

## Feeding on Pasture

Feeding on pasture is one option to care for cattle when pasture grass is gone. However, to be sure that you don't harm your pasture while feeding. Drought has made many pastures almost useless as cattle feed. If you keep your cows you need to feed them hay or other supplements. And the most convenient place to feed them often is the pasture.

But as long as animals are on the pasture, they will continue to do some damage. They will nibble at what little grass remains. They will trample and cut up plant crowns with their hooves. Even lying on plants while resting will cause some damage. And any damage caused by feeding will lengthen the amount of time it will take your pasture to recover before it is in condition to be grazed again.

To minimize the total damage done to your pastures while feeding, use one of two feeding methods. The first is called a sacrifice paddock and is similar to converting a small portion of your pasture into a temporary feedlot. Do all your feeding in one small area, protecting the rest of your pasture but potentially killing all plants currently there. If you choose this sacrifice paddock method, be sure the site won't erode after grass is gone and select a site that may be re-seeded easily since you very well may need to do so later.

The second option is the moving feed bunk method. Pasture damage is relatively small when animals are concentrated on an area for just a couple days. The moving feed bunk method involves moving feeding sites throughout your pastures every couple of days. It's a difficult method to use if you actually are using feed bunks, but if all your hay or feed goes on the ground it isn't hard to accomplish.

Use one of these methods to avoid doing more damage than needed.

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