

Dead Spots in Pastures

Last week, just before I turned a few cows and calves out to pasture at home, I walked through all the paddocks and was saddened to find dead spots in a few of them. So what should I do?

In early April I told you that your pastures might have some dead spots this spring. Most likely these spots would be where bluegrass was the primary grass. Because weeds would invade those dead areas, I suggested reseeding, if possible, using seed of grasses similar to the grasses within that pasture. For example, use a warm-season grass mix in native pasture or plant brome in a cool-season pasture.

Reseeding still is an option to consider, especially for larger areas that can be protected from grazing so animals don't damage young seedlings. But, it is getting a little late to seed yet this spring.

For my pastures, though, I'm trying a different approach. My dead grass has some winter annual weeds like shephardspurse and downy brome growing in them. Reseeding would be awkward because the patches are scattered within mostly brome plus alfalfa paddocks and most dead spots aren't much bigger than a throw rug or full size mattress.

Instead of reseeding, I will delay grazing in hopes that the surrounding brome will start to creep in or maybe grass seeds from prior years might start new seedlings. The brome looks real healthy and I plan to graze it just as it starts to head out. This sometimes encourages brome to tiller and thicken.

I wish I had followed my April advice and reseeded some of the larger spots. If you haven't done anything yet like me, maybe you can try my alternative strategy and delay grazing your worst areas. It's going to be weedy this year. If they are broadleaf weeds, herbicides might be useful later.

Hopefully, we get lucky and good grass fills in quickly.

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