

Cutting costs without cutting corners on pasture management

Marcelo Wallau

*Assistant professor – Forages Extension Specialist
University of Florida - Agronomy*

Mark Mauldin and Cheryl Mackowiak

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Increase in cost of production

What can be done to cut costs?

Times of hardship

We get to be better managers!



Strategies and decision making ... and its consequences

On pasture management

- 1) Optimize grazing management
- 2) Managing forage production and demand
- 3) Making use of a fertilization decision tree



Grazing management

“NO COST” AND LIKELY THE MOST IMPACTFUL ASPECT
(but mismanagement can cost you a lot!)

About grazing management

Implement rotational grazing ~ 30% increase in efficiency

But

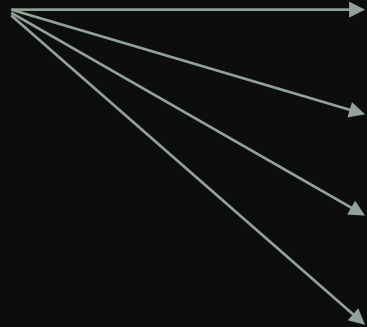
Rotational grazing alone does not solve overstocking and other mismanagement

- ↳ 1) Stocking rate and carrying capacity
- ↳ 2) Increase pasture diversity to reduce dependence on supplemental feeding
- ↳ 3) Respect plant's growth requirements: avoid early overgrazing (spring) and respect stubble heights

How much can your pastures support?

Pasture productivity → carrying capacity → stocking rate

Overstocking



Reduce forage production

Reduce animal performance

Degrades pasture

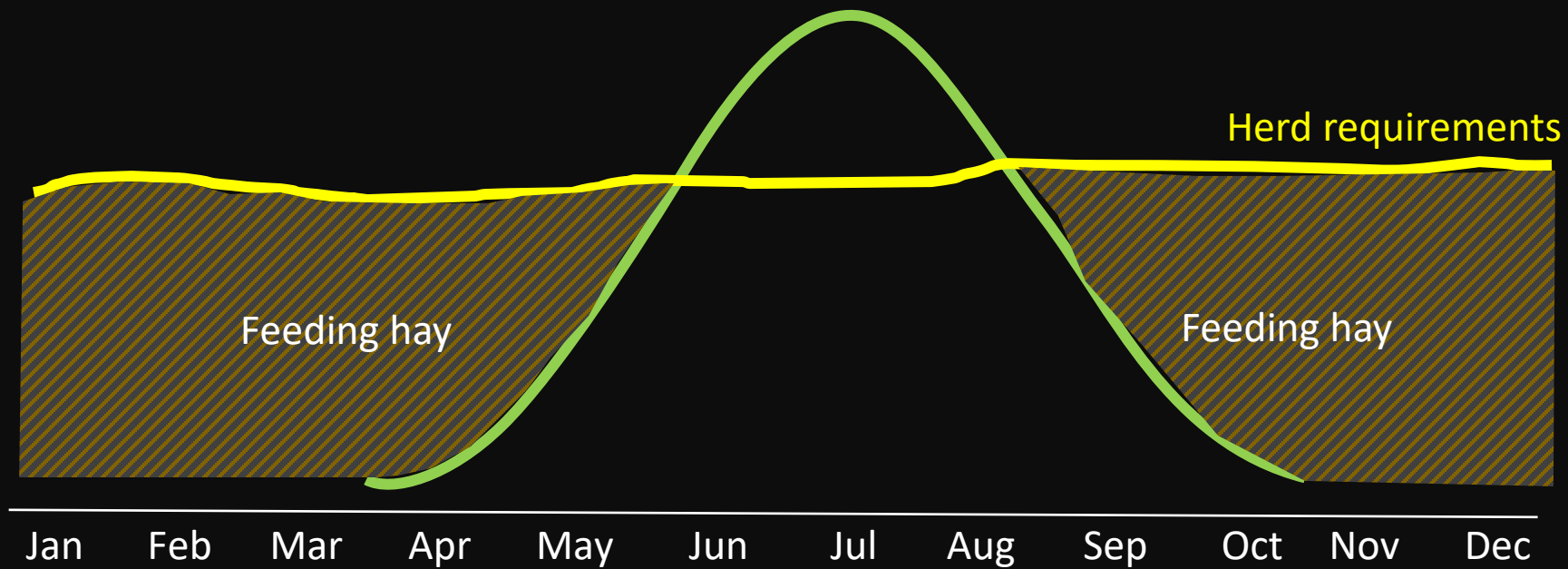
Increase need for feeding



Adjusting forage budget

Matching forage production and demand

Typical scenario – only bahiagrass and no breeding season



Reducing inventory and increasing the uniformity of
nutritional requirements (tightening breeding/calving season)
helps to balancing forage production and demand...

