BLUEGRASS VS BROME

Pastures greened up early this spring during our warm March weather. Unfortunately, bluegrass in pastures also matured and headed out early, reducing both its growth potential and forage quality.

This early heading also showed us we had much more bluegrass in these pastures than most of us realized. So how do you get rid of this bluegrass and bring back the higher producing brome.

It might be nice if a magic chemical would kill bluegrass and not hurt brome but I'm afraid there isn't anything labeled and available to do that yet. So we need to use other methods.

It starts with creating a growth environment that is better for brome than bluegrass. That means higher soil fertility and improved rotational grazing management.

As a taller, potentially higher yielding grass, brome responds more to fertilizer than does bluegrass, especially nitrogen. Spring fertilization can give brome a competitive advantage over bluegrass.

But we can't stop there. Bluegrass invades and thrives in areas that are grazed short and remain short for lengthy periods of time. Unfortunately, this is how most brome pastures are grazed. What you need to do is leave more grass in pastures when you move to a new area, shorten the length of time a pasture is grazed to no more than four or five days, and let pasture regrow longer before grazing again.

The only practical way to do this is to subdivide with more cross-fences. It probably takes ten to twelve smaller pastures to make a big change. I know it sounds like a huge undertaking, but if you are serious about improving your pastures, it's worth doing.

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