

The Alliance for Grassland Renewal: A Model for Teaching Endophyte Technology

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Abstract : To the author's best knowledge, there are no published reports of effective methods for teaching fescue toxicosis and grass endophyte technology in the USA. To address this need, a group of university scientists, industry representatives, government agents, and livestock producers formed an organization called the Alliance for Grassland Renewal. One goal of the Alliance was to develop a teaching method that could be employed across all regions in the USA and all sectors of the agricultural community. The first step in developing this method was identification of experts who were familiar with the science and management of fescue toxicosis. The second step was curriculum development. Experts wrote a curriculum that addressed all aspects of toxicosis and management, including toxicology, animal nutrition, pasture management, economics, and mycology. The curriculum was created for presentation in lectures, laboratories, and in the field. The curriculum was in that it could be delivered across state lines, regardless of peculiar, in-state recommendations. The curriculum was also unique as it was unanimously supported by private companies otherwise in competition with each other. The final step in developing this teaching method was formulating a delivery plan. All experts, including university, industry, government, and production, volunteered to travel from any state in the USA, converge in one location, teach a 1-day workshop, then travel to the next location. The results of this teaching method indicate widespread success. Since 2012, experts across the entire USA have converged to teach Alliance workshops in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, with ongoing workshops in Arkansas and Tennessee. Data from post-workshop surveys indicate that instruction has been effective, as at least 50% of the participants stated their intention to adopt the endophyte technology presented in these workshops. The teaching method developed by the Alliance for Grassland Renewal has proved to be effective, and the Alliance continues to expand across the USA.

Keywords : endophyte, *Epichloe coenophiala*, ergot alkaloids, fescue toxicosis, tall fescue

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