Adjusting forage budget

by **reducing** and **organizing** demand

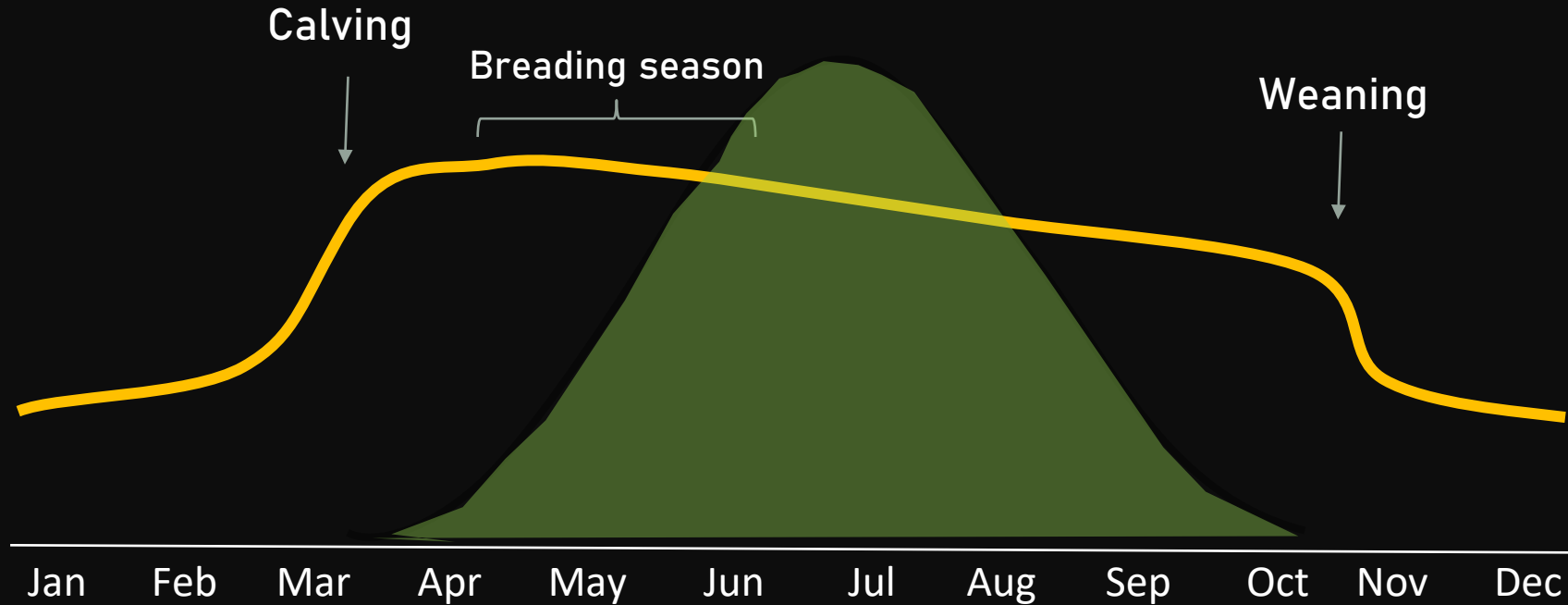
Opportunity for reducing inventory

- **Cull heavy** – defined breeding season and preg check – generate income
- **Breed earlier** (requires investment in feed)

