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COOL-SEASON GRASSES INVADING WARM-SEASON PASTURES

When cheatgrass, bromes, and other cool-season plants invade warm-season grass pastures and rangeland, they shift good grazing away from summer.

Cool-season grasses take over summer pastures relatively easily because they develop rapidly during fall and spring when native grass provides little competition. Then they use moisture and nutrients during spring before warm-season plants have a chance to use them.

Heavy grazing now this fall after warm-season plants have gone dormant after a hard freeze as well as grazing very early next spring will weaken and reduce competition from these cool-season grasses. This limits further invasion and slowly improves summer production. A prescribed spring burn also can do wonders for a warm-season pasture if you have enough fuel to carry a fire and can conduct the burn safely and legally.

An even faster approach is to apply glyphosate herbicides like Roundup after a couple hard freezes in late fall. Hard freezes turn warm-season plants dormant but the weedy cool-season grasses remain green. Apply glyphosate when temperatures during the day are above 60 degrees and nighttime temperatures stay above 40 degrees for best results. This will kill or weaken the green and susceptible cool-season weedy grasses but not affect dormant warm-season plants. By reducing competition, warm-season plants will grow more vigorously next year and provide better summer pasture.

Don't settle for invaded native pasture. Transform them back to vigorous warm-season grasses for better summer grazing.

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