



The Forager

Spring 2012

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Contract Grazing Factsheet Series Now Available



A new four-part series of fact sheets on contract grazing for cattle is now available on the Iowa Beef Center (IBC) website. Two Iowa State University Extension and Outreach specialists are Iowa representatives to the specialized working group within the Green Lands, Blue Water project that developed the new resource. Iowa State Extension beef program specialist Joe Sellers said he and small farms specialist Andy Larson worked with project members from Wisconsin and Minnesota to identify needs and information for those who graze cattle.

“Our group has been working on these fact sheets as a source of assistance to graziers and cattle owners who use custom grazing in their management schemes,” Sellers said. “As cow numbers increase and available pasture acres decrease, we want people to recognize and learn more about options for their operations.”

One such option is the development of working partnerships with other producers to access pasture through contract grazing. Each of the four new fact sheets focuses on one topic related to contract grazing: contract grazing basics, evaluating land suitability, rental and lease agreements, and contract grazing rates.

The fact sheets can be viewed, download and printed at no cost from these links:

1. The Basics of Contract Grazing
<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/information/ContractGrazing1Basics.pdf>
2. Evaluating Land Suitability for Grazing Cattle
<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/information/ContractGrazing2LandEval.pdf>
3. Pasture Rental and Lease Agreements
<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/information/ContractGrazing3Leases.pdf>
4. Rates Charged for Contract Grazing Arrangements
<http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/information/ContractGrazing4Rates.pdf>

These fact sheets can be used to supplement existing grazing-related information on the IBC website, specifically under “Cattle Grazing Survey 2007” http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/research_projects.html

IFGC Education Grant Program

Hosting a Pasture Walk? Need some help to cover costs? IFGC is here to help!

Members of IFGC needing help to cover costs of food, refreshments, materials, speaker expenses, or similar items can apply for IFGC funding. Up to \$100 per event is possible.

Get an application by visiting your local NRCS or Extension Office, or by writing or emailing Mark Fehseke at: 418 S Franklin ST, Corydon, Iowa 50060 or dibbikim@yahoo.com.

Evaluate Forage Stands for Winter Injury

By: Stephen K. Barnhart, Extension Forage Specialist, Iowa State University, sbarnhar@iastate.edu

Winter-dormant perennial forage plants remain dormant as long as temperatures in the 'crown' area, or upper few inches of the soil remain between about 0°F and 35°F. Snow cover and residual vegetative cover help to insulate the soil and stabilize soil and crown temperatures. Under ideal conditions, as spring temperatures warm through March, the plants 'break dormancy', and regrow normally into the spring. Winter injury and winter kill can occur under several conditions: if there is no snow cover and crown temperatures go much below 0°F; when mid-winter 'warm spells' cause the plants to 'break dormancy' early and are then more susceptible to late-winter cold crown temperatures; and, when plants are submerged in frozen, ponded water in low-lying areas during the winter.

This winter, the crown temperatures have likely not been cold enough for direct cold injury, even without snow cover. While day temperatures have been warmer than normal for short periods through February and early March, night temperatures have, hopefully, been cold enough to prevent the plants from breaking dormancy. A significant concern are the localized, frozen, ponded areas. How well did they handle this winter? It is time to go find out.

Stand Evaluation

When evaluating alfalfa in late winter for winter injury, consider both the number of plants per square foot, and for alfalfa, the age of the stand. Crown and root diseases also have a major effect on stand reduction of legumes, so plants should be checked for dead, dying, or diseased crown and root tissue. Winter-injured plants may survive satisfactorily, but are often slow to recover in spring, so a quick decision to destroy a winter injured stand is not recommended.

Wait until the spring regrowth is about 3 to 4 inches high. Select random stand count sites. Check at least one 1-square-foot site for every 5 to 10 acres. Dig up all of the plants in the 1-square-foot area. Inspect for new growth and the crown and buds to determine if the tissue is still alive. Then count the number of live plants per square foot. Use Table 1 to begin your rating of the stand. Next, split the taproots and evaluate their general health. The core of a healthy taproot is firm and creamy-white. Damaged or dying taproots are yellowish-brown to chocolate-brown in color and watery or dry and fibrous in texture. Only healthy plants will contribute significantly to yield, so if the taproots are more than 50 percent diseased, reduce your initial stand count accordingly.

Table 1 Age of stand and rating of winter survival

	Good	Marginal *	Consider Reseeding
	Plants per square foot		
Year after seeding	+12	8 to 12	less than 8
2	+8	5 to 6	less than 5
3**	+6	4 to 5	less than 4
4 and older **	+4	3 to 4	less than 3

* Healthy alfalfa plants in thin stands often produce more individual stems per plant and compensate some in yield potential

** If 50 percent or more of the plants have crown or root rot, consider reseeding.

Plan your management this season, based on your stand evaluation.

