

To Clip Or Not To Clip, That Is The Beef Producers Dilemma

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Late July is the time of the grazing season when cattle farmers tussle with the question, "should I clip my pastures that look a little ragged with weeds and old, cool season grass seedheads?"

According to Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension, each pasture presents a different situation, so it is difficult to give a blanket recommendation.

"Much of the raggedness may have resulted from mismanagement early in the grazing season. Stocking rates could have been fairly light as the grazing season started. As a result, some of the pasture gets away from the cattle and they resort to spot grazing," said Cole.

Weeds and brush may be part of the problem as they encroach on a good pasture that was a victim of overgrazing, drought or low fertility. Even abundant rainfall can negatively alter the best plans.

Cole says there are several considerations farmers need to look at before getting out the brush hog in early August.

"Consider cost, because the cost per acre varies and the benefits may not justify the expense of clipping," said Cole.

Appearance of the property is also a consideration. "Some landowners value the attractiveness of their pastures due to their neighborhood. For example, purebred beef operations strive to have neat surroundings and they may be able to justify the cost of clipping," said Cole.

Landowners need to consider the extent of the weed or mature grass problems, whether or not clipping would damage clovers or lespedeza stands, and whether or not money spent on a timely herbicide application would be a better investment.

It is also important to consider whether clipping now will benefit fescue growth for fall stockpiling?

"Stockpiled fescue is much higher in nutritional value when a pasture is clipped about this time of year," said Cole. "And another important consideration is whether or not you have spare time and equipment to do the clipping or would you have to hire it done?"

For more information on the pros and cons of late summer weed clipping, contact the University of Missouri Extension agronomist or livestock specialist at the nearest MU Extension Center. Δ



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