Abstract

Alliance for Grassland Renewal's impact on novel *Epichloë* endophyte tall fescue adoption in the US

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Novel *Epichloë* endophyte infected tall fescue was commercially introduced to US livestock producers in 2001. Initial acceptance of the technology was poor with sales amounting to a small fraction of market studies. Acceptance of novel technology was attributed to mixed messaging from livestock professionals and companies with novel products. University, industry, and seed companies coalesced in the fall 2012 to develop the Alliance for Grassland Renewal to provide uniform messaging to livestock producers, operating under the assumption that educating producers would increase novel endophyte technology adoption. Methods: A minimum of four 'producer' schools were conducted by the Alliance each year beginning in 2013 until present. School topics included: differentiating the endophyte types in tall fescue, common falsehood remedies to fescue toxicosis, methods to renovate toxic tall fescue, pasture management, seed testing for quality control and assurance of novel products, and economics of pasture renovation. The 'Alliance' selected Agrinostics Ltd. Co. as the standard laboratory to monitor seed lots for quality (viable infection frequencies, mammalian toxic off types). Agrinostics monitored the number of seed lots tested over time to determine the impact of the Alliance on novel endophyte adoption. Findings: There was a lag in novel endophyte technology acceptance by producers from 2013 through 2016. However, beginning in 2017 there has been a linear increase in the number of seed lots tested. We conclude that novel endophyte technology is gaining acceptance by livestock producers because of the educational efforts provided by the Alliance. However, producer resistance to pasture renovation remains. Resistance to renovation is related to a) current livestock market conditions and b) a poor understanding when renovation is the best strategic option.

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