

The Pasture Post

Tri-County Livestock Newsletter

Serving Anson, Stanly, and Union Counties

Summer 2024 Edition

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Upcoming Events:

- Anson County Cattlemen's Association Meeting
 - June 11th 7:00pm
 - 501 McLaurin St. Wadesboro, NC 28170
 - \$5 program cost
- Anson County Cattlemen's Association Meeting
 - July 2nd 6:30 PM
 - 26032 Newt Rd. Albemarle, NC 28001
 - \$5 program cost
- Union County Cattlemen's Annual Meeting
 - August 15th 6:30pm
 - Simpson Event Center- 307 Cultivation Cir Monroe, NC 28112
 - \$10 program cost
- Backyard Basics: Intro to Small-Scale Livestock Virtual Series- see flyer at end



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For any meeting or program listed, persons with disabilities may request accommodations to participate by contacting the Extension Office where the meeting will be held by phone, email, or in person at least 7 days prior to the event.

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Establishing Native Warm Season Grasses

By: Rachel Owens

There has been increased interest in using native warm season grasses in grazing systems in recent years. While fescue and other cool season grasses go through a summer slump in the hot summer months, the native warm season grasses offer a high-quality grazing option with a high volume of biomass. Since these grasses are native to the region, they are naturally well adapted to the climate. They develop deep root systems that allow them to handle drought in the summer and thrive even in marginal soils. Additionally, these grasses provide excellent wildlife habitat. Examples of native warm season grasses include switch grass, little bluestem, indiangrass, big bluestem, eastern gamagrass, among others. Make sure you select species and cultivars that are native to your specific region to avoid issues like winter kill.

Establishing native grasses requires more upfront planning and preparation and can be a little trickier than other forages. The biggest factor that impacts whether or not a planting is successful is weed control. Native grasses are much slower to germinate and grow in the first season. They focus on developing a deep root system before devoting energy to foliage growth. Therefore, it is critical to have weeds under control so they do not create a canopy and shade out the new seedlings.

The best results for weed control involve multiple applications of a non-selective herbicide prior to planting. Applying twice in the spring to catch the second wave of weeds and grasses germinating is an option. Using cover crops to help smother out weeds in the seasons preceding the planting is another tool that can be used. Avoid rushing into planting without taking the time to prepare for success.

Native grasses can be planted with a no-till drill. They prefer to be planted very shallow at 1/8 to 1/2 inch deep. This makes it very important to test the depth settings on the drill before planting a field. Additionally, most of the seeds have long awns that make the seeds “fluffy” making it hard to pass through the normal seed box. Use a drill that had a fluffy seed box for best results. Native grasses can also be planted using conventional methods. When preparing the seed bed, make sure it is fairly firm to avoid planting seeds too deep. A cultipacker may be necessary to achieve the desired firmness.

For the first-year management, fertilizer needs should be limited. Nitrogen should not be given prior to or after seeding as it can feed the weeds and encourage their growth. As long as phosphorous and potassium levels are adequate and not severely depleted, there is no need for fertilize. They also tolerate more acidic soils so lime is also not necessary unless the pH is below 5.0.

For the first year, the goal is to have one plant per square foot. They will continue to grow and tiller into the second year. Keeping weeds at bay remains critical. Seedlings will be susceptible to damage from herbicides in the first year. Mowing high or running livestock in a quick flash grazing can be an option to open the canopy for the seedlings.

While establishing these native warm season grasses can be a little more challenging, they offer many benefits and can provide high quality grazing for years to come. For more information on establishing native grasses, visit:

[UT Establishing Native Warm-season Grasses for Livestock Forage in the Mid-South](#)



“Native warm season grasses offer a high-quality grazing option with a high volume of biomass”

Heat Management for Livestock Species

By: Katelyn Stegall

It's June in North Carolina, and in some areas it has rained every single day for at least a solid week. This is to say, you don't need me to tell you that it is HOT and it is HUMID! So, I'm going to jump right into signs of heat stress and how to avoid heat-stressed animals!

A quick note to begin with: don't overlook humidity! While the temperature may seem mild, high relative humidity can and will still contribute to heat stress much more quickly than you realize.

Cattle

Temperatures start to work their way above a cow's comfort zone at about 70 degrees. Much above this and we need to be thinking about some heat abatement strategies.

-Avoid activity as much as possible during the heat of the day. Move, work, or handle cattle early in the morning or late in the evening.

-Make sure there is access to plenty of water. The shorter the distance the cattle have to walk to water, the better.

- Avoid large groups of cattle in one place. Do not pen cattle together without plenty of room in between to dissipate heat, and make sure they can all find a shady spot in the pasture (or barn) without having to group together too much.

Monitoring your cattle is key to making sure they are handling the heat well. Look for signs such as rapid breathing, open-mouth breathing, panting, and drooling. Cattle showing these signs will need to be cooled off quickly. In more serious cases, trembling and loss of coordination can occur.

