Plan Now For Stockpiling Tall Fescue
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Even with as hot as it has been this summer, now is the time to start thinking about feeding your cows this winter. We all know that winter feeding means hay. When November gets here, tall fescue pastures will not be growing, and hay will have to be put out until March or April when fescue pastures begin to grow again. Because of the high cost of cutting and feeding hay, decreasing the length of time hay needs to be fed will decrease expenses. One of the easiest and cheapest ways to do this is by stockpiling tall fescue.

Stockpiling is nothing more than saving forage in the field when it is growing for grazing later as needed. The purpose of stockpiling is to delay hay feeding by one to two months, which will decrease the amount of hay needed during the winter.

The guidelines for a good stockpiling program are simple and straight forward.

(1) Graze or clip fescue pastures short in early August. Make sure that all of the old, mature forage has been removed.

(2) Apply 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre in mid to late August. This will promote as much new growth as possible.

(3) Keep cattle off one or two of the pastures, which will allow the fescue to accumulate.

Later in the fall or winter when the forage is needed, it can then be grazed. Nitrogen should be applied to all tall fescue pastures in the fall, even if they will not be stockpiled. Applying nitrogen will help increase fall growth, some which can be grazed early and some which can be stockpiled for later.

Fall stockpiled tall fescue is higher quality than in the spring because it is more leafy, higher in protein and carbohydrates, and lower in fiber. A fall application of nitrogen on fescue will help lengthen the grazing season, and decrease our hay needs and winter feed bill. Hay production and feeding is one of the major expenses of cattle production. Stockpiling fescue can help us decrease the amount of time and money that will be "eaten up" by hay.