Opportunity for selection

- **Know your heifers** early → keep only the top

Adjusting breeding season: spring calving on bahiagrass



Diversity

Annual options ~20% of the area

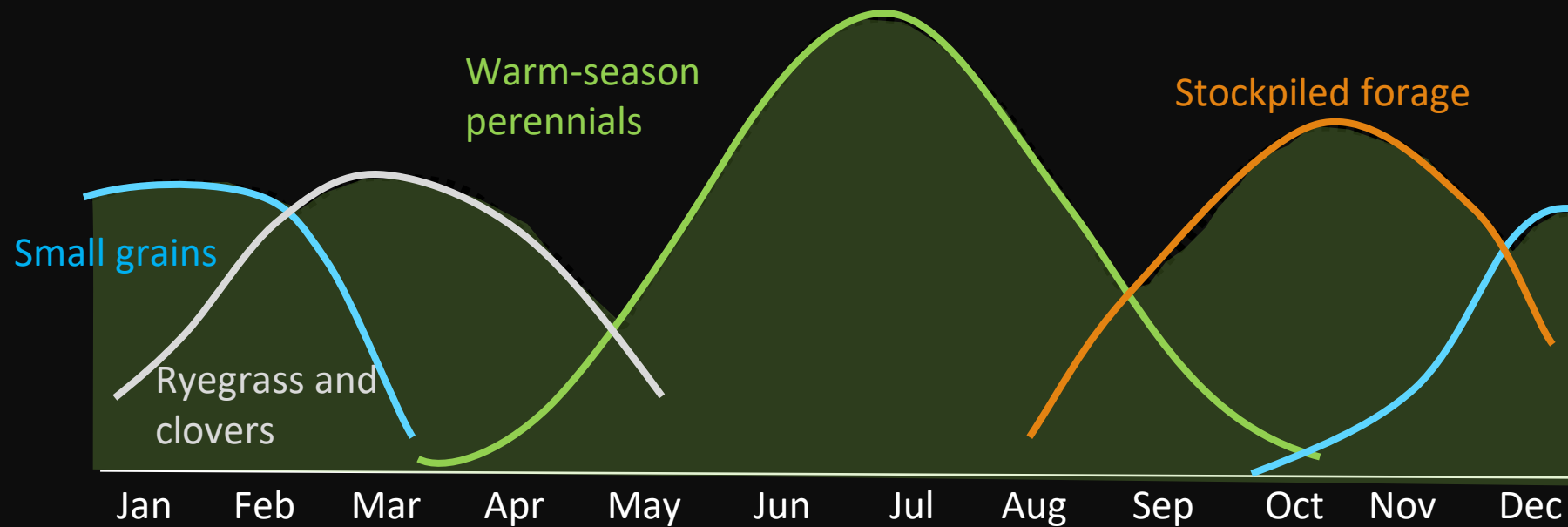
- Improve quantity and quality of forage production – strategic
- Require investment in fertilizer

Perennial options

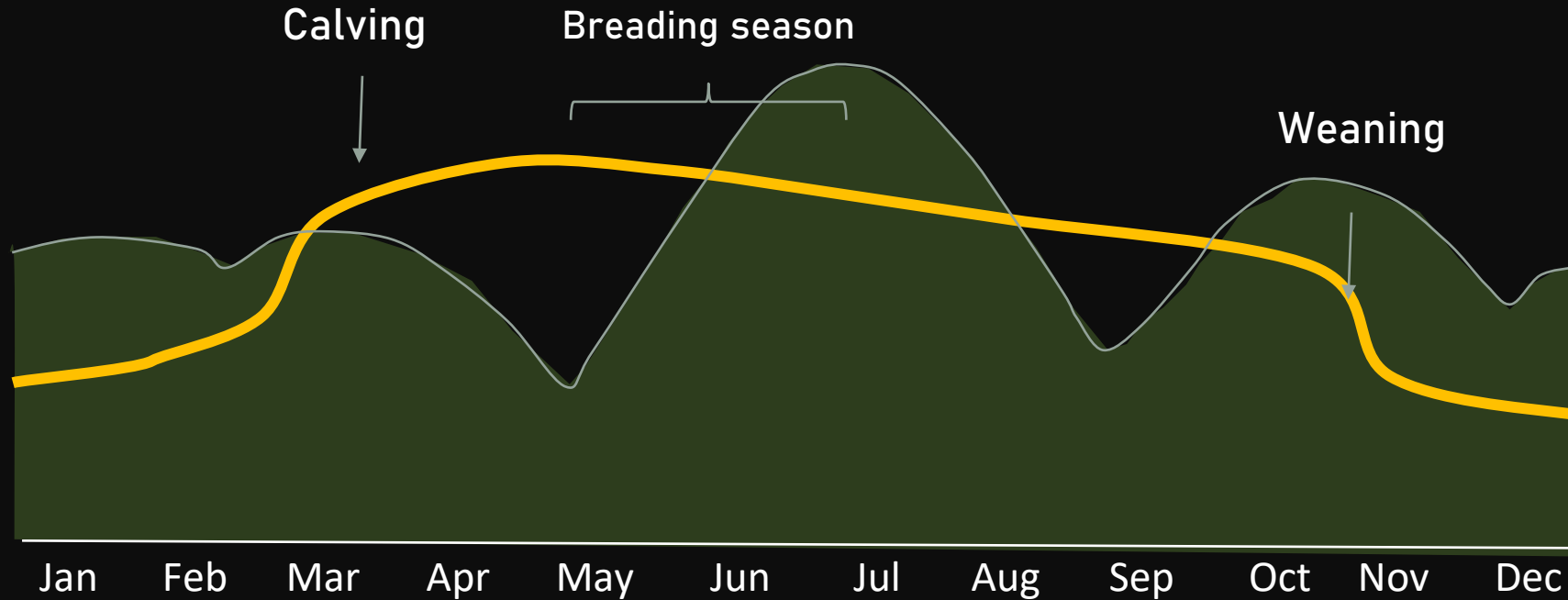
- Bahiagrass – base
- Add bermudagrass – high quality and high production
- Add limpograss – alternative for fall grazing (stockpiling)
- Add perennial peanut – improved pasture quality w/o need for N and increase animal gain (we will talk more about legumes later)

