

## **It's Time to Stockpile Again**

Stockpiling fescue in late summer and fall offers a great opportunity to extend the grazing season well past our growing season and decrease your hay feeding days. As you know, winter feed costs are the largest expense item in the annual operating budget for a commercial cow-calf operation. Many farmers over the years have learned to stockpile fescue in the fall to provide winter grazing and greatly reduce their winter feeding costs. You still have time to stockpile fescue now, if you take action soon.

Here are some proven tips to help you maximize your success using this underutilized practice.

### **Select the right field to stockpile:**

- Choose a pasture or paddock that has a high fescue content and has not been repeatedly overgrazed.
- Select a pasture that has good fertility (medium+ P & K levels and pH  $\geq$  6.0).
- Use a pasture located on upland, well drained soils

### **Prepare the field for success:**

- Graze off rough summer growth including crabgrass, foxtail and old fescue.
- Fertilize by the end of August with 50 lbs./acre N for optimum fall growth
- If the field has 25% clover or a recent history of poultry litter applications then no additional N is recommended.
- Ammonium nitrate and ammonium sulfate were the most effective sources in our tests
- Keep cattle off this paddock for the following 75 - 90 days



Caption: A timely August N application can maximize your fall stockpiling potential. Photo courtesy Keith Tuck.

### **Expect good quality and production:**

- Stockpile fescue yields generally average 3,000 – 4,000 lbs. forage dry matter per acre
- CP content begin about 16% and taper to 10% by March in fields fertilized with N.
- TDN values begin about 68% early and taper to 55% by March in fields fertilized with N.
- The nutritive quality fully meets the requirements of a lactating beef cow
- Remember, if it doesn't rain much, the grass doesn't grow much.



Caption: With good growing conditions this field stockpiled 4500 lbs./ forage dry matter per acre.

**Stockpile enough to meet your grazing goals:**

- You have to have forage to graze while your paddocks are stockpiling
- Stockpile between 0.5 - 1 acre per cow calf pair if possible
- Strip-grazing will usually double the amount of grazing days on the same acreage
- One acre of good stockpile, per cow calf pair, will typically last through March if you strip graze it.



Caption: Strip-grazing is an easy technique that can double the grazing days on stockpiled fescue.

For more information on stockpiling and strip-grazing fescue on other farms around Virginia, go to <https://vaforages.org/resources/publications/> and read the publication titled: *What to Expect When Stockpiling and Strip-Grazing Tall Fescue*.