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GRAZING STOCKPILED GRASS DURING WINTER

Grazing winter range or pastures has many benefits. It can save as much as a dollar a day per cow compared to feeding hay. It removes old growth so pasture next spring and summer is fresher. And some weeds may be eaten that cattle won't touch during summer. Plus, there is little risk of damage to your dormant pasture.

But the way you manage your cattle during winter grazing can have a big effect on its success. For instance, maybe you have a goal of feeding as little protein supplement as possible while winter grazing. Then you must make sure your stocking level is light enough so cattle can select just the higher quality plant parts to eat. Another strategy might be to stretch winter pasture as far as possible. Then it might be best to restrict animal access to small areas at a time, like with strip grazing, and feed supplements as needed. Or, if you use forage from winter range just as a filler to keep cattle from bellowing when you limit feed corn, corn by-products, or other nutrient dense feeds, then high stocking levels and unrestricted access might be best.

Whatever your strategy, though, consider carefully what kind of nutrition animals are getting from the pasture so you neither underfeed nor overfeed expensive supplements. Be sure to provide salt, calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin A free choice at all times.

Winter grazing is a great opportunity to reduce winter feed costs. With the right grazing strategy, it can help you meet many of your feeding goals.

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