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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