

August 2017

INVENTORY AND RATION AS PASTURES DRY

Many years as August rolls around we can pretty much tell how much longer are pastures will be able to provide adequate grazing.

This year, I'm pretty lucky. My pastures in southeast Nebraska have received adequate rainfall. As I walked or drove through most of my pastures last weekend, I estimated the grazing days I expect from my remaining brome regrowth, my warm-season grass pastures, and the amount of regrowth I think will occur even without more rain. With careful management, I think they will last until October, maybe even November.

I emphasize the words "careful management". Cool-season grasses basically are done growing unless they receive quite a bit of rain in late August and September. Warm-season grass pastures aren't much different. With adequate moisture, plants will continue to get taller as they form seedstalks but they'll produce only a little new leafy growth. That helps hay yield but doesn't do much for grazing.

That means we may need to get by with what we currently have available. Stretching grazing for as long as possible takes planning. And the sooner, the better. Plans on how the remaining pasture forage will be rationed to the animals is especially important. One of the best ways to stretch pasture is to limit access to just a couple days worth of grazing at a time to reduce trampling waste. I am using temporary electric cross fences to do this. Extra tall grass might be windrowed and grazed to reduce trampling. Managed efficiently, pastures will last much longer.

My planning just about guarantees I'll have pasture until corn stalks are ready. What about you?

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