

BENEFITS OF LEGUMES

Reducing pasture expenses can help your bottom line. But don't try to starve a profit from your pastures. Sometimes you need to invest. This spring, invest in legumes.

Spring-like weather between snow storms in January and February should get you looking forward to next spring. I'm sure one thing you won't look forward to, though, is paying for nitrogen fertilizer on your pastures.

Avoid this expense by adding legumes to your grazinglands. Five years of grazing research in eastern Nebraska showed that brome/legume pastures produced almost four-tenths of a pound higher average daily gain on yearlings than did straight brome pastures fertilized with 50 pounds of nitrogen.

That may not sound like a lot to you, but that much faster gain for the full season produced an extra fifty-one pounds of beef per acre. With no nitrogen fertilizer. Adding the value of heavier yearlings plus reduced fertilizer expenses resulted in more than an extra fifty dollars per acre profit. That's fifty more dollars – per acre!

Similar research was conducted with warm-season grasses with nearly the same results.

February and March are good months to start adding legumes. Red clover is the easiest one to establish because seed can be broadcast on pastures even if they are covered with several inches of snow. As snow melts and temperatures fluctuate in early spring, the seeds will get worked into the soil, germinate, and start to grow. With a little attention to controlling competition from the existing grass, new red clover plants can start increasing your pasture production by summer.

Don't become trapped by the never ending cost of nitrogen fertilizer. Use legumes to reduce costs and increase production.

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