

Weekly Article

5-3-2021

Spring Pasture Management Tips

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. Wet and soggy is the best way I can describe the last week or so. Talking to producers around the county, I have heard rain totals of 2 inches to 4.5 inches of rain from last Wednesday and Thursday. This wet weather has definitely slowed field work down but there is one thing that has not slowed and that is the grass. In my eyes this is a good thing, meaning more feed for cattle and faster growing calves. If you have a large lawn to mow this might be a bad thing (unless you love to mow the yard). With all that grass out in the pasture some producers might be tempted to expand herds or graze fields longer than needed. Today I want to discuss some tips for managing your pasture this spring.

No matter if you are grazing cattle, sheep, goats, or horses, pasture management should be a priority. If you manage your pasture well now you will ultimately have a healthier pasture, come summer and fall when forage growth slows down. During the spring flush of grass one can easily get caught in the trap of thinking that they need more animals to manage grass height or allow animals to graze the forage too low. Practices like this can have a direct effect on pasture health later in the growing season. Currently our cool season forages are growing at an overwhelming rate due to warming soil temperatures, warmer night and day temps, and an abundance of precipitation. Soon the rain will slack the temperatures will rise higher than most of our cool season forages like and reproduction will halt growth. Here are a few simple tips to stay ahead of the grass now without degrading your pasture.

- Who is making the decisions you, or the livestock? In most conventional grazing systems, the animal will make the decision on grazing height and forage utilization. Rotational grazing allows you to make decisions of how close to graze the forage and forage utilization. This will eliminate picking and choosing of different forages within the pasture.
- Avoid over fertilizing with nitrogen fertilizers. Nitrogen fertilizer boost forage growth and speeds up the reproduction process of forages.
- Do not wait too long to graze. Start grazing as soon as the grass is 6-8 inches in height. This will allow you to start before the forage gets too mature. As forages mature protein, energy, and total digestible nutrients goes down.
- Keep the forage in a vegetative state. This can be done by rotating livestock rapidly, allowing animals to top off the forage preventing seed head formation. You could also use mechanical means such as harvesting for hay or trimming with a bush hog.

- Consider adding warm season annuals to your rotation. Eliminating cool season forage paddock and planting to a warm season annual such as sorghum Sudan can allow you to have healthy forage during the summer months when cool season forage go dormant.

Some other details to go over:

- USDA FSA will open a sign-up period for CFAP #2 Assistance program for Livestock, row crop, and specialty crop producers effected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Call (937) 544 -2033 for assistance.
- Adams County Farmers Market Opens May 8th, 2021 located on the Courthouse Square.
- May is Beef Month remember to Eat some Beef and then thank the cattle producers who work hard everyday to produce a healthy and safe product for you and your family to consume!
- July 15th is the set deadline to report acreage planted to spring crops such as corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa, Tomatoes, Potatoes and more. Contact the FSA Office to report once crops are planted.

From the field

- Soil Temperatures around 60-62 °F
- Herbicide burndown applications.
- Winter wheat is in growth phase Feeks 8-9.
- Many cool season forages are at boot stage.
- Tobacco seedlings growing rapidly 1st mowing will be taking place soon.
- Be on the lookout for thrip damage on strawberries and flea beetle damage on lettuce, cabbage, broccoli, and other cool season garden vegetables.
- Alfalfa Weevil increasing in population (early harvest can help slow spread).

