

# Extend Grazing Season By Stockpiling Grass

PRINCETON, KY.

**W**ith the 2007 hay shortage still a vivid memory and high prices and tight supplies continuing into 2008, many livestock producers are looking for ways to extend the grazing season and reduce the cost of winter feeding. Garry Lacefield, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture extension forage specialist, said one way to accomplish this is to stockpile grass beginning in mid-August for late fall or early winter grazing.

Stockpiling is accomplished by leaving a recently grazed pasture idle and adding nitrogen to it to achieve optimum growth. Livestock are then allowed to graze the field in late fall or early winter to extend grazing and reduce hay requirements.

He said Kentucky has two grasses, Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue, that are excellent for stockpiling. Both are cool season grasses that will retain their color and quality into the winter. However, tall fescue yields more pounds per acre of dry matter during this period than blue-

grass. Tall fescue also peaks in quality during this time.

When considering stockpiling, some producers may worry about the high cost of nitrogen. Recommended application rates for the average field are between 50 and 80 pounds of nitrogen per acre, but Lacefield said producers can enhance growth and improve quality with 30 to 40 pounds. The amount producers use may depend on hay availability and costs this winter.

"If hay supplies are good, then they might not want to apply as much nitrogen to their fields, but if hay supplies are short and expensive, then producers can justify using more nitrogen," Lacefield said.

Producers can get the most out of their grasses by controlling where livestock graze. Installing an electric wire around a specific area for the animals to graze will reduce waste. Once the animals clear an area, move the wire to another area.

"Grazing management will dramatically increase the amount of forage grazed," he said. Δ