

Summer Pasture Management Tips

Well it's getting to be that time of year again. The days are getting longer and the temperatures are getting warmer.... yep, summer is on it's way. Now is a good idea to have a summer pasture management plan in place. Pastures during this time can provide essential nutrients to the cattle herd. As the grasses are growing they will provide the protein and other nutrients that your cows will need. The only problem is that as they mature their nutrition value also declines just as your cows are needing more for gestation. It is for this fact that pasture management is very important for this time of year. Having a plan in place now can save you many headaches later on down the road. Here are 5 things that you should look at going into summer:

Have a fly and pest control plan

Flies and parasites can tie up the nutrients that your cattle will need. Several studies have shown that an over infestation of either flies or other parasites will result in less weaning weight for your calves. This is why you should include some type of control method for your summer pasture. A typical fly prevention plan will usually run from about March through October, though this can depend mostly on which region of the country that you are in. A good rule to follow is that you want to start putting out something for flies 30 days before the last frost of Spring occurs in your area. Then you will continue providing it to your herd till 30 days after the first frost of fall occurs.

Provide access to fresh, clean water

Water is the essential requirement for life, whether it be for humans or livestock. Water intake is very important year round but even more so in a summer pasture. Providing access to clean, cool water will help in meeting a cow's increasing nutrient requirements. Research from the University of Nebraska has shown that a cow's consumption should equal to about 1 gal per 100lbs of body weight in order to meet her needs. As we get into the hot days of summer that need actually double to where she will need about 2 gals of water per 100lbs of body weight. So it is for this fact that you will want to make sure that you have plenty of places where the cattle can get a drink of water when they need it.

Create a flexible supplement program

The quality of your forages can change as they mature. This can also be affected by the temperature and the amount of rainfall that you have received. Because of these possible changes that you will want to have a supplement program planned out in case you will need to use it. It is difficult to change the supplement levels on a daily basis so having a plan that can be adjusted quickly can be of big help to you. Keeping a watchful eye on your pastures will give you an idea of when or if the supplement levels should be changed.

Give access to supplements early

Now that you have a supplement program mapped out it would actually be a benefit to you if you gave the cows access to it early on. This will prevent their nutrient intake levels from dropping below what is

needed to keep to going. If you wait till their BCS starts to decline then it is already too late. Only giving them supplements when it looks like they really need it will get expensive. This is because no matter how much they eat they are trying to catch back up instead of just maintaining. It is because of this reason that many ranches have started going to a year-round supplement program. By giving it to them before it is really needed will allow your cows a chance to get use to it being around. This will help so they don't over consume the supplement when forage quality declines. It is a good idea to start putting it out while they are in good BCS and the forage quality is high.

Have cover available in the pasture

Having a cool spot where they can "hang out" during the hot parts of summer is always a good idea. This can be either some sort of building or just simply a group of trees that provide some shade in the pasture. Just be sure that whatever it is it has good air circulation. It is a well known fact that the temperatures get considerable higher if there is not good air flow. No matter what you go with the idea is just having a shady spot where the cattle can get out of the sun for a while. After all you don't like being out in the direct sunlight all day do you?

As the weather begins to get warmer there are 5 things that you should plan for with your summer pasture

1. Have a fly and pest control plan in place
2. Provide access to fresh, cool, clean water to your cattle
3. Create a flexible supplement program for when forage quality declines
4. Give access to the supplements early so you are not having to play catch up
5. Have some type of cover in your pasture so your cows can have a place to relax

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