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GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

October 2025

Director's Note - Angela Kumlin

Greetings FFGA Members

As September draws to a close, the days are getting shorter, and the air smells like fall. We've been spending time getting some infrastructure projects done that need to happen before freeze-up, and searching for cattle in places they shouldn't be! We were also fortunate enough to have 4 of our team attend Jordie Waters' Stockmanship School at Mt. Sentinel Ranch last week. We were blessed with beautiful weather for it, and spent two days learning from a true stockmanship expert. Jordie related well to the crowd and had practical advice. We all really appreciated the hands-on learning opportunities he provided as well, where we could get feedback on our own skills. It seems like every time I go to a stockmanship school, I pick up something new, and I think things will stick better after getting to try out several of the methods Jordie taught! Many of us thought the school should be an annual learning event for those of us who handle livestock.

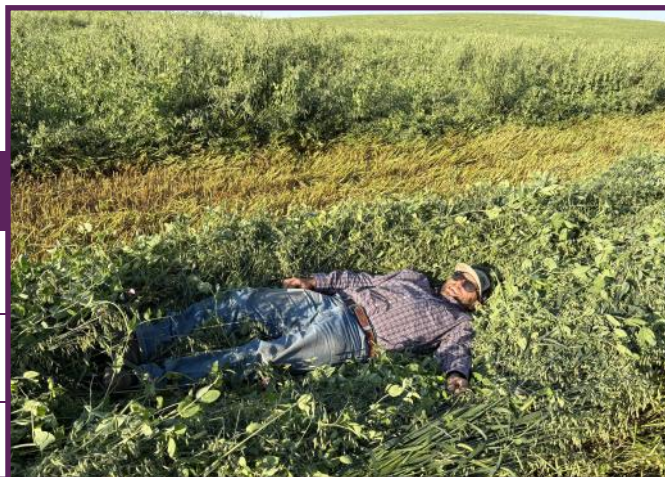
Looking forward to fall, this will be our family's first year back in the 4-H world, now that we have a nine-year-old in the house. Now that the kids are getting older, it's fun to take them along on more ranching activities. We have two (almost three) independent riders, and we sure enjoy seeing them gain independence horseback. We've spent some fun family time searching for sheds (and lost heifers), and we are amazed that we haven't had a killing frost yet. That's helpful, because with all the rain we had in July, it was a project to get our swath grazing crop cut. We

had a great yield on a polyculture blend and are going to try developing calves on it this winter.

It's a great time to own cattle with unprecedented markets this fall. Calf prices are substantially higher than last year, and it leaves us with two excellent problems at hand. Profits often mean that ranchers will look for ways to avoid taxes, and I would encourage everyone to consider using those profits to make improvements that will increase the long-term viability of your ranch. Perhaps now is the time to put in that water pipeline you've been considering, or developing a long-term brush management plan. The other (excellent) problem that high prices presents is, what will we replace our calves with after we sell them? If you are familiar with sell-buy marketing, the goal is to replace an over-valued animal with an under-valued animal in the same market (ie very close to the same time). If you are curious to learn more about Sell-Buy marketing, I encourage you to attend the Doug Ferguson Sell-Buy Marketing School that FFGA is hosting in November. Happy Thanksgiving everyone – I hope you all have much to be thankful for. I know I do!

Angela Kumlin

(Photo: The Kumlin's Poly Culture Swath)



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On the Cover: Stockmanship School at Mt. Sentinel Ranch. Photo: FFGA

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Fall grazing management: Balancing forage use and recovery



Photo: FFGA

After several years of dry conditions limiting fall pasture growth in cool-season pastures, this year may look a little different. Moisture and moderate temperatures are setting up the potential for some extra grass growth heading into the fall. While it's tempting to use this forage right away, taking time to think through fall grazing strategies can pay dividends for both short-term feed needs and long-term pasture health.

Stockpiling opportunities

One option is to let pastures rest this fall and stockpile growth for later grazing. Cool-season grasses like smooth brome grass, Kentucky bluegrass and fescue often respond well to cooler fall conditions, if moisture is present.

Stockpiling can provide high-quality forage for late fall or even winter grazing, reducing the need for harvested feeds. Fertilizing earlier in the season and allowing pastures to rest now sets up the best stockpiling response, but even without those steps, deferring grazing can build feed reserves.

Research at the University of Wisconsin has shown that cool-season grass stockpiled with 40-60 lb. of nitrogen/acre can produce nearly a 75% increase in forage over unfertilized fields, depending on rainfall.

Fall fertilization

Fertility is another tool to consider in the fall. Applying nitrogen in late August through early September can boost fall growth and improve stockpiling potential. While we are now on the back end of the ideal window,

some benefit can still be seen if moisture is available to move nutrients into the soil profile. Beyond immediate growth, fall-applied fertilizer can also enhance early spring vigor by ensuring adequate nutrient availability as plants break dormancy.

