Over the years, I have attended numerous forage production seminars and field days across the Southeast. One recurring topic that always seems to be discussed or demonstrated is the practice of overseeding pastures with small grains and/or clovers during the fall and winter months. It is well known that overseeding a pasture or hayfield can result in an increase in both quantity and quality of forage produced. In addition, hundreds of grazing studies have shown an increase in animal gains when animals have grazing access to overseeded fields.

But does overseeding pastures and hayfields pay? Or put in another way – will overseeding provide more than $1.00 gain for every $1.00 invested? Research across the country strongly suggests it does. One study in Kentucky found a tall fescue pasture overseeded with 6 lbs./A of red clover seed yielded more than two tons more forage per acre than fescue pastures fertilized with 90 lbs of Nitrogen. The cost per ton of forage produced was about $4.86 for the clover-fescue mix versus $9.13 for the fertilized fescue pastures.

An Auburn University overseeding study looked at grazing days and calf gain per acre utilizing various winter forages overseeded on bermuda sod. The addition of winter forages to these bermuda pastures gave from 24 to 81 more grazing days and from 117 to 218 lbs. more calf gain per acre. In this study, an investment of $45 to overseed rye, arrowleaf and crimson clover in a bermuda pasture returned $165 per acre. Simply overseeding with ryegrass netted an extra $50.00 worth of calf gain per acre.

In a Georgia study, steers grazing toxic tall fescue overseeded with 3 lbs./A ladino clover gained an average of 39 lbs. per head more over a 50 day grazing period than steers grazing toxic fescue. The result was a $60 return for less than a $15/acre investment.

The research reported only looked at economic returns and did not take into account the animal health benefits of diluting toxic fescue nor the free nitrogen provided by the clovers.

Pennington Seed Company offers a full line of high yielding and university tested forage grasses and legumes ideally suited for overseeding pastures. These include Wintergrazer rye, Passerel Plus ryegrass, Durana and Patriot perennial white clover and Supergraze (a blend of Wintergrazer rye & Passerel Plus ryegrass).

For further information on these products and how they can fit into your livestock operation, contact Pennington Seed Company @ 1-800-285-SEED or visit our website @ www.penningtonseed.com.