

Stockpiling Fescue for Winter Grazing

The first step is inventorying available winter feed and determining number of paddocks to designate for stockpiling. Fescues waxy leaf makes it the only choice for stockpiling. Pure stands of fescue work better than stands with heavy clover mix. The grass will be high in protein and total digestible nutrients for the herd ration.

Heavily graze, cut for hay or mow fescue down to 3 inches around first two weeks of August in selected areas for stockpiling. An acre of 90-day stockpiled fescue can produce an average of 3000 lbs of dry matter. This will vary with fall soil moisture and stand quality. Research indicates that fescue/clover mixed pastures need nitrogen to produce necessary dry matter. The recommendation is to apply 40 to 50 units of nitrogen mid- to late-August in mixed pastures or pastures with average stand quality. In pure, healthy stands in good soil where production can be maximized, up to 60 to 80 units of N can be applied. Nitrogen products to consider are urea + urease inhibitor (NBPT), ammonium nitrate or ammonium sulfate.

Keep livestock and equipment off of selected fields until after first hard frost, around early to mid-November. Strip graze cattle to increase utilization by prevent them from trampling or laying on forage. Base grazing area on animal units of dry matter needed for one day. The grazing wedge program may be used to provide a monthly snapshot. Grazing wedges can be found at the MU website: <http://grazingbeef.missouri.edu>.

A slide set on stockpiling is available online:

http://extension.missouri.edu/webster/documents/presentations/2014-01-18_DiversifiedAgConference/2014-01-18_Stockpiling_Pastures-TimSchnakenberg-print.pdf

Calculations:

A.U. = (# Cow/calf pairs x lbs. per pair) / 1000

Pounds Dry Matter (D.M.)/Day = A.U. x 30 lbs D.M.

Total Pounds Forage/A = 250 lb D.M. per inch of forage (yard stick method)

Forage Intake (% of Body Wt.): Dry Cow = 2%; Stocker = 3%; Lactating Cow = 4%

Animals = $\frac{\text{Total lbs Forage/A} \times \% \text{ Grazing Eff.} \times \text{Paddock Acres}}{\text{Ave. Animal Wt.} \times \text{Forage Intake \%} \times \text{Grazing Days}}$