



Have you heard about the increased interest in planting forbs in pasture mixes? Forbs like plantain and chicory have extremely high feed value, but there is much more to the story. I had some farmers tell me recently that by adding a small amount of chicory or plantain in hay for dry cows, they took care of all of their freshening problems including milk fever, retained placentas, fatty livers and more. So I dug deeper and actually found some research data to explain what happened. These forbs with their deep root structures pull up larger amounts of trace minerals than grasses do. Also the calcium/phosphorus ratios are well balanced. There may still be more to the story that we don't understand at this time.

We have seen how well Tonic plantain works in mixes for pastures and are impressed with its summer performance and the yield it can give. We will also investigate adding some small amounts in hay mixes as well. We will try it on our farm this year and let you know what happens.

When it comes to chicory, there is a huge amount of research showing that sheep and goats grazing chicory have reduced worm loads. In some cases, grazing chicory has been as effective as dosing them with conventional de-wormer. Grazing chicory for just a short period of time can drastically reduce the parasite population but giving them access to some chicory at all times may be even better.

Varieties: Tonic Plantain from PGG added to perennial ryegrass can increase overall production through the dog days of August and the fall. It can be planted in Zones 1 thru 6 and has an improved supply of some trace minerals. It is usually seeded at 4-6#'s in a mix.

Forage Feast Chicory is a perennial chicory from France thru Barenbrug with very good winter-hardiness, excellent summer production and very high feed value. A deep taproot makes it very drought-tolerant. Forage Feast looks like a giant dandelion, but tends to be leafier, more digestible and more bolt resistant than competitive varieties. Seed at 1#/acre in mixes or 4 to 6#'s in a monoculture.