

## Maximizing Recent Rain

Many drought-stressed grasslands received enough rain recently to give pastures a much needed boost. So, how should you manage these pastures to maximize growth from recent rain?

Finally seeing some fresh green grass is nice. As we all know, though, it will take a lot more rain to bring things back to normal. So it's important to make the most of this recent moisture.

Cows sure appreciate the green grass starting to return to the hills that have been drought-stressed. However, cows aren't very good managers. They're just thinking about today's meal and not at all about the future.

However, grazing fresh growth as soon as it develops is not your best option. Avoid as much as possible the extreme temptation to give cows access to all this nice green feed right away. When plants are grazed 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. Even continue to feed a little hay to stretch the number of acres given a chance to grow.

If our prayers are answered and more rain comes, you can expect regrowth will occur after grazing later on. But if it doesn't rain, at least all the moisture you did 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 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)

