

January 20, 2016

IRRIGATED PASTURES BEAT HIGH RENT AND LOW CROP PRICES

High pasture rents, risk of drought, and little profit from irrigated crops make irrigated pasture an attractive option.

When pasture rent approaches or even exceeds three hundred dollars per cow-calf pair for the season, it may be time to look at other options. One attractive option might be to grow your own irrigated pasture, especially when corn prices are below four dollars a bushel. Well-managed irrigated pasture can support about one and one-half cow-calf pairs per acre. This could save you over four hundred dollars per acre at rental pasture rates.

Of course, you will gross a whole lot more per acre by continuing to grow irrigated corn. But, cash costs to raise corn are way more for corn than for irrigated pasture so you might actually be losing money with corn.

And this doesn't take into account other advantages of irrigated pasture. Things like the convenience of having so many animals together close to home, better early spring grass, and improved bull power when breeding in such small areas. Only you can determine what these are worth to you.

Irrigated pastures can be highly productive and profitable, but your best management effort is needed. For details on seeding and managing irrigated pastures, several extension NebGuides are available on-line and at local extension offices.

Do you get the most out of your irrigated acres? Is corn at four dollars per bushel making you money? If not, irrigated pasture might be better. Think about it.

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



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.. Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.