

AGR Education Grant Proposals

(April 2025)

The Alliance for Grassland Renewal is a national organization focused on enhancing the appropriate adoption of novel endophyte tall fescue technology through education, incentives, self-regulation and promotion. Current board members are from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The Alliance is providing financial support for Extension agents and other trained forage educators to educate producers about novel endophyte tall fescue. Highlighting producers who have successfully integrated novel endophyte tall fescue into their operations will help with the adoption of novel endophyte technology on farms and ranches in the Fescue Belt.

The proposed reimbursement grant program will provide funding to Extension agents and other trained forage educators to conduct an educational program, either a pasture walk or a more formal full day workshop. In addition, funding will be provided to conduct tiller testing in tall fescue pastures to establish infection rates and novel endophyte status.

Extension agents or other agency personnel who have attended either a one-day Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop or who have attended the on-line Extension Agent / Agency Personnel training are eligible for these grants. The Alliance will fund one event in each state that has representation on the Alliance board. It is expected that these activities will be conducted in collaboration with the state level Alliance members.

Below are two proposed options:

Option 1: Pasture Walk / Tiller Testing - \$500 grant funding

This option helps Extension agents and/or other trained ag educators to have funds for low-cost, highly impactful pasture walks showcasing the use and management of novel endophyte tall fescue pastures and hay fields. In addition to supporting costs associated with the pasture walk, it is highly recommended funds be used to support tiller testing to establish endophyte infection rates in KY31 pastures as a guideline for pasture renovation. Secondly, funds may be used to support tiller testing to establish if invasion of toxic fescue has occurred in novel endophyte tall fescue pastures or hay fields.

The idea of this option is to encourage trained educators to interact with a producer who has planted novel endophyte tall fescue and to host a pasture walk at that location. After the workshop, the agent would work with interested producers to assess their fescue infection levels and plan renovation. They might also work with a producer with old stands of novel endophyte tall fescue to determine if there has been any invasion of toxic tall fescue.

The Alliance will provide PDFs of various handouts needed (including an evaluation) and will provide technical assistance as needed.

Option 2: 6-hour education program with meal, and Tiller Testing - \$1000 grant funding

This option allows for more in-depth education on the different types of tall fescue seed currently on the market (toxic, endophyte free, novel endophyte), conversion techniques, managing mixed toxic and non-toxic tall fescue forage systems, and management of novel tall fescue pastures and hay fields.

This option involves the delivery of a 6-hour workshop that would combine a classroom session to teach the basics of fescue toxicosis management and pasture renovation, followed by a lunch. After lunch the attendees would visit one or two farms with existing novel endophyte tall fescue stands. In addition to providing program funding, every effort will be made to provide an Alliance for Grassland Renewal board member at no charge to speak at the education program, depending on scheduling and board member availability.

Sample Novel Endophyte Tall Fescue Workshop and Tour, Generic Agenda

A pilot workshop was held in North Carolina in December of 2024. The revised agenda for this event is as follows:

- Registration at 8:30 am
- Program starts 9:00 am
- 9 am to 9:30 am. *The Tall Fescue Story. How KY 31 came to dominate our forage systems. Different types of Endophyte Infected Tall Fescue.*
- 9:30 to 10:00. *Managing Tall Fescue Toxicosis.*
- 10:00 to 10:30. *Understanding Endophytes, Testing and Quality Control.*
- 10:30 to 10:50. *Break*
- 10:50 to 11:30. *Systems for Renovating Tall Fescue Pastures.*
- 11:30 to Noon. *Economics of Fescue Pasture Renovation.*
- Lunch. Noon to 1 pm. During lunch introduce the farmers the group will visit in the afternoon. Other experienced producers in attendance will describe their experience with Novel Endophyte Tall Fescue.
- 1 pm. First farm visit with pasture walk.
- 2 pm. Second farm visit with pasture walk. (optional depending on the distance between farms).
- 3 pm Adjourn

This is an example agenda. Local workshops can adjust topics as necessary. We have developed Powerpoint presentations to fit this time schedule and those can be provided. One speaker can be provided by the Alliance, and they could deliver 2 or 3 of

the talks. The other presentations can be done by state specialists or experienced agents. Having other Alliance members speak over Zoom is another option when local speakers are not available.

It is expected that the Alliance would provide about \$500 to support the meal or other meeting expenses. An additional \$500 would be available to support tiller testing to establish endophyte infection rates in existing suspected toxic tall fescue fields as a guideline for pasture renovation. This is the major focus of the tiller testing option. Secondly, funds may also be used to support tiller testing to establish endophyte infection rates of novel endophyte tall fescue pastures or hay fields.

Additional funding may be needed for this program depending on the size of the workshop. For the NC Pilot described above we charged a \$20 registration fee and also had support from the NC Forage and Grassland Council.