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CUTTING EXCESS SPRING PASTURE FOR HAY

Extra rain produces extra grass. As pastures grow faster than cattle can eat, finding ways to use this extra grass efficiently can be like money in the bank.

The most obvious way to conserve extra growth is by cutting hay from parts of the pasture. Normally I try to avoid extra hay cutting but if you have the equipment, the time, and more pasture than you can use this spring, cutting hay for use later in summer or winter when pasture becomes scarce is a good option.

If you choose the hay option, cut as seedheads emerge for good hay quality and plant regrowth potential. Also, fence out soon the area to be cut from the rest of the pasture. Otherwise, cattle will ignore and waste the taller, stummier grass as they just graze new regrowth after cutting hay. You might even apply a little nitrogen fertilizer to stimulate growth if soil moisture still is good.

Don't be surprised if certain weeds like common ragweed or foxtails become abundant in areas cut for hay. Ragweed or other non-palatable broadleaf weeds can be killed easily with herbicides if necessary. Herbicide options are much more limited for the foxtails or other annual grassy weeds, but cattle will graze them quite well if you allow them access before these weeds begin to head out. And the same holds true for many broadleaf weeds.

Don't let extra spring pasture go to waste. Cutting the excess as hay is one way to save and stretch your forage supply.

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