

Alabama Bermudagrass Hay Growers Summit Targets Advanced Producers M.K. Stanford¹, M.L. Marks¹, G.L. Thompson¹, S.L. Dillard¹, M.K. Mullenix¹

¹Alabama Cooperative Extension System/Auburn University, Auburn, AL

INTRODUCTION

Commercial bermudagrass hay producers with a profit motive need advanced education and prescribed management practices prior to spring green up. Attendees are primarily focused on the equine hay market and have demonstrated a willingness to follow the recommendations presented each year.

Objectives:

- 1. Provide current recommendations for the upcoming growing season while acknowledging hay market realities
- 2. Focus on soil fertility, insect/weed pest management and practical solutions for a targeted clientele
- 3. Proactive efforts lead to fewer in-season issues and significant time savings on farm visits

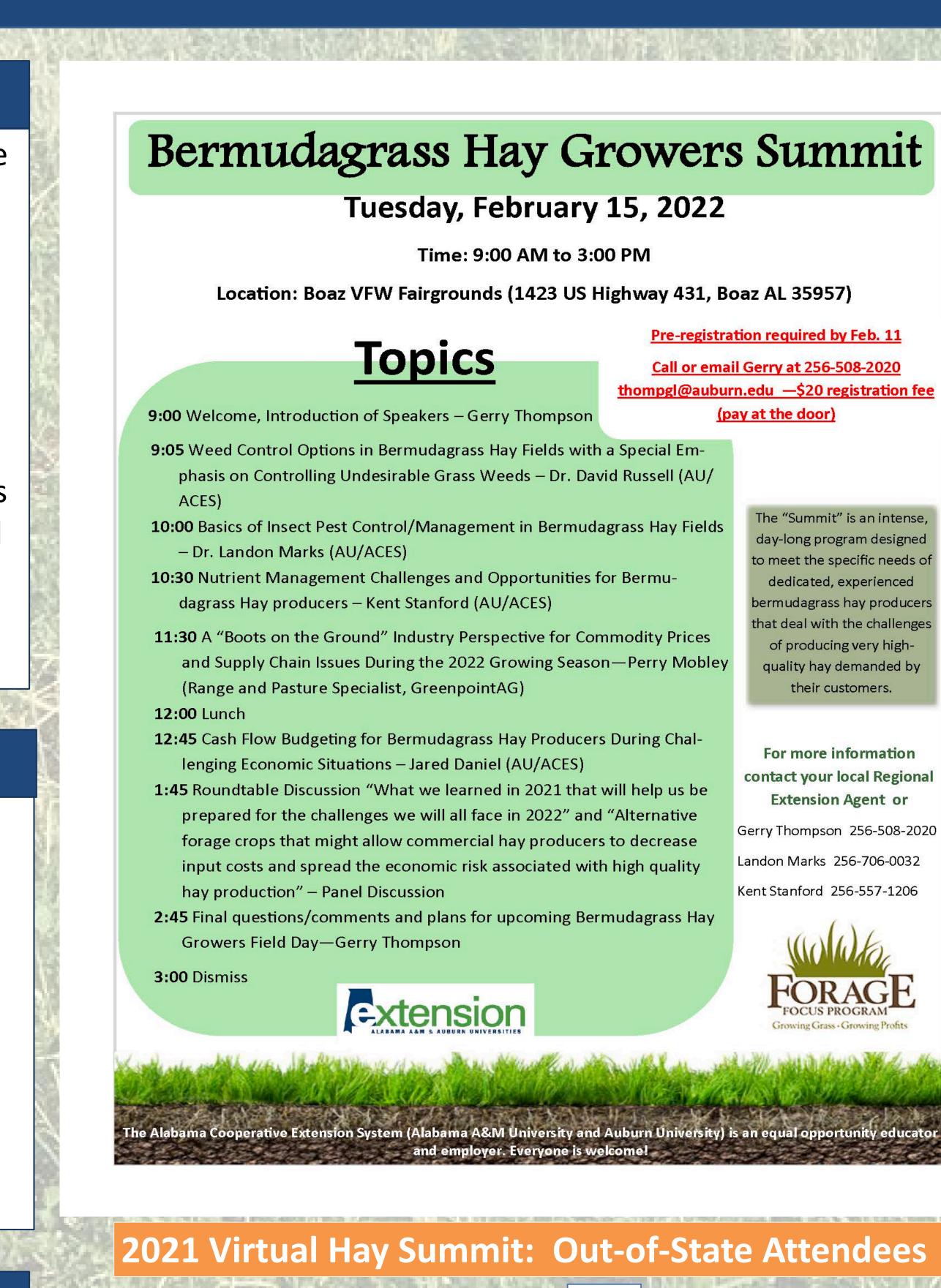
METHODS

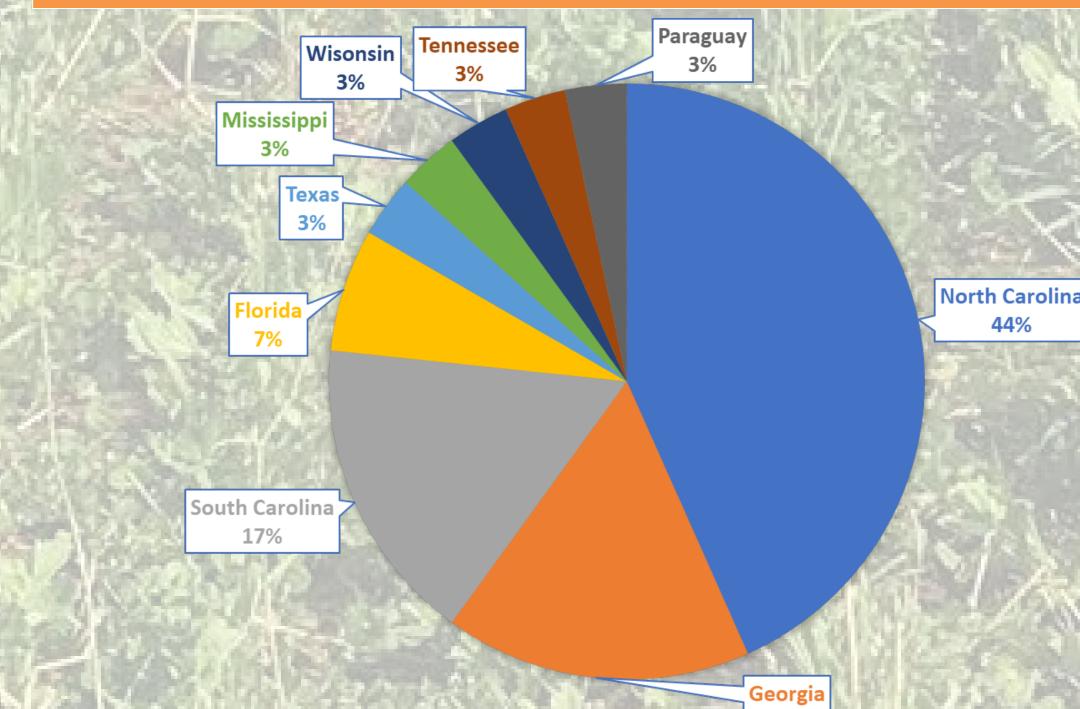
- Conducted for 6 years in North Alabama
- Began in 2017 as an invitation-only event for commercial bermudagrass hay producers
- Held in February each year
- Six-hour, lecture format workshop
- Primary speakers are Extension, with a mix of industry reps
- Promoted to top producers over the course of the year
- Average attendance of 18 hay producers
- Producer panels and roundtable discussion included
- Offered virtually via Zoom platform in 2021

VIRTUAL FORMAT

Logistics of meeting administration:

