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## FORAGES WITH LIMITED IRRIGATION

Many irrigated acres may not receive enough water this summer to grow a good grain or root crop. Sometimes you can combine water allocated for several fields onto one field to get a crop, but that still leaves the other acres with little or no water at all.

Forage crops also need water for highest production, but at least some useful yield can be gathered when total water available is very low. So what are your best options?

If you expect water limits will continue for several more years a perennial forage would eliminate the cost and time of establishing a new crop each year. Switchgrass is one good choice. It's less expensive to plant, its primary water needs occur in early summer when water usually is available, and it can be managed for hay or pasture. Other warm-season grass options include big or sand bluestem and indiangrass, especially for grazing. Some wheatgrasses and bromegrasses as well as alfalfa can work with limited irrigation, but these cool-season plants respond best to water applied during spring. For some irrigators, water isn't available until after this most efficient time has passed.

Of course, annual forages like pearl and foxtail millet, cane, teff, and sorghum-sudangrass are relatively water efficient and will yield proportionately to the amount of water they receive. And this spring especially, don't forget small grains like oats and spring-type varieties of rye, barley, and triticale for spring forage if you have moisture at those times.

It may not be what you hoped for, but growing forages under limited irrigation may help you make the best out of a bad situation.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
314 Keim Hall—East Campus  
Lincoln NE 68583-0915  
402-4742-2577  
[banderson1@unl.edu](mailto:banderson1@unl.edu)



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