



WEB CONTENT DISPLAY  
November 23, 2012

### **ALFALFA MAKES GOOD FALL PASTURE**

Alfalfa can provide considerable, high quality grazing in the fall. This year, after the one good rain in September, we saw some fall regrowth that can be utilized. By the end of November, the alfalfa usually is frozen down far enough to eliminate bloat hazard to cattle but this fall it has been warm enough we still have green plants.

Many growers find that grazing alfalfa in the late fall provides some flexibility that is often useful. Alfalfa makes an excellent weaning pasture for spring calves and yearlings continue to gain weight rapidly on fall alfalfa. Cows can gain condition before harsher winter temperatures. Ewes and lambs also benefit from grazing fall alfalfa.

Bloat hazard is always a concern when grazing fall alfalfa. However, after frost hits fall alfalfa and it starts to dry down, it has less tendency to cause bloat than summer alfalfa, especially in a dry fall. Producers can protect their livestock from bloat by filling them with hay before turning them onto the alfalfa. Maintaining access to dry hay or corn stalks while grazing alfalfa also helps reduce bloat. Producers also can swath their alfalfa ahead of grazing and let animals graze dry hay in the swath. Bloat protectants like poloxalene can be fed to livestock as blocks or mixed with grain. This works well when animals eat a uniform amount each day, but it adds to your bottom line expenses.

Producers also need to be careful not to damage their alfalfa stands. No worry this year, it's so dry, the dogs are marking their territory with chalk lines. The fields are firm and dry. A small sacrifice area should be reserved for grazing and feeding if we were so fortunate to have soils that were wet. This avoids damage to the entire field.

The Drought Disaster declaration in Nebraska has given livestock producers options for deferring income from livestock sales in 2012. Tina Barrett, Executive Director from the Nebraska Farm Business Inc., recently recorded a webinar titled "Livestock Deferral Elections" highlighting these options and things producers should consider in light of current tax laws and possible future tax rate increases. To learn more about these options go to the nation's leading website for beef information at UNL called <http://beef.unl.edu>.

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