

GRAZE ACCORDING TO MOISTURE CONDITIONS

It takes rain to grow grass. While some areas still are quite dry, many others recently have greatly increased their soil moisture.

When moisture is plentiful and temperatures get warm, grass grows rapidly. There are several ways you can reap maximum benefits from extra grass. But you must be able to control when and where your animals graze to take advantage of this grass. And that means fencing and management.

One option for extra grass is to cut hay for winter feed. If you select this option, choose the area you plan to cut for hay now so you can prevent animals from grazing there, both before and after cutting hay. Build or repair fences if needed.

Another option is stockpiling extra growth in a pasture for grazing next winter. This can save on winter hay and is inexpensive to try. It also is a good way to strengthen plants following drought or a hard winter. On summer rangeland, you need to start accumulating growth no later than early July by fencing cows out of the planned winter pasture. If, instead, your winter pasture will be from cool-season grasses like brome grass, wheatgrass, or fescue, be ready to fence off and save the winter grazing portion by late July. And don't overgraze that area this summer or late season growth will be slow.

Finally, simply start or improve a planned rotational grazing program this summer. Your pasture plants will recover well during their rest periods, building deep and healthy root systems that will maintain production when it finally does turn dry.

Don't just be satisfied when abundant rain gives you extra grass. Take advantage of this growth for long term benefits.

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