

## **Finding Extra Pasture**

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Are you one of the many producers who will be carrying increased livestock numbers this pasture season? If this applies to your situation, there are a number of options to increase your pasture production this coming year. It is important to take steps early in the season to have the best opportunities to increase the amount of available pasture for the 2005 grazing season. What are the options?

### **1. Rotational Grazing**

Rotational grazing will give increased forage production and increased gains per acre. Plants start to grow again about 5-6 days after grazing occurs. The key to rotational grazing is the rest period following the grazing. It is during this rest period that the plants have an opportunity to produce new growth and develop their root systems. The livestock should be removed from the field before this new growth is initiated. A sound rotational grazing system can result in 25-50% increased gains per acre. Gain per animal may not be any higher but the acreage will support more animals.

### **2. Apply Nitrogen to Grass**

Nitrogen fertiliser will give a significant increase in grass growth in any pastures that contain less than 30% legume. Nitrogen should be applied in amounts of 40-50 lbs. of actual N per application. Applications should be 4-6 weeks apart. The first application should be made in late May or early June.

Earlier applications will increase the early growth, which usually exceeds the animal needs and becomes mature. If you are prepared to use the early season growth for stored forage, then you could make the first application in late-April or early-May, soon after the grass starts to grow. It has generally been found that in a stocker cattle situation, 1 lb. of nitrogen will produce 1 lb. of beef.

### **3. Sorghum-Sudan or Corn After 1<sup>st</sup> Cut**

In hay fields where the production level has decreased, consider taking the first-cut of hay and then plant sorghum-sudan grass or corn for grazing, green chop, or silage. Sorghum-sudan and corn are warm season grasses that will produce fairly well with a mid-June planting. You will have the hay from the first-cut and the sorghum or corn for August/September feed. The corn could actually be left and then grazed in the fall/winter, until the snow is too deep for the livestock.

#### **4. Turnips After Cereals**

Early planted spring cereals could be harvested as forage or grazed. Then plant a brassica crop, such as turnips or fodder rape, to give late-season grazing. Cereals can also be planted later in the season (late-July to mid-August) for grazing in September and October.

#### **5. Purchased Feed**

Buy standing hay or baled hay to supplement your forage supply. Calculate your needs early and get your hay lined up so that it is cut at the optimum time for quality forage. First-cut hay made in July is going to have little nutritional value. Purchasing corn silage maybe another option that might work for you.

Supplement your livestock with purchased grain. Currently grain prices are at a low point and the grains do supply a high-energy ration supplement.

#### **6. Ration Balancing**

Balance your rations. Feed your livestock to their needs, do not underfeed and do not overfeed. Balanced rations are going to give you the most economical gains.

These are some ideas that can be utilised to increase your forage production in 2005. Early planning and careful utilisation of your pasture should make the grazing season a successful one, even with increased livestock numbers.