



ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

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Fall Grazing Options

It is hard to believe that fall is just around the corner. And in parts of the Dakotas, the forage and crops already look like fall. The impact of last year's drought and a shortage of late summer rains have resulted in significant forage shortfalls and crop challenges. As we transition into the fall, we need to think about fall grazing options for the cow herd.

Grazing failed crops can be done, but there are a number of issues to look out for. First of all, nitrates can be an issue in small grains, sudan and sorghum, and corn. With corn, if it has set an ear, then grazing is not recommended. The availability of starch is higher in less mature grain and so even small amounts of grain have the potential to cause acidosis and bloat. Grazing soybeans can be an option. Something to watch with soybeans is to make sure you do NOT put out a supplement containing urea as soybeans contain an enzyme that breaks down the urea too quickly and can cause toxicity in the cattle.

Questions on grazing rye and millet are starting to show up and the primary concern with these crops is the amount of nitrates these forages may have. If you want to open the gate on these forages, we should really check them for nitrates first or you could risk having a large dead pile. It will take a couple days to get a sample back and then we would know if the field is safe for grazing. Taking a number of clippings from around the field at the approximate height of grazing will give us an idea if the crop is safe to graze. You can put them in a plastic bag and refrigerate it until you can get it sent to a lab for testing. Your local Dakotaland Feeds consultant or local dealer can help you with getting samples sent in for analysis. Prussic acid is a concern with grazing sorghum and sudan hybrids. It basically is like cyanide poisoning in cattle and generally the greatest risk is immediately after a frost.

One option that we do not generally recommend is free-choice liquid in poor forage conditions. Intakes on these products are highly dependent on forage quality and quantity. If quality and quantity are poor, intakes are likely to be high which means that your cost could be pretty high also. The protein in liquid supplement is mostly from some non-protein nitrogen (NPN) source or urea and at high intakes, they can cause death by urea toxicity. The calves do not need to consume much liquid to get more NPN than they can handle and utilize. We have other options that are easier to control intake and cost like the 30-13 tubs, the 38 Hi Energy tubs, or cake.

When it comes to stretching pastures, there unfortunately is no good option. Feeding them on the pasture means that you will trample a lot of grass, but hopefully be able to supply what they need. Not many producers want to drive the feed wagon to the pasture though. Accuration blocks or blends of Ration Manager or Accuration and corn mean high intakes and significant out of pocket costs but we can keep the cows in decent shape. Pulling the cows off the pasture is the best thing to help get the pasture to recover for the next year, but you need good fences to keep them in elsewhere and in many cases, silage has not been put up yet and so there are still limited feed resources even if you pull them into the drylot.

In a Nutshell:

- * **Watch for nitrates in small grains and forage crops**
- * **Sample nitrates before grazing cattle on a field**
- * **Tubs are preferable to liquid for free-choice feeding**
- * **Early weaning is an option to help save forage**
- * **Early weaned calves need added protein and energy**
- * **Stress Care products get calves off to a good start**
- * **Let us get a fall feeding program set up for you**

FALL GRAZING OPTIONS

When grass is short and pastures are stressed, early weaning is a must. This drops the cow's nutrient requirements tremendously and allows her to maintain condition on very poor quality feed. A protein supplement is typically necessary to meet the protein needs of the cow with the poor quality grass but it doesn't take as much as we need for a lactating cow. We have tub options for 38% or 30% protein supplements as well as Accuration blocks or tubs.

Early weaned calves need a more nutrient dense starting ration than older, heavier calves. If the calves are 300 lbs or so, we need to have the protein in their ration at 16-18% and we would increase the energy slightly compared to traditional weaning as well. Remember that these calves are going to have relatively low intakes initially and so having a nutrient dense ration is key. Also, water intake is critical to get the calves started eating and keep them healthy. Make sure early weaned calves have easy access to water. Sometimes water tanks have been built for bigger cattle and so additional water space or modifications to the current tank may be necessary.

When it comes to getting calves started, we have a lot of different options and methods to get the calves off to a solid start nutritionally. Many of the calves we are going to wean this fall did not have a great start to life this spring with the April blizzard. The result is that these calves may be more susceptible to disease during a stressful period like weaning time. The Stress Care program can help you keep these calves as healthy as possible. When you are getting close to weaning time, give your consultant a heads up so we can make sure to get the calves off to a good start from day one. And if you want to use medicated feed, make sure to get your VFD lined up ahead of time.

It is a busy time of year between silage season, pre-conditioning, getting ready for harvest, and getting the kids back to school. Let us help you get your feeding program set and forage sampled so we can at least take one item off the to-do list. Thanks for your business and have a safe harvest.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

Silage Season is here!

Remember these steps for harvesting silage.

- 1) Harvest at the right moisture (65% moisture or 35% dry matter)
- 2) Theoretical chop length should be 3/8"
- 3) Use a quality inoculant like Biomax
- 4) Make a drive over mound for best packing and safety
- 5) Pack with 800# of weight per ton unloaded per hour
- 6) Cover the pile with plastic!!
- 7) Feed off 12" per day to keep the face fresh and avoid mold and yeast growth.

Things to be thinking about:

- * Clean water tanks prior to weaning, check pens and perform maintenance
- * Get your **Stress Care starter** product on hand for weaning
- * Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly
- * Get your feed storage area ready for silage season and get your inoculant lined up
- * Get creep feed out for spring-born calves, ask about *Stress Care 10* for weaning
- * **Talk to your vet about getting a VFD prior to weaning if you plan to use Aureomycin**
- * Keep mineral in place for the cows on pasture, it enhances digestibility and most forage is deficient in minerals
- * Feed **Altosid** to control horn fly populations until the first frost
- * Get a pre-conditioning program in place and talk about vaccines, dewormer and treatments with your vet
- * Talk to your veterinarian about ultrasounding bred heifers for pregnancy and start feeding or sell the opens