United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Stockpiling Tall Fescue

A good stand of tall fescue provides excellent fall and winter grazing for most classes of beef livestock.

Benefits of stockpiling tall fescue include: less stress and disease of livestock; improved forage quality compared to hay; lower labor and machinery costs; less feed wasted; improved soil, sod, and water quality; and prepares the field for frost seeding legumes following winter grazing period.

Four Key Decisions

1) Field Selection

A. Good stand of tall fescue (few or no weeds)
B. Good soil drainage for fall and winter grazing
C. Available water for livestock
D. Adequate fencing to allow control of livestock

2) Timing

Too early = lower quality and weed growth
Too late = reduced yield potential

A. August 1-15 West of Blue Ridge August 15-30 East of Blue Ridge
B. Preparation
    1. Soil test and apply needed P, K and lime per soil test
    2. Graze or mow to 3-4 inches and apply 60-80 lbs N/acre
    3. Allow accumulation of tall fescue until November – December
    4. Utilize other forages during accumulation of tall fescue
        a. summer annuals and/or perennials
        b. grass-legume pastures before quality deteriorates
        c. feed hay if necessary to allow accumulation

3) Fertility

A. Timing

Effect of Timing of Nitrogen Application on Production Efficiency of KY 31 Tall Fescue

Date N Applied	Nitrogen Efficiency lbs DM/lb N added
August 1	27.2
August 15	25.8
September 1	19.2
October 1	10.8

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B. Amount

Fertility – Nitrogen Amount
Influence of N Fertilization on Yield and Protein of Stockpiled Tall Fescue

N Application (lbs/acre)	12% Moisture (tons/acre)	Crude Protein (% of dry matter)
0	0.5	11.6
25	0.9	12.3
50	1.2	12.6
75	1.6	13.9
100	1.7	13.5
125	1.9	14.6
150	2.0	15.3

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4) Utilization by Livestock

A. Use a high stocking density to reduce waste
B. Allow enough forage for no more than 2-3 days at a time

45 cows x 1200 lbs each x 2 ½%* of body weight = 1,350 lbs/day/herd
For example: If a 50-acre stand produces 3,100 lbs dm/acre with utilization rate of 80%, then you would have 124,000 pounds of dry matter which should provide 90 days of grazing for 45 cows. This could mean a significant savings in feed costs.

- supply = 50 acres x 3,100 lbs dm/ac x .80 utilization = 124,000 lbs dm/ac
- 124,000 lbs dm divided by 1,350 lbs/day/herd = 90 days grazing
- 45 cows x 50 to 75 cents saved/day x 90 days = $2,000 to $3,000

* Intake rate will be higher during high lactation