But now might not be the best time to establish new pastures...

Diversity of forages along the year (and area)



Scenario 4 spring calving with bahiagrass, stockpiled limpograss and cool-season forages



Fertilization decision tree

Use

Hay

Grazing

Recycle ~80% nutrient

...

Removal of nutrients

1 ton bermudagrass

50-60 lb N

14-17 lb P

30-40 lb K

UAN32 \$1.09/lb N
~ \$60/ton just in N

Will lead to lower
productivity and pasture
degradation

Grazing

High maint. pasture



Annual grasses or mixes – N, P, K
Annual legumes – P, K

If not able to invest, just *don't* plant

Low maint. pasture

Bermudagrass

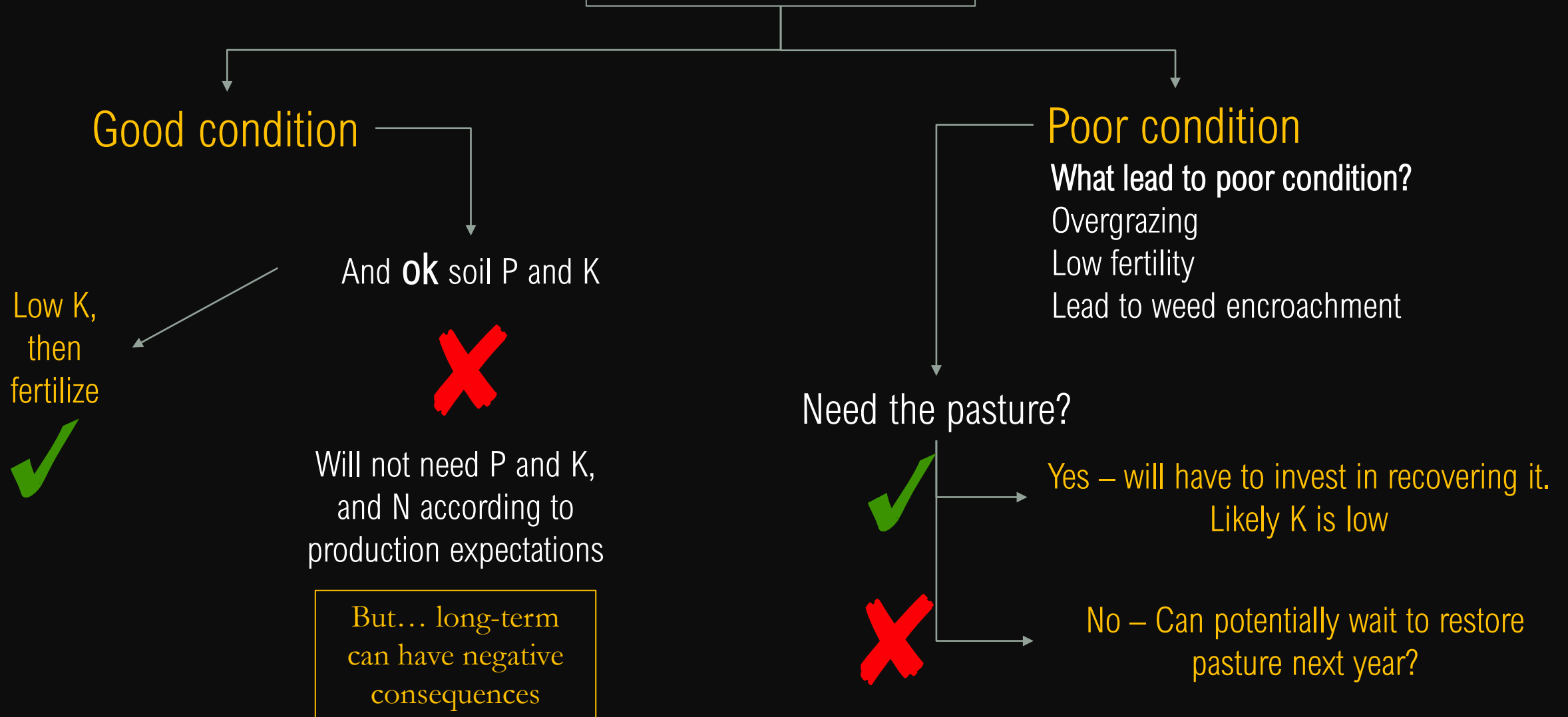
Bahiagrass

N needed for achieving
production goals;

P and K depends

Pasture condition?

Pasture condition



Pasture renovation

Fertilization

Improve soil nutrient levels
P, K
pH (liming)

About liming: only if pH
is low, otherwise is just
extra expense

Other

Grazing management
Weed control

Avoid overgrazing
Give the pasture a chance,
observe regrowth periods and
stubble heights

Avoid weed “re-
encroachment”
If discontinuing spraying program;
high herbicide prices - might need to
rethink spraying program/strategies

Other considerations about fertilization

Invest where return is best

- If planting annual forages
- On bermudagrass instead of bahiagrass

