

## **Make the Most of Rain When it Comes**

How should you manage pastures to maximize growth after it rains? As drought-parched areas receive rain, some green will start to return to the pastures. You and your cows sure will appreciate it. As we all know, though, it's will take a lot more rain to bring things back to normal. Since that's unlikely, it's important to make the most of this recent moisture.

Grazing fresh growth as soon as it develops is not your best option. Avoid the extreme temptation to give cows access to the nice green feed right away. When you graze plants as they start to grow, it lowers their rate of growth and reduces their water use efficiency by allowing more soil moisture to escape as evaporation instead of first going through the plant to support growth.

A better move is to restrict animal access to as little land area as possible so the maximum number of grass plants get to grow without potential grazing pressure. It is better to feed hay to stretch the number of acres given a chance to grow than to graze too soon.

If our prayers are answered and more rain comes, you will be able to start grazing later on with expectations that regrowth will occur. But if it doesn't rain, at least all the moisture you do receive will have been used to support growth instead of just evaporating away.

When rain produces fresh green growth after an extended dry period, it's hard to delay grazing. But that is exactly what you must do to maximize growth from limited moisture.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
314 Keim Hall—East Campus  
Lincoln NE 68583-0915  
402-4742-2577  
[banderson1@unl.edu](mailto:banderson1@unl.edu)

