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CHANGE GRAZING MANAGEMENT AS PASTURES DRY UP

Many pastures are getting dry. Even if spring rain was adequate, recent dry weather combined with all the hot days lately is producing some drought-stressed pastures. Many pastures are, or soon will be, completely grazed out.

When your pastures run out of water, some grazing rules no longer work. Probably the main rule that breaks is one called 'grass grows grass'. Have you ever heard that phrase? It describes leaving enough grass in a grazed pasture so it can regrow more quickly. But when we say 'grass grows grass', we expect everything grass plants need for regrowth will be available, including moisture. But if moisture is absent it's a totally different story.

As soils begin to get dry, I still suggest leaving grass behind to encourage regrowth that uses what little moisture is available.

Once soils get so dry, though, that you'll need a heavy rain for any regrowth to occur, grazing management can change. At that point consider grazing pastures completely, leaving behind only enough grass and litter to protect your soil from eroding. Any extra grass left behind will not regrow when it gets this dry, and probably will be gone or worthless by the time cattle return later.

Suppose you do graze completely, and it does rain. Then, do not graze the regrowth until it has been at least six weeks since that regrowth started to avoid injuring plants. Notice – I said since regrowth started, not just when grazing ended.

Drought causes changes in the way plants grow. Your grazing management should change, also, to get the best use of your grass.

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