- If stands are winter-injured, but will be harvested this season, allow plants to mature to 10 to 25% bloom or later, before cutting.
- Increase cutting height to 3 to 4 inches
- Maintain good fertilizer and insect management
- If stands are severely winter injured, and you have incurred a significant loss to planned stored forage, plan to reestablish a new hay field this spring, and begin to plan for any needed supplemental harvested and stored forage needed until the new seeding becomes adequately productive.

Assess red clover stands similarly.

Reseeding in hayfields or pastures might be needed. Reseeding more alfalfa into or immediately after a 2-year old or older stand is not recommended. Overseeding or drilling grasses or red clover into thin or winter damaged stands should be done from now through April. Delaying seeding increases the risk of weed and surviving forage plant competition and seedling loss to increasingly dry and hot soil surface conditions of early summer.

Iowa State University Extension Publications for further information

Evaluation for winter injury: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PMI362.pdf>

Selecting forage species: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PMI792.pdf>

Establishing new forage stands: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PMI008.pdf>

Interseeding and No-till renovation: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PMI097.pdf>

2013 Iowa Grazing Conference - June 25-26 in Creston

Iowa grazing supporters are one again planning the "Iowa Grazing Conference", to be held June 25 & 26 at the Southwestern Community College campus in Creston. The conference will run from 1 p.m. on June 25 to noon June 26. The featured speaker will be Dr Garry Lacefield, grazing and forage specialist from the University of Kentucky. The event includes breakout sessions on improving grazing management, cover crops and using annual forage crops for hay and pasture, using grazing to improve wildlife habitat, environmental impacts of grazing, cow herd and grassland economics, and producer panels on current technologies. A pasture walk and barbeque will be held at the Ron Dunphy farm the evening of June 25.

Registration and final program details will be available in late April. Look for details on the iowabeefcenter.org or at iowaforage.org. Sponsors and planners of the event include the Iowa Beef Center and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southwestern Community College, and the Iowa Forage and Grasslands Council.

Hay Expo - June 19 & 20 in Waukon

The Farm Progress Hay Expo will head to northeast Iowa for the 2013 event scheduled for June 19 and 20. The nation's largest two-day hay event will be held at Regancrest Holsteins in Waukon, Iowa.

The 27th annual Hay Expo returns to northeast Iowa after several shows were held in Minnesota and central Iowa. The Hay Expo has a history of choosing a new location each year. The show location rotates and has been in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. The annual event has grown and evolved over the years and continues as the best resource for forage producers to see and learn about the latest technology, products and services for their industry.

"Regancrest is well-known and respected in the area for their highly productive dairy genetics and farming practices," says Matt Jungmann, Farm Progress national events manager. "We are very pleased to have Regancrest as the host for the Hay Expo in 2013."

Regancrest runs a diversified operation that includes some of the most sought-after dairy genetics in the country. A new dairy facility with a 600-head milking capacity was added in 1999. Along with milking cows and extensive embryo flushing and transfer work, more than 2,600 acres are farmed, plus custom work. Truly a family operation, family members are involved in every aspect of the farm and business.

The two-day hay extravaganza will showcase mowing, conditioning, baling, hay handling and silage demonstrations on alfalfa. Visitors will be able to compare the various equipment brands operating side by side under actual field conditions.

The 2013 Farm Progress Hay Expo will be held June 19 and 20 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The show site is located off of Highway 9, north of Waukon, Iowa. Admission is free; parking is \$10 per vehicle. The public is welcome. For more information, visit www.HayExpo.com or call 866-264-7469.



Iowa Forage & Grassland Council
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Nutrient Management Strategy Update and Materials

As reported in the last IFGC newsletter, a statewide nutrient management strategy, which is a joint effort between the Iowa Department of Agriculture, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University, was released for public comment in November. The goal of the strategy is to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus load in Iowa's waterways that drain into the Missouri River Basin.

Currently, the strategy authors are reviewing all of the submitted comments and will amend the strategy appropriately based on the feedback received by all parties. Over 1,000 comments were received which included formal comments by Karl Brooks, Region 7 Administrator, US EPA.

"The EPA views the draft Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy as a great start to set in motion actions that will begin to yield measurable nutrient pollution reductions from point and nonpoint sources," said Brooks. "EPA looks forward to working collaboratively with IDALS and IDNR on implementation of the strategy to achieve our mutual goals of water quality improvement in Iowa."

Brooks' comments stated that EPA supports states leading efforts to reduce nutrient loads from point and nonpoint sources but stresses that EPA is not mandating specific strategies or solutions and offered suggestions on how to strengthen the policy considerations and point and nonpoint source sections of the document.



Iowa State University Extension and Outreach has released multiple materials to aid in the understanding and implementation of practices that were set forth in the strategy. A handout that details recommended nitrogen and phosphorous practices aimed at reducing nutrient loss for your review and use is available along with video presentations by John Lawrence and Matt Helmers for viewing at www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu/documents.