

Extend Grazing with Summer Stockpiling

Conservation Innovation Grant Project Fact Sheet



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What is Summer Stockpiling?

Summer stockpiling is a system that excludes grazing from a portion of pasture acres during spring and summer in order to have forage for late-summer and early-fall grazing. This practice allows other pastures to stockpile for winter grazing. The main goal is to provide a high quality, grazable forage during late summer, when cool season pasture production can otherwise be limited.



Why Extend the Grazing Season?

Forage Quality

- Research and demonstration has found summer stockpile forage to average about 12 percent crude protein and 60 percent total digestible nutrients.
- Fescue alkaloid concentrations tested no higher than what is commonly measured on conventionally grazed pasture.



Less Expense and Labor Requirements

- Pasture is less expensive than hay and stored feeds.
- Minimum labor is required to set electric fences and restrict livestock from the area to be stockpiled.
- Strip-grazing the stockpile increases use efficiency.
- Moving fencing for strip grazing typically takes 15-30 minutes two or three times per week.

Effects on Pasture Condition

- No impacts of practical significance observed.
- The summer stockpiled pasture grazed earliest in the process often regrows enough to provide additional grazing before moving to the fall stockpile.

Steps to Summer Stockpiling

The following model has consistently extended the grazing season ninety days longer than the conventional grazing season:

Early Spring

- Select pastures for summer stockpile. Plan to reserve about 25 percent of total pasture acres.
- Defer grazing from spring green-up through mid-August.
- Rotationally graze the remainder through spring and summer.
- Apply nitrogen to boost spring growth if needed.

Late Summer

- Begin strip-grazing in mid-August.
- Use electric poly-wire fence stretched across a field. Open the fence to expose new strips of forage as needed.
- Pasture should be grazed short before moving livestock in order to optimize forage use .

Fall

As the summer stockpile is being grazed, apply nitrogen to other pastures and begin stockpiling fall growth for grazing in winter.



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