However, nitrogen isn't the only nutrient to keep in mind. Phosphorus and potassium applications are also worth considering. These nutrients don't produce the same rapid flush of growth as nitrogen but play a critical role in stand persistence, root development and winter hardiness.

Fall can be a good time to correct deficiencies since soil tests taken after summer growth provide a clearer picture of nutrient status, and applications can be made ahead of next year's needs. As a rule of thumb, aim to maintain soil test phosphorus above 15 ppm (Bray) and potassium above 120 ppm for cool-season grasses. Alfalfa and mixed stands may require higher levels.

On native range or warm-season species, however, fall fertilization is not recommended since these plants are headed toward dormancy and won't respond with additional growth.

Weighing trade-offs: Forage now vs. later

The key question for many producers is whether to use the extra growth this fall or leave it for later. Grazing now can relieve pressure on other feed sources, but it comes with trade-offs. Grass plants need time in the fall to rebuild root reserves and set buds for spring growth. Overutilization in September or October can weaken stands and reduce vigor next year.

Think back to this past spring. With slow green-up and delayed growth, early grazing pressure often left pastures short well into the season. Heavy use this fall could set the stage for a repeat scenario. Leaving enough leaf area for photosynthesis and recovery heading into dormancy is critical to avoid slowing spring

growth. A practical rule: If plants have fewer than four weeks of good growing conditions left after a grazing event, the chances of full recovery before dormancy are low.

Strategic approaches

Rotate, don't concentrate. If you choose to graze this fall, rotate quickly to avoid overgrazing any one area.

Watch residuals. Leave at least 4 inches of stubble on cool-season grasses to maintain plant health. For native range, leaving 6-8 inches is a safer target.

Target less-sensitive acres. Native warm-season rangeland doesn't respond as strongly to fall rest, but it also won't provide much regrowth. Use caution if grazing these areas, and avoid heavy pressure.

Plan for next spring. Pastures rested this fall will often be the first and most productive next spring. Factor this into your grazing plan.

If you're leasing or custom grazing, discuss fall use and fertility decisions with the landowner to avoid conflicts over spring performance and/or conflicts with the current lease terms.

Bottom line

This fall may offer a rare chance for some extra pasture growth. Using it wisely can either fill feed gaps now or set up strong forage supplies for the months ahead. The right choice depends on your operation's forage needs, but keeping long-term recovery in mind is key. Fertility, rest and careful use of available forage all play a role. Including cost-checks on fertilizer ROI and monitoring residual heights can help producers decide which strategy fits best. A little restraint today can mean more grass tomorrow.

Author: University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Original Article: <https://www.beefmagazine.com/farm-business-management/fall-grazing-management-balancing-forage-use-and-recovery>

ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN (EFP) WORKSHOPS



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NOVEMBER 13, 2025

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NOVEMBER 24, 2025

MD OF PINCHER CREEK BUILDING - PINCHER CREEK, AB
DECEMBER 11, 2025

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Getting the most out of your pastures with multispecies grazing



Photo: FFGA

As we look out on our pasture's painted canvas, we always strive to make something better – whether that's deciding which bull to turn out for this coming year's calf crop, how to better maintain weeds and brush along fencelines or simply how to increase forage production. All these corrections require a thinking cap and, of course, a toolbox. When it comes to better pasture maintenance and increasing the overall richness of the soil, have you considered the idea of integrating multispecies livestock into your grazing program?

"A resilient farm is based upon diversity," says Lee Rinehart, sustainable agriculture specialist with the National Center for Appropriate Technology. "Grazing multiple species together can allow for a more stable and sustainable income and will noticeably increase pasture resiliency. Having different livestock species on the farm will help push plant succession in the pastures toward a multitude of forage species."

With the help of varied species of livestock, the composition of the pasture is likely to change. Livestock contribute organic matter to the soil, fostering better nutrient cycling. Grazing on forage plants stimulates root growth and root exudation of plant sugars that feed soil microorganisms. This all increases soil microbiota, especially when differ-

ent species of livestock graze together on one pasture.

Creating diversity on pastureland

The big question is, how do you get diversity out on your pastureland? Rinehart says, "First thing, put animals on it and watch." Observe their grazing patterns and what plants they are after. Notice how the pastures recover after the livestock are moved to another paddock. Rinehart also noted to move your livestock around and to not keep them on the same pasture the same time each year. Hence, it is important to document the changes in your pastures, especially the different livestock species grazing on them.

