

STOCKPILE EXTRA SUMMER GROWTH FOR WINTER PASTURE

Abundant rain produces abundant grass. If this describes your grasslands, let's find the best way to take advantage of this blessing.

When you get abundant rain and warm, sunny weather, your pastures may produce more growth than needed for your current summer stocking rates. Options to use the extra growth are needed.

Sometimes we cut and bale extra growth as hay. This is a good plan if you need the hay. Other times we simply let cattle graze what they want and leave the excess in the field. Rebuilding surface litter that was burned up by recent droughts can be healthy for the pasture.

How about another option? Try stockpiling, or saving some extra pasture growth for grazing during the winter.

There are lots of advantages to winter grazing. For starters, less hay needs to be fed next winter. Thus, you won't need to make as much hay this summer. And stockpiling in summer and fall followed by winter grazing is one of the best methods to improve the health of your grasslands, especially native range.

If you have some run down, poor condition, low producing pastures, these often are the best candidates for winter grazing. Grasses that need invigorating will be strengthened if you avoid grazing them during the growing season. Later, your winter grazing will clean off much of the frozen growth during winter. Cattle may even eat some plants like yucca and ragweed during winter that they won't hardly touch during summer. Sure, you'll need some protein supplements, but cattle do a pretty good job of picking high quality plant parts to eat while winter grazing.

Extra growth is an opportunity to both reduce winter feed costs and improve pasture condition. Get it by stockpiling extra summer growth for winter grazing.

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