- Offered local viewing locations at county offices
- Connectivity unstable in many local offices
- Multiple co-hosts/admins selected as backup
- Moderator hierarchy established
- Designated sole individual as contact during the event
- Local meeting host with IT abilities & resources
- Low-cost alternative and major time savings







EVALUATION RESULTS

- Increased management on 11,266 acres each year • \$17,704.60 per person economic impact from implementing recommendations provided at the event
- 4.63 rating (on a 1 poor -5 exceptional) of all topics
- 29.4% increase in knowledge by attending (with a highly experienced audience)
- 98.2% of attendees planned to implement at least one recommendation
- Average of 625 acres managed per participant (6 yr avg)

	S. S. S. P. R.	
Evaluation Questions	Yes	No
Was workshop useful?	90.6%	0.0%
Was length of program appropriate	87.1%	9.7% (Too long) 3.2% (Too short)
Would you recommend the meeting to others?	96.9%	0.0%
Did the course meet your expectations?	93.8%	0.0%

CONCLUSIONS

- In-person, targeted programs for specific enterprises still work!
- Providing reliable content draws repeat clientele
- Direct promotion efforts pay off
- Online option expands the program reach but impact is harder to gauge and does not result in local engagement
- Hybrid options are not conducive to discussion formats
- Connection with commercial hay producers can lead to their involvement with related Extension events