If budget is tight, strategically fertilize part of the area

- Where it is needed the most, and will be the best return
- Remember: N fertilization strategy affects amount and timing of forage production

What about legumes?

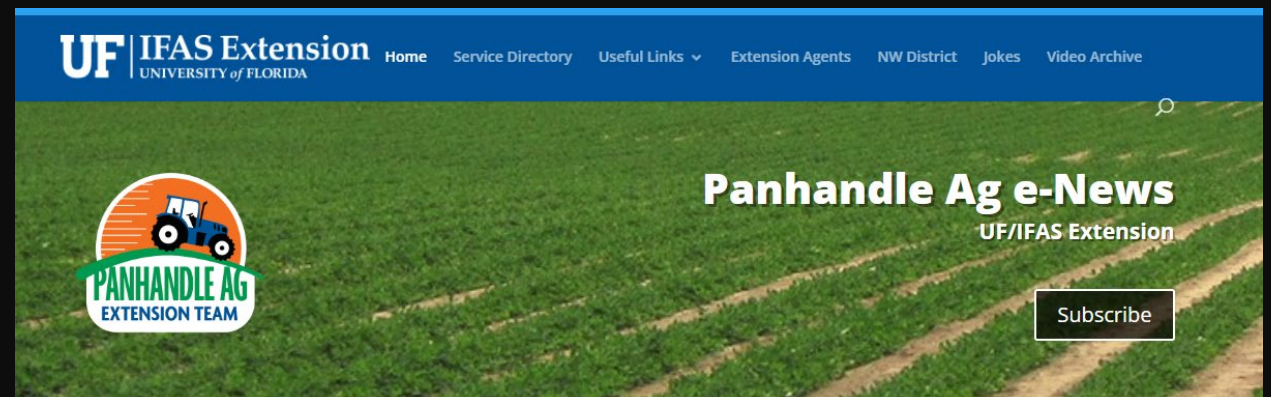
Great strategy to reduce N inputs

- 40 – 120 lbs N/year fixed!!

Not an overnight solution

- Will require good soil fertility
- Perennials – take time to establish
- Annuals add nitrogen to the system, not “give” N to companion crops for being productive

Multiple resources at Panhandle Ag e-News – and with your local agent



Hay testing

Cheap hay can be expensive

- Low intake, high waste
- Low performance
- More need for supplementation

Know the quality of your hay

- Supplement only what is needed
- Use hay balancer

UF IFAS UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

UF Hay Balancer

Orange cells are input cells: enter your information here. These are the only cells that can be modified.

INPUT	
Type of animal	1 = cow, 2 = growing heifer, 3 = bull
Months of lactation (enter 0 for dry cows)	5
Type of breed	1 = For british breeds (Angus, Hereford, etc), 2 = Brangus or Braford, 3 = Brahman or Nellore
Average body weight (BW) in lbs	1200
Number of animals	1
Number of days to supplement	90

Consult your local extension agent for
discussing more ideas