To increase grazing capacity, the consideration of adding sheep to an existing cattle operation can be beneficial. "One sheep for every cow will usually not affect pasture productivity, since the dietary overlap between the two species is around 50 percent to 75 percent, but there are seasonal considerations to consider. As the season gets warmer and dryer, dietary overlap between sheep and cattle tends to decrease as sheep look for higher-quality forage while cattle can get by with forages of lesser quality," Rinehart says.

A key management strategy is to select indicator plants in the pasture and monitor them. When these plants reach about 50% to 60% defoliation, it's probably time to move the herd or flock. If you want to start small with the integration of sheep and cattle together, Rinehart suggests trying out one sheep for every one or two cows. With that, you also have another enterprise, increasing opportunities for profitability. It is also important to note that while integrating sheep into a cattle opera-

tion, your population with sheep will increase dramatically, and quickly, especially with twin rates. "The pressure on the pasture throughout the course of a year will rapidly increase with sheep rather than cattle," Rinehart says.

Travis Hoffman, sheep specialist for North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota, explains more about the integration of sheep and goats into cattle pastures. "Sheep provide the opportunity to utilize pastureland if there are invasive species, most specifically leafy spurge. Goats have the advantage because they are browsers and will help to utilize shrubs and forbs – helping with Minnesota's challenge on buckthorn," says Hoffman. "Buckthorn decreases pasture capability as a forage. Utilizing goats in a multispecies grazing situation allows for the goats to control buckthorn, and the goats graze, making the pastures better available to cattle and better for cattle use."

Additionally, when the prices of cattle drop, you have sheep or goats to piggyback on, which also has the benefit of having a lower upfront cost to get into. Moreover, instead of having to spray weeds, sheep and/or goats will take care of those for you – saving money and helping take care of the land. With these benefits noted, there are some important considerations when grazing multiple species together.

Adequate fencing

Fencing requirements vary between species; however, fencing for a multispecies system doesn't have to be complicated. "Two strands of poly wire will keep sheep and cattle in, and it might keep goats in but only if they are bonded to the cattle," says Rinehart. Rinehart shares

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how when you have multiple species together within a paddock, they tend to bond and have fewer incidents of escapes (i.e., the goats). They stick closer together because of their evolutionary history of avoiding predation.

Mineral supplementation

Sheep are more susceptible to copper toxicity than goats and cattle. “You can overcome this if you have really good soils, if you’ve been working on your soils and if you’ve got really diverse forages out there with a good grazing system,” says Rinehart.

Rinehart refers to a good grazing system as when animals are not staying on a paddock too long and their grazing periods are short, leaving a good residue after grazing and allowing that pasture to have full plant recovery before it’s grazed again. This all builds the soil structure, aggregation and a habitat for microorganisms, resulting in nutri-

ent cycling while also accessing rock minerals through carbonate acids.

If mineral is needed on multi-species pastures, you can separate creep feeders for sheep, or if you have goats and cattle together, feed them the same mineral. Hoffman encourages using species-specific mineral for sheep to help avoid copper toxicity, “not cattle mineral because of the increases in the copper in the cattle mineral.”

Parasite control

“When grazing sheep and/or goats, it’s important in early summer to evaluate parasitic load by using FAMACHA scoring. Deworming sheep and goats prior to pasture grazing is beneficial,” recommends Hoffman. “Veterinarians would suggest, according to the biological cycle of parasites, that you check your animals once a month to determine anemia. That is the result of increased parasitic loads.”

When managing parasite populations in which you have a refugium of parasites and increased resistance to dewormers, Rinehart suggests utilizing a five-point check: FAMACHA scoring, identifying animals, getting rid of repeat offenders and only treating the ones with symptoms of anemia. Speak with your veterinarian for more information on small ruminant parasite control.

Keep in mind these best practices to fully utilize your pastureland. Will you be incorporating multi-species grazing to build a more resilient, diverse farm?

Author: Olivia Sip

Original Article: <https://www.agproud.com/articles/57998-getting-the-most-out-of-your-pastures-with-multispecies-grazing>

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Managing annual forages after frost



Photo: FFGA

The first frost may be welcome for knocking back flies, but for cattle grazing annual forages like milo, sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, frost events can bring serious risks. A few timely management steps can keep cattle safe from prussic acid, nitrate poisoning and even bloat this fall.

Check your seed tag to know ex-

actly what is in the field before grazing.

When grazing, waiting five to seven days after a frost can help limit risk for both nitrate and prussic acid poisoning.

With haying and cutting, prussic acid is not a concern, but nitrates can be worse. Remember to wait five days after a frost before cutting and raise the cutting height 6 to 8 inches to reduce risk.

After a non-killing frost, new shoots or regrowth can be high in prussic acid and nitrates. If present, pull animals immediately and do not re-graze until the plant has been fully killed or new growth is at least 18 inches high.

