

Plan Now For Fall Forage

BLUE SPRINGS, MO. It wasn't the best of springs for baling hay. "Stockpiling fall forage can stretch your hay supply by delaying how early you start feeding hay, plus reduce your harvesting costs," says Pat Miller, University of Missouri Extension agronomy specialist. "Think of it as letting the cows do their own harvesting," she says. "Fall fescue pastures have excellent forage quality, running 15 to 18 percent protein."

If you want to get fall grazing or winter stockpiling from your fescue stands, fertilizing needs to be done in late summer, preferably just before a rain.

"Much of the late growth of fescue is made during August and September, so for the fertilizer to benefit the fall growth, it needs to be applied mid- to late July," Miller says.

If the stand is primarily grass, 60 to 80

pounds of nitrogen would be plenty. If the stand is thick with legumes, they will provide much of the needed nitrogen. Apply phosphorus, potash and lime according to soil test recommendations to get the benefit of all the nitrogen you apply.

If the stand is primarily fescue, it can also be stockpiled for winter use. For this use, Miller recommends removing cattle by early August and returning them in early October. Other grasses and legumes do not work as well for stockpiling.

"The best way to utilize this stockpiled fescue is to strip graze or limit graze," Miller says. An electric fence can be moved each day to give them one day's worth of grazing. This way, the cattle will not trample the grass before they are able to eat it.

"They'll probably be there waiting for you to move the fence," Miller says. Δ



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