



quickly. Be sure to allow freshly planted areas to establish.

Consider management style. While producers dream of achieving maximum forage production and animal gains per acre, most are unwilling or unable to invest the money and management effort to achieve these gains. Producers should weigh management and fertility input requirements and determine if these can be provided cost effectively. The usefulness and appropriateness of forage species vary depending on the producer's management inputs and performance expectations.

Replacing Tall Fescue-based Systems in Summer Months

Alfalfa. The “Queen of Forages” has earned her title for several reasons. Alfalfa is a high quality legume that is relatively summer active. This quality combined with excellent drought tolerance makes alfalfa one of the most underutilized grazing crops for summer stockers. Developing grazing tolerant varieties provide summer stocker operations opportunities for rapid gains.

Grazing alfalfa does require high fertility and adequate pH, but most potash is recycled under grazing. While bloat is a concern, the addition of grasses and careful grazing management will greatly minimize this risk.

High nitrogen fertilizer costs make this species more attractive than ever now — particularly in areas where it can be incorporated into crop rotations containing corn.

Pearlmillet, sudangrass, and sorghum-sudan hybrids. These summer annual grasses provide large amounts of high quality forage in summer months. Pearlmillet is tolerant of soil acidity and droughty soils and does not produce prussic acid. Sorghum-sudan is typically higher yielding, but is more drought prone and less tolerant of low pH than pearlmillet. Sudangrass has finer stems and can be a good option for hay and grazing operations

It can be difficult to manage these species because of extremely rapid summer growth. Also, the high cost of fuel and nitrogen may make them less attractive.

Brown midrib varieties of sorghum-sudan and sudangrass are also available for improved forage quality. Brown midrib “yield drag” issues have been largely resolved in these species and the increased gains from this trait make it an excellent option for stocker operators.

Crabgrass. This high quality, palatable, annual warm season species is often viewed as a weed. Crabgrass is already present in many tall fescue pastures, but is likely underutilized and overlooked for one reason — poor pasture fertility. Existing crabgrass can respond well to early or mid-summer nitrogen applications when moisture is not limiting. Currently Red River is the only variety available for purchase. Crabgrass should be spring planted, either in clean tilled areas or in thinned fescue stands, and managed to reseed in late summer.

Chicory. This species offers some promising characteristics for Southeastern producers. Chicory has good seedling vigor and has been successfully sodseeded into tall fescue. Chicory is often used overseas for finishing or lactating cattle and can be planted in mixtures with white clover, red clover or alfalfa.

Chicory is tolerant of acid soils and responds to high fertility. It has a deep taproot, is drought tolerant and functions as a weak perennial under rotational stocking. Expect persistence of three to four years under good fertility and grazing management. Summer production of this species is better than most cool season forages, but does not approach that of warm season annual grasses.

Prariegrass — a.k.a. rescuegrass or ‘Matua’ brome. This is a high quality forage with good establishment year traits; however, varieties have not performed well in yield or persistence trials in the deep South. It can be difficult to establish, and powdery mildew is a severe problem in wet years. Lakota is a newer variety with reportedly improved mildew resistance. Rotational stocking with long rest periods (40-50 days) is the ideal management method and it should be allowed to reseed in September for year-to-year persistence.

Back to Basics: Cow-Calf Resource Manual Available

By, Jason Ahola, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Livestock Specialist,
Ron Torell, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Livestock Specialist

Producers looking for a solid resource manual on beef cow/calf production should consider buying a Cow-Calf Management Guide and Cattle Producer's Library. This handbook contains over 230 different fact sheets on all aspects of beef cattle production in a 4-inch, three-ring binder. Each fact sheet has been peer-reviewed by state Extension beef cattle specialists and educators from across the 12 Western states.

Revised fact sheets are available for an additional cost each year for those who have previously purchased the book. To order the book (\$95 plus shipping) or CD-ROM version (\$35), contact the Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences at the University of Idaho (208-885-6045) or angelac@uidaho.edu

Topics that are addressed within the fact sheets include: Quality Assurance, nutrition, reproduction,

range and pasture, animal health, management, marketing, finance, genetics, drought and other natural disasters.

A Management Guide provides a list of the specific fact sheets that contain information related to the biological cycle of the cow. Overall, this publication suggests management strategies that beef cattle operations can adopt in order to improve profitability.