ANIMAL SCIENCES TECHNICAL SERIES

TIMELY INFORMATION
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Stockpiled Tifton 44 bermudagrass for dry, pregnant beef cows

This Timely Information sheet highlights the results of a research study conducted at the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center regarding stockpiled bermudagrass as a winter supplement for a spring-calving cow herd.

Stockpiling bermudagrass: definition and management

Stockpiling bermudagrass involves allowing forage to accumulate over a period of time and then using cattle to harvest this forage in a controlled manner. Controlled grazing can be achieved through frontal grazing. Frontal grazing involves moving a temporary fence (i.e. polywire or polytape) every 3 to 5 days to allow animals access to a new strip of forage. There is no back fence required, allowing the animals to move freely in previously grazed areas and continuous access to a single water source.

Stockpiling Tifton 44 at the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center

A field of Tifton 44 bermudagrass was cut for hay during the summer of 2001 and 2002. Following harvest in early August, nitrogen was applied at 50 lb N/acre and allowed to accumulate for grazing later in the year. The field was perimeter-fenced with electric wire. A single wire strip was used across the width of the field, and moved twice per week to allow animals access to a new strip of forage beginning in October of each year of the study.

What did they find?

Year 1

- In early October, 24 cows began grazing the stockpiled Tifton 44 bermudagrass (average weight 1,320 pounds).
- Average forage production was 4,000 pounds of dry matter per acre.
- Cattle were removed in mid-December after using 9 acres of forage.
- Cattle also received a 38% crude protein block during this time, and consumed 0.65 pounds per day.
- When cattle were removed, they were in similar body condition and weighed the same as at the beginning of the grazing season

Year 2

- In early October, 24 cows began grazing the stockpiled Tifton 44 bermudagrass. Twelve cows received 3.5 pounds of cottonseed meal per day and twelve received no supplement.

- Supplemented cows weighed 1,360 pounds and unsupplemented weighed 1,380 pounds in October.
- Cattle were removed in mid-December. Supplemented cows weighed 1,410 pounds and unsupplemented weighed 1,460 pounds. Both groups maintained a body condition score of 5 during the grazing season.

Take Home Points

- The use of stockpiled Tifton 44 bermudagrass is an effective alternative to hay feeding for dry, pregnant cows.
- Dry, pregnant cows in good body condition (5 +) require no supplement in this system.

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