

November 5, 2010

REVIVE WARM SEASON PASTURE

If cheatgrass, brome, or bluegrass is taking over a native pasture, there are some options to revitalize the grass. The invasion of cool season grass species shifts good grazing away from summer and towards springtime when most folks have plenty of pasture anyway.

Cool-season grasses take over summer pastures relatively easily because they develop rapidly during fall and spring when native grass provides little competition. Then they use moisture and nutrients during spring before warm-season plants have a chance to use them. One management grazing method to shift that trend is to flash graze downy brome early on in the fall and spring before it matures and then rest the pasture allowing native grasses to come on and do better. Hard grazing this fall, as well as early next spring, will weaken brome and bluegrass when warm-season plants are dormant and unaffected. This can stop further invasion and slowly improve summer production.

A prescribed spring burn also can do wonders for a warm-season pasture if you have enough fuel to carry a fire and can conduct the burn safely and legally. New organizations like the Tri-County Prescribed Burn Association can help you do this job safer.

An even faster approach is to apply glyphosate herbicides like Roundup in late fall. Most years you would never talk about doing this in November but this could be an opportunity this year because of mild weather. Hard freezes turn warm-season plants dormant but weedy cool-season grasses remain green. Make sure the native grass is completely dormant from a hard freeze, there cannot be any green on the native plants.

Apply glyphosate when temperatures during the day are above 60 degrees and nighttime temperatures stay above 40 degrees for best results. This will kill or weaken the green and susceptible cool-season grasses but not affect dormant warm-season plants. By reducing competition, warm-season plants will grow more vigorously next year and provide better summer pasture. If you are not sure if there is enough native left, do a test strip first before treating the whole pasture.

Don't settle for invaded native pasture. Use flash grazing strategies, prescribed burning or herbicides or a combination thereof to transform native pastures back to vigorous warm-season grasses for better summer grazing next year.

FALL FERTILIZING AND GRAZING

We have had a few questions come into the office about 11-52-0 application in the fall and grazing at the same time. It is unusual to go this long without incorporating rainfall. This shouldn't be a problem with the cattle. The dry fertilizer will shift down to the soil line. Cows won't lick it up unless they have no salt/mineral provided to them.



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