AI), exposing the heifers to a bull for 45 days after AI. These practices help us keep improving the productivity and sustainability of our operation.

Our goal is to manage the farm in a way that ensures future generations will have the opportunity to continue farming if they choose to. Rhonda and I are blessed to have our daughter, Aubrey, and her husband, Jon Payton Hammer, and our two grandsons, Jase and Harlen who are the joy of our hearts. We hope to leave behind a farm that will allow them, and others, to thrive for years to come.

Ultimately, everything we do is to honor God and His creation. We are blessed to work the land and contribute to feeding the world, and we take that responsibility seriously. We thank God every day for the opportunity to farm and to work alongside the people we love.

Oregon Forage & Grassland Council

The Oregon Forage and Grassland Council (OFGC) has appointed Cher Gillson as its new president, succeeding Dr. Gordon Jones. Cher, who has led OFGC's Marketing Committee for five years, is passionate about regenerative agriculture and fostering connections among farmers, researchers, and industry experts. She works in Sales & Marketing at GO Seed, specializing in cover crops, soil health, and forage solutions, and was recognized as one of Seed World's Top 10 Next Generation Leaders in 2023. She looks forward to expanding OFGC's impact and welcomes member feedback.



Mark your calendars for OFGC's first pasture walk of 2025 on Saturday, April 26, at 10 a.m.! The event will be hosted by Maria Rooney, owner of Silver Creek Lambscapes in Silverton, Oregon. Since 1986, Maria has run a progressive sheep operation with 200 ewes, focusing on superior wool quality, growth, and productivity through top genetics. Her Romney flock is nationally recognized for its show success. An industry leader, Maria has served on multiple sheep boards and the Oregon Forage and Grassland Council.



AFGC Mission:

To bring producers, educators, scientists, and industry together to promote and advance forages in agriculture.

AFGC Vision:

To be the leader and voice of economically and environmentally sound forage focused agriculture.