Dangers of prussic acid to grazing cattle

Following a frost, sorghum, su-

dangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids and milo have broken cell membranes that allow the formation of prussic acid. Prussic acid is a form of cyanide released from a compound called durrin that is naturally occurring in sorghum species. When ingested and broken down by the digestive system, the cyanide is released and can quickly cause lethal results when consumed in high amounts. Monogastric species like pigs and horses can get prussic acid poisoning in extreme cases, but ruminants are more susceptible.

Keeping livestock out of these areas for five to seven days after a frost can limit the risk associated with prussic acid. Importantly, each time a new part of the plant is frozen, this five- to seven-day timer is reset until the entire plant has been

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killed. This means grazing can be tricky in the fall when multiple light frosts occur but don't completely kill the plant. In these situations, it may be safer to remove animals until a full killing frost has occurred.

New shoots and especially regrowth on previously frost-damaged plants have the highest concentrations of prussic acid. If you notice new shoots after a frost, animals should not be allowed to graze until the regrowth is 15-18 inches tall or a frost completely kills the plant. This can be especially tricky when warm temperatures follow an early frost and regrowth is stimulated.

Unless extremely high levels of prussic acid are present initially, haying or cutting a crop with prussic acid is not a concern. During the drying process, the prussic acid will volatilize, and 50% or more of the initial concentration will be lost. Similarly, the fermentation process for ensiled sorghums will reduce prussic acid levels. If you are concerned about high levels of prussic acid in a silage or hay feed, samples can be sent to a lab for analysis.

Relative risk for prussic acid formation*

Sudangrass varieties—Low to intermediate

Sorghum-sudangrass hybrids—Intermediate

Forage sorghums—Intermediate to high

Grain sorghum—High to very high

*Adapted from Mark Sulc, The Ohio State University.

Nitrate poisoning

Grasses are especially susceptible to nitrate poisoning risks. Slower metabolism following a stress like freezing allows nitrates to accumulate within the plant, specifically oats, sudangrass and millets. Because nitrates do not dissipate like prussic acid, haying or green chopping is not recommended following a freeze and can be potentially dangerous.

Nitrates commonly concentrate in the lower portions of plant stems. Waiting five days before haying or chopping and keeping a cutting height of 6 to 8 inches will help mitigate risk. Like prussic acid, the ensiling process will lower nitrate levels of plants harvested for silage. If grazing, reducing the stocking rate and increasing the animals' ability to selectively graze can lower nitrate risks. Pull animals off once the upper two-thirds of the plant has been consumed to avoid forcing animals to eat the lower portions of plants where nitrate risk is highest. This is not a good strategy for mixtures with sorghum species due to the prussic acid concerns discussed above.

Feeds that may contain high levels of nitrate aren't necessarily unusable, as long as proper action is taken to minimize risk. Send samples to a lab for analysis on those forages that are suspected to contain high nitrate levels. With these results, rations can be developed that limit the amount of high-nitrate forage being fed, minimizing risk.

Avoiding bloat

One final issue to keep an eye out for following a freeze is bloat. In high-quality forages like alfalfa, clover and fresh small grain shoots, frost damage in the plant will rupture cell walls and make protein and minerals more readily available for one to two days. Many of the cover crop mixes contain some form of clover. Remember that ladino and white clover can cause bloat. These readily available proteins and minerals increase gas buildup in the rumen to the point that animals cannot eliminate them by eructation (belching), creating bloat.

Fresh young plants and naturally higher-protein species like legumes have a higher chance of causing bloat. In cover crop mixtures, grazing mature plants and making sure that mixtures don't contain more than 50% high-forage-quality spe-

cies like clover and alfalfa will help lower this risk. Introducing animals to suspect forages with a full stomach and limiting the time they are allowed to graze – supplementing in the meantime with hay – can keep animals from overeating, further exacerbating the problem. Providing free-choice grass hay and limiting animal grazing by strip grazing can help provide a more balanced mixture of plants and decrease the likelihood of bloat even further.

One final option that can be utilized in situations where bloat is a concern is a diet supplement. Bloat reducers like poloxalene or monensin can be effective if consumed regularly. To ensure uniform intake, these supplements can be mixed into a daily feed ration (poloxalene and monensin) or use a molasses or salt-based block that cattle will regularly consume (poloxalene). Be sure to remove other salt and mineral choices if you choose to use this as a delivery method to ensure animals are regularly consuming the supplement.

Final thoughts

Frost can create a perfect storm for grazing cattle — prussic acid in sorghums, nitrates in small grains and bloat in legumes. Planning ahead, delaying grazing after frost and using testing and supplements when needed can ensure that the welcome relief of fall frost doesn't turn into a costly challenge for your herd.

Author: University of Nebraska

Original Article: [https://](https://www.beefmagazine.com/livestock-management/managing-annual-forages-after-frost)

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