

Feed Hay to Let Pasture Grow

Hay is for winter and pasture is for summer - right? Well, maybe we should rethink this schedule to increase overall production. Many of us received welcome rain here in August and pastures are growing well. That means we can continue grazing and can hold our hay until later. Or does it?

Let's think about this for a moment. Does pasture grow during winter? Of course not, so if we want more pasture growth we need to encourage it during the growing season. What will happen, though, if we graze pastures short now during summer and fall? Of course- growth slows down and produces less than if we let it grow without grazing.

To let it grow and accumulate without grazing, we probably need to feed hay. But if we feed hay now, won't we have less of it available for winter? Maybe - but we shouldn't need as much hay for winter because all that extra pasture growth that accumulated while we fed hay can be grazed this fall and winter when we normally feed hay.

In fact, if we allow pastures to grow as much as possible from now until it freezes, we may feed less total hay before next spring than if we follow our standard practice of grazing now and saving hay for winter.

So, if you expect to feed hay eventually before next spring, it might be smarter to feed some of it now rather than later so your pastures can produce extra forage while they still can. Sometimes doing things backwards from our normal practices can maximize production. Feeding hay now and grazing this winter might be one of them.

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