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GRAZING MANAGEMENT CRITICAL NOW

When pastures look good and cattle are doing well we usually pay little attention to them. But don't take good pasture for granted; in a couple months it could look a lot different.

Now is the time to pay special attention to your rotational grazing. In particular, whenever possible, leave more growth behind than usual when you move to new pasture.

When moisture is available, like now, your grasses will regrow after grazing. Regrowth starts more rapidly when extra leaves remain behind after grazing. These leaves help plants harvest more sunlight energy to hasten regrowth, so your pasture will be ready to graze again much sooner and with more forage than if it had been grazed very short. After all, grass grows grass.

Another valuable reason to leave extra growth behind is the increased competition this provides to weeds. June and early July is the time many weeds like ragweed really start growing rapidly. The extra grass you leave behind and the faster regrowth of your grass will help reduce this weed invasion.

A final reason to leave extra growth behind is to improve animal nutrition. As you leave behind the stemmy, less desirable feed and move animals more frequently into fresh, high quality pasture, rates of gain increase, cows get bred more rapidly, and overall performance improves.

Sure, your pastures look good now. To keep them looking good and your cattle performing well: avoid overgrazing, encourage rapid regrowth, maintain competitive residues, and rotate often onto fresh, productive pasture.

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