

# Make Better Use Of Available Forage



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**W**ith the cost of fertilizer and equipment increasing, it is important that minimal forage is wasted by cattle. With a little extra expense and labor, beef producers can make better use of available pastures.

Cattle are not efficiently using the forage if there are areas in pasture where the grass is tall and other areas where it is short. Do not clip these pastures to get them growing evenly: clipping is expensive and it wastes grass. Instead, reduce the pasture size so animals must graze all of the forage. Divide the pastures that are currently being grazed as a starting point. Be sure that animals have access to water and mineral in every pasture. Cattle should consume the available grass within approximately seven days. If it takes longer, they will return to previously grazed areas and leave some areas to mature. Pastures not needed for grazing can be utilized for hay.

To divide pastures and hold in cattle, use one or two strands of electric fencing. Place cattle

inside a pasture with a permanent fence that has a strand of electric fence along the interior to train the animals to the fence. Also, make sure the temporary fence is properly grounded. Hooking a fence charger to the electric fence and to a ground rod that is made of concrete reinforcing bar (rebar), water pipe or similar material is not adequate. For proper grounding, use at least three ground rods similar to those used as grounds in houses. Connect these rods in a series (driven about 10 feet apart) with clamps and wire that are made of the same metal as the rods. If you use a galvanized ground rod, use galvanized wire secured with a galvanized clamp. Using the same metal prevents the oxidation that can occur when attaching a copper wire to a steel rod. The oxidized connection impedes the flow of current and reduces the amount of voltage available to shock animals.

In summary, beef cattle producers should ensure their animals utilize all the forage produced on the farm. Electric fencing will help create optimum size pastures. Δ

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