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A voluntary partnership with private landowners

Extended Grazing from STOCKPILING

Garry Lacefield, Extension Forage Specialist, University of Kentucky

Many cattle producers can take advantage of the late summer-fall growing conditions to obtain high quality pasture for fall and early winter grazing by using a practice called stockpiling. But, before you know if stockpiling will work for you, there are several questions that need to be answered:

- ⇨ **Which grass species are best for stockpiling?**
- ⇨ **When should stockpiling begin?**
- ⇨ **When, what kind, and how much fertilizer should be applied?**
- ⇨ **When should the stockpiled material be used?**
- ⇨ **What classes of cattle should be given access to stockpiled pastures?**
- ⇨ **What grazing system should be used for most efficient use?**

Grasses to Stockpile

The best grasses for stockpiling are cool-season grasses, which will retain their green color and forage quality late into winter. In addition, the grass should be somewhat resistant to low temperatures and have the capabilities of forming a good sod. Tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass are two grasses which have these characteristics. Tall fescue produces more fall and winter growth than bluegrass.

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Cover photograph:
Cattle grazing stockpiled tall fescue near Lexington, Kentucky.

STOCKPILING

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Time to Begin Stockpiling

Late July through early August is the time to begin stockpiling for fall and winter use. Remove cattle in late July or early August, apply necessary fertilizer, and allow the grass to accumulate growth until November or December.

During the stockpiling period (August 1 to November 1) other available forages such as sorghum-sudan hybrids, sudangrass, bermudagrass, grass-lespedeza, and grass-clover should be utilized. After frost, alfalfa-grass and clover-grass growth should be grazed first before moving to stockpiled grass fields.

Fertilizer Needed

A soil test should be taken to determine the phosphorous, potassium, and lime necessary. Nitrogen should be topdressed at the rate of 40 to 60 pounds of actual N per acre on bluegrass and 40 to 80 pounds per acre on tall fescue.

A study done by Kentucky researchers showed that bluegrass fertilized with 45 pounds of nitrogen per acre had a yield increase of 20 pounds of dry matter per pound of nitrogen applied on pasture where nitrogen was applied on August 15 and yield was determined on December 1. In the same study, tall fescue showed even greater nitrogen use efficiency with a yield increase of 24.4 pounds of dry matter for each pound of nitrogen applied.

Additional studies have shown the greatest response for early application of nitrogen. Nitrogen applications before August 1 may encourage summer grasses such as crabgrass and subsequently reduce the production of bluegrass and tall fescue.

Stockpiled tall fescue in October (prior to grazing) near Lexington, Kentucky.

Strip grazing stockpiled tall fescue in Metcalf County, Kentucky.

Utilization of Stockpiled Forages

After frost, be sure to graze the grass-legume fields quickly before the plants deteriorate. After the grass-legume fields have been grazed, the stockpiled fields should be grazed. Light stocking will cause a lot of waste as a result of trampling. To make most efficient use of the high quality feed in stockpiled fields, install a temporary electric fence across the field dividing it so that the area to be grazed has a source of water and minerals. Once the animals have grazed this area off, move the fence to open up a new strip. Repeat this system until the entire field is grazed.

Animal Performance

The high quality of stockpiled tall fescue produces good gains on both weaned stock and mature cows. These gains are a response to the high crude protein and digestibility of the fall growth of tall fescue. In particular, the sugar content rises to very high levels in response to lower temperatures and shortening day length. This nutritional change takes place gradually after the first frost.

Dollars and Cents

Researchers in Missouri compared hay feeding to grazing stockpiled tall fescue. Results of their studies showed that grazing stockpiled tall fescue reduced hay feeding from 120 days to 60 days. Cost per cow day was 74 cents for feeding hay and 19 cents for grazing stockpiled tall fescue. Wintering cost per cow was reduced by $48 by grazing stockpiled tall fescue.

GREAT LAKES INTERNATIONAL GRAZING CONFERENCE

By Bob Hendershot, NRCS, Lancaster, Ohio

Almost 500 livestock producers from across the midwest and Canada attended the Great Lakes International Grazing Conference in Shipshewana, Indiana on February 14 and 15. Five different agencies worked very hard to sponsor and host the conference. Those agencies were USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Extension Service, Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Clean Water Initiative.

The conference included a trade show that had 42 commercial and educational displays. The conference started with five breakout sessions (Dairy, Beef, Sheep, Horses, and Alternative Marketing). Each of the breakout sessions had three presentations that highlighted producers and researchers. The second day of the conference had two concurrent sessions. One session was Getting Started in Grazing Management, and the other session was Mastering the Art of Grazing Management. During both of these sessions, producers and researchers shared in presenting technology and skills to help other producers adopt improved pasture management. Conference speakers included producers and researchers from Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, New York, and Michigan.

Dr. Woody Lane, grazing consultant from Oregon, and Nigel Young, researcher from the United Kingdom, presented material both days that challenged the experienced grazier and encouraged the beginners. Bob Drake, rancher from Oklahoma and Chairman of the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) National Steering Committee, also spoke to the group. He shared his comments on the national effort to promote grazing lands and encouraged everyone to work toward promoting grazing land conservation.

Bob Drake, Chairman of the GLCI National Steering Committee.

Reminder !!

Mark Your Calendars NOW

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GRAZING LANDS

Bally's Hotel and Casino

Las Vegas, Nevada
December 5-8, 2000

Invited Speakers, Voluntary Papers and Poster Sessions

*Grazing Management
*Emerging Technology
*Enterprise Diversification
*Grazing Land Watershed Impacts on Urban Areas
*Grazing/Wildlife Interactions
*Public/Private Lands Interface
*Effects of Legislation and Policy on Grazing Lands
*The Business Side of Grazing Management

National & Regional GLCI Sessions

Trade Show and Expo

Watch future issues of *GLCI News* for information on Registration, Agenda, and Program Details.

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

I hope your calendars are marked, as we are only six months from the National Conference on Grazing Lands. The dates for the conference are December 5-8, 2000 at Bally's in Las Vegas, Nevada. Our planning committees continue to keep us on task, as the work for this conference is no small chore. National exposure and public awareness will be a crucial key to our success. The National Steering Committee will have their annual business meeting in August to continue planning on this national conference.

I am pleased to make the following announcements, which are very good for our initiative. First, I want to acknowledge the contributions and commitments of all the organizations and individuals that have given their support to the National Grazing Conference. Their efforts will truly add value and exposure to our conference.

I would also like to welcome Joe Nickerson and John Spain to the National GLCI steering committee. Joe is from Wauchula, Florida and represents the Dairy Industry. John is from Hinesville, Arkansas and represents the American Forage and Grassland Council. We are happy to have them aboard.

To receive more information about Joe Nickerson, John Spain and others on the steering committee check out our website at www.glci.org.

See you in December in Vegas !!!
Bob Drake
Chairman

GLCINews

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