Horses

In a pasture situation, the same heat abatement strategies will apply to horses. Where we really need to be careful is when it comes to riding and exercise. In hot, humid weather, it only takes 17 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise to raise a horse's body temperature to dangerous levels. When deciding whether or not to exercise your horse, use this formula

$$\text{Air Temperature (°F)} + \text{Relative Humidity (\%)} = \text{Heat Stress Index}$$

If the total is 130 or less, you're good to go and your horse should be able to cool itself down. The higher over 130 the number gets, the harder it will be for your horse to cool itself down. It is recommended that you avoid exercising your horse when the number reaches 150 or above.

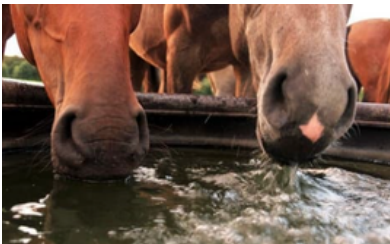
Signs of an overheated horse include rapid breathing, flared nostrils, profuse sweating, unpredictable behavior and gait, and a very high body temperature. To cool off an overheated horse, spray the head, back, neck, rump, and legs with a steady stream of cool water. Continue this until the horse is cooled back down.

Small Ruminants

Though they may be a little more tolerant to heat than cattle and horses, the same recommendations and heat stress symptoms apply to sheep and goats as cattle. If you have wool sheep, do not shear them in the heat of the summer. Wool works as a natural insulator to keep sheep from getting too hot or too cold. A close shear in the summer can limit moisture absorption and will allow more solar radiation.

Again, take into consideration the relative humidity when thinking about heat stress in your animals. In more serious cases (an uncoordinated, trembling cow or a horse with an extremely high rectal temperature for example) heat stress should be treated as an emergency and a veterinarian should be called.

Something to keep in mind when it comes to heat stress, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.



*"Don't
overlook
humidity!"*

Timely Reminders

Cattle

- Be on the lookout for signs of pinkeye in cattle, which is often spread by flies. Make sure you have a vet-client-patient relationship (VCPR) before you have need for antibiotics to treat.
- Check summer forages for nitrates during peak accumulation times. Hay can be tested for nitrates for free with the NCDA

Horses

- Avoid riding when the combined temperature and relative humidity is over 150 to avoid heat stress.
- You can cool an overheated horse by sponging it with cool water.
- Call your vet if you suspect your horse is having a heat stroke.

Small

Ruminants

- With the wet weather, keep an eye on your sheep or goat's feet. The first sign of foot rot is usually mild lameness/limping. Redness and swelling of the hoof will follow.
- Lower feed and hay quality for ewes before weaning to help dry up udders to prevent mastitis. Make sure lambs are eating feed two weeks before weaning to ensure they manage the transition well.

4-H Youth Livestock

- Project animals should be selected for the fall show season and youth should be working on showing skills.
- Summer competitions occur throughout June and July, such as Skill-a-thon, Livestock and Poultry Judging, and Quiz Bowl and Avian Bowl.

Summer Forage Checklist

Management

- Fescue and other cool season grasses will enter into the “summer slump” where regrowth is very limited. Be ready to supplement with hay in a sacrifice area if there are no other grazing options.
 - Bermuda can be grazed when it reaches 6+ inches in height. Leave at least 2-3 inches of residue to encourage regrowth.
 - Summer annual and native warm season grasses will need to be grazed higher and leave more residue in order to be utilized throughout the season.
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Seeding

- Bermuda and other perennial warm season grass, summer annuals, and native warm season grasses have a possible planting window that extends into late June.
 - Cool season forages, such as fescue and orchard grass, should not be planted at this time.
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Weed Control

- Scout for summer weeds and be ready to control before they get too big. Aim for controlling when weeds are only a few inches high. Mature weeds are not as easily controlled by herbicides or will need higher application rates.
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Fertilizer

- Bermuda/Warm Season Grasses- Fertilize at green up and give 40-60 lb N/acre during peak growth in July for grazing pastures, or 50-75 lb N/acre after each cutting of hay to encourage regrowth.
- Fescue/Cool Season Grasses- fertilizer is not recommended while the grass is in the “summer slump” months. Lime can be applied to begin adjusting the pH in preparation for fall fertilization.



BACKYARD BASICS:

INTRO TO SMALL SCALE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION VIRTUAL SERIES

BACKYARD CHICKENS

6/10

Registration:
go.ncsu.edu/backyardbasics1

FREEZER BEEF

6/17

Registration:
go.ncsu.edu/backyardbasics2

SMALL RUMINANTS

6/24

Registration:
go.ncsu.edu/backyardbasics3

Do you have a few acres and are not sure what you can raise? Do you want to want to learn how to raise chickens, beef cattle, or small ruminants on a small scale? Join us for our Backyard Basics: Intro to small scale livestock production virtual series! All classes will be held via zoom!



In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, NC State will honor requests for reasonable accommodations made by individuals with disabilities. Please direct accommodation requests to Katelyn Stegall at katelyn_stegall@ncsu.edu or 704-983-3987. Requests can be served more effectively if notice is provided at least 10 days before the event.

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