

LATE PLANTING ALTERNATIVES FOR FALL GRAZING

Most areas have been blessed with summer precipitation and forecasts suggest it will continue into fall. This is encouraging many folks to think about planting something for fall pasture. Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet, or should I say magic grass, that can provide grazing instantly. All plants need some time – as well as the right temperature, moisture, and nutrient conditions – to grow.

Of all the options available, oats and annual ryegrass may have the best chance of producing enough growth yet this fall to pay for its planting. Since turnip, forage rape, and radish seeds are relatively inexpensive, they also might work with a warm fall, but don't count on it.

Instead of trying to save hay by growing some fall pasture, most of you are likely to save more hay by planting winter rye or triticale for early spring pasture. Depending on the number of acres you plant and what other spring grazing options you have, these winter small grains should help eliminate the last two to six weeks of hay feeding this winter. As an added benefit, they also get cows and new-born calves out onto high quality pasture when their nutritional requirements are high enough to make good use of fresh pasture.

If you still want to try something for this fall, plant a mix of thirty pounds of oats with sixty pounds of winter rye. This mix should give you some fall grazing plus good spring forage as well.

Waiting until September to plant usually gives only modest amounts of fall grazing. And it always will be much less than plantings made in August – when they should be.

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