

Benefits of Stockpile Grazing for the Beef Herd

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I remember the first time that I was introduced to winter stockpile grazing while working as a student on the Berea College Farm. I thought that stockpile grazing was the craziest idea. Why would anyone not cut a 2nd cutting of hay, and leave the grass for winter grazing? Later on, I saw the results! Slick, fat, good conditioned cattle that didn't need to be fed grain.

Stockpiling for feeding beef cattle works well with our most predominant pasture grass, KY-31 Tall fescue. Research trials have shown that, when managed appropriately stockpiled KY-31 tall fescue actually increases in sugar and nutrient content after a hard frost or freeze event. Most of the time cattle grazing stockpiled tall fescue are able to get the nutrition that they need so that the need to feed supplemental grain and hay is slim to none.



*Pictured above: **Example of Intensive Grazing** Stockpiling tall fescue works best when implemented along with intensive grazing. This field was intensively grazed at Roger Young's farm. (Right) Demonstrates 3 different sections of grazed pasture. (Left) Stockpiled fescue that has not yet been intensively grazed.*

If you have never heard of stockpiling, you may be wondering how stockpiling tall fescue works. Establishing stockpile starts by removing cattle from the pasture in mid to late July, the pasture is clipped of weeds, and fertilized with by mid-August. Then it is simply allowed to grow until after a hard frost or freeze, when the pasture can be grazed.

Stockpiling fescue works best with intensive grazing. This method usually utilizes temporary movable fencing to limit access of the cattle to only enough pasture that they will can utilize in a week or less. Intensive grazing allows producers to be able to feed out pasture much like they would a bag of feed. Cattle can be managed as intensively, at the level of management that the producer desires.



Cattle Intensively Grazing New Grass (Above): Roger Young found that intensive grazing of stockpiled pasture doesn't take a lot of time, saves on input costs, and produces better animals.

This fall, Roger Young is implementing intensive grazing of stockpiled fescue pasture on his farm. On a farm visit with him recently, he told me that he has found that intensive grazing of stockpiled pasture doesn't take a lot of time, saves on fuel and feed costs, and produces better animals. With fuel, fertilizer, and input prices currently increasing, intensively grazing stockpiled pasture may be something that you want to consider on your farm.

If you would like to learn more about intensive grazing stockpiled pasture, feel free to contact us at the NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County Center. You can reach me by sending an email to david_davis@ncsu.edu, or by calling 828-682-6186.

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