

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

 Cooperative  
Extension Service



## Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES  
EDUCATION

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August 5, 2023

### Stockpile forages to extend the grazing season

With the recent rainfall, there hasn't been a summer in quite a while with as much promise for an excellent stockpile fescue yield. Beginning to plan for stockpile management now will increase the likelihood of success and help extend the grazing season on high-quality pasture well into the fall and early winter. A stockpile program aims to delay feeding hay as long as possible, reducing feed and labor costs by lowering the amount of hay needed while providing an ideal environment for the beef cow herd to spend the winter and calve.

It's relatively easy to stockpile. Simply take cattle off pastures in the next week or two, apply nitrogen fertilizer, and allow grass to accumulate growth through late fall. Then, put cattle on the pasture one section at a time until they've strip grazed the entire field. Don't worry about johnsongrass in the pasture. Prussic acid is a concern immediately after light freeze events, but the goal for a stockpile field is to delay grazing until at least two weeks after the first hard freeze event, killing all of the remaining johnsongrass which may have escaped death from light freezes earlier in the fall.

Tall fescue is the best grass species to stockpile in Kentucky. It has a waxy outer leaf surface which retains its green color and forage quality late into winter. It is very tolerant of low

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temperatures and is a tough sod that can recover from hoof damage in wet conditions. Another unique attribute of tall fescue is that after experiencing a hard freeze, sugar content increases.

Nitrogen and moisture are critical to successfully stockpiling grasses. Apply nitrogen in mid-August at the rate of 40 to 100 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre on tall fescue. Numerous studies show wise fertilizer use and timing results in high yields during fall and early winter. Tall fescue crude protein and digestibility are better during fall and early winter than at any other time of the year. Yields can be very good when water is available during the stockpiling period. Tall fescue can produce two tons of dry matter up to late November. With adequate water, producers can achieve 25 pounds of dry matter for each pound of nitrogen used.

After frost, let cattle graze pastures containing legume species first before the plants deteriorate. Then, put animals on the stockpiled grass fields. For the most efficient use of stockpiled fields, establish a strip grazing system by using a temporary electric fence to section off areas of the field. The first grazing area should have water and mineral sources. When animals have grazed this area, move the fence to open a new strip. Repeat this process until the entire field has been grazed.

Stockpiled grass is an excellent choice for fall-calving cows because it can be used to meet high nutritional needs after calving and during the breeding season. Grazing stockpiled grasses may offer the most benefit to spring-calving cows in thin body condition during the fall. Growing, weaned cattle can be grazed on stockpiled fescue. Using stockpiled grasses helps lower feed costs when backgrounding cattle.

If necessary, feed some hay in September and October to prevent moving the herd into the stockpile field. It will be hard to resist letting them in the lush green field. But it will be

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better for the herd and requires less labor to feed hay when it's warm and dry in the fall. Keep the herd out of the stockpile field until winter sets in.

Contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service for more information about pasture management and other topics.

## **Annual Rural Life Celebration**

Make plans to attend the Rural Life Celebration on Sunday, August 13, at 4:00 p.m. at the St.

Mary of the Woods Parrish Hall in Whitesville. This event is free and open to the public. It is a great opportunity to visit and share an appreciation for agriculture and the rural lifestyle with people from across the county.

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