

Revitalizing Warm-season Pastures

Cheatgrass, downy brome, bluegrass, smooth brome and other cool-season plants have invaded many warm-season grass pastures and rangeland. This invasion shifts good grazing away from summer and towards springtime when most folks have plenty of pasture anyway.

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 this fall after hard freezes when warm-season plants are dormant and unaffected as well as early next spring will weaken and reduce summer competition from bluegrass and brome. This can stop further invasion and slowly improve 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 now in late fall. Hard freezes turn warm-season plants dormant but 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 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.

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

