

Winter Weeds to Watch Out For

Allison Brown, Livestock Agent, Alexander County



If you haven't already, now is the time to start walking your pastures and hayfields in search of winter broadleaf weeds. Examples of these are Yellow Buttercup, Chickweed, Henbit, Purple Deadnettle, Dandelion, Thistle, and Plantain. These weeds can reduce forage stands and take up spring nitrogen applications meant for forage growth.

To control these weeds, timely applications are important! If you wait to see yellow flowers everywhere in your pasture, you are too late to control Buttercup! Learn to identify these weeds in the early stage of growth so that you can ensure better control when applying chemicals. Herbicide applications should be done when weeds are smaller and weather conditions are favorable (3 days of daytime highs in the 60's). These will decrease the amount of herbicide needed and will ensure greater efficacy of the herbicide and better economic returns.

For chemical control, herbicides registered for use on grass pastures that contain 2,4-D will effectively control buttercup. Depending on other weeds present products that contain dicamba+2,4-D (eg. Weedmaster), aminopyralid (eg. ForeFront, Milestone), triclopyr (eg. PastureGard, Crossbow), or metsulfuron (eg. Cimarron) can also be used. However, legumes such as clovers interseeded with grass pastures can be severely injured or killed by these herbicide products.

++ Extension Cattle Call Giveaway ++

The Extension Cattle Call Team would again like to invite each of you to participate in a drawing for 2.5 liter of Dectomax Pour-on sponsored by Zoetis and Dr. Bradley Mills. It only takes a minute to enter the drawing. All you need to do is call Wilkes Extension at 651-7331 and tell them the key phrase is "Spring Deworm". Someone will take your name and number and enter you into the drawing to be held on March 31st.

Pasture Fertilization

Carl Pless, Livestock Agent, Cabarrus County

Much warmer and wetter weather than average in late fall and early winter allowed grass to stay green and grow more than most livestock farmers have seen in several years. Cold and continued wet conditions during January have stopped grass growth, though in many cases it is still green. Hay is in short supply for many livestock producers. With the possibility and hope for an early spring, getting grass to tiller and grow as soon as possible could be of much value.

Forage can be the most economical source of energy and nutrients for grazing animals. Producing forage with a high percentage energy or Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) and high yield per acre can lead to more beef production.

Fertilizers and manures can provide the energy for forage production. Requirements for producing a ton of fescue grass hay are 40-50 pounds of nitrogen, 8-12 pounds of phosphorus and 40-60 pounds of potassium. A grazing 1100 pound cow and her calf will remove about 10-15 pounds of phosphorus and 2 pounds of potassium per year. Rotational grazing and feeding hay in a manner that distributes manure across the pasture recycles nutrients and reduces the amount of purchased fertilizer needed.

Nitrogen is the plant nutrient that produces the largest and most noticeable yield response. Legumes growing in a pasture can produce most of the nitrogen needed for the growth of the clover and grass. An application of about 30 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre as soon as soil conditions allow can result in increased tillering of cool season grasses. Two tons of poultry litter can provide 40 to 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre. Chemical nitrogen sources include: Uran 30 which contains equal parts of urea and ammonia nitrate, ammonia sulfate which has 21% nitrogen and 24% sulfur, Urea which contains 46% nitrogen and diammonium phosphate which contains 18% nitrogen and 46% phosphoric acid.

Best forage growth is achieved by splitting nitrogen applications on most grasses. Nitrogen usage by plants is complex, and nitrogen fertilizer is more effective when applied in small, frequent applications than when applied once in large quantities. It is not recommended to apply more than 60 pounds of actual nitrogen/acre at any one application; applying nitrogen in amounts greater than 90 pounds/acre may lead to livestock nitrate toxicity. Grass fertilized with high amounts of nitrogen and potassium, whether chemical or manure, can lead to animals with low blood magnesium and grass tetany and as more than one farmer has commented "you don't want to be standing behind them when they cough".

Excessive applications of nitrogen should be avoided as it is expensive and can lead to leaching or runoff into streams. If misused, there are those who would seek greater regulation of the farmer's freedom to manage his use of fertilizers and manure.

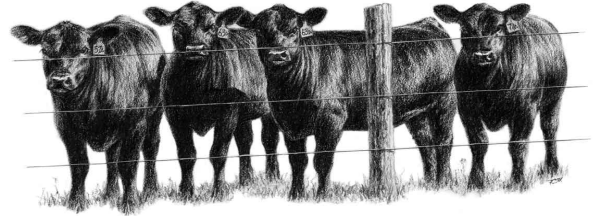
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Extension

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Cattle Call



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All About the Bull

Teresa Herman, Livestock Agent, Iredell County

Everyone in the beef industry agrees that maintaining a 60- to 75-day breeding and calving season can be one of the most important management tools for producers. With uniformity in age and size, the calf crop is more valuable. However, many producers lose this advantage, just because they do not have a pen or pasture that will house bulls nine to 10 months of the year.



There are many options for producers to deal with this issue. First, selling bulls after the breeding season is one option. Bulls marketed on the weekly markets have been bringing \$90 to \$110.00/cwt depending on flesh. If the bull is maintained for another year, the winter feed bill alone could cost around \$500. If the bull is sold after the breeding season, the total dollars profited would be about \$1600 to \$1850 with the expense of maintaining the bull. This money could be used to invest in a replacement bull next spring that would be of "better genetic" potential than the "old bull". While this is not a common practice most cow-calf producers use, producers should consider the benefits of this option compared to keeping the bull around for another year.

A second option for producers is "shared ownership". Many producers co-own bulls and have slightly different breeding seasons. For example, farmer B is a fall calver. He needs the bull to be with cows from December through February. Farmer A is a spring calver. He needs the bull from June through August. This practice allows the bull to stay busy and out of trouble for most of the year. A good cow health protocol is necessary for both herds.

Bull leasing may be an attractive option. Leasing allows a producer to use bulls that have a higher dollar value (and superior genetics in many cases) than the producer might be willing to pay if buying bulls. There are many different types of leasing arrangements available. When considering leasing as an option, compare the costs and returns from leasing a bull versus buying a bull. It is also important to outline the responsibilities of all lease participants in enough detail to answer any questions that might arise if the bull gets sick, dies or is determined to be an unsatisfactory breeder. If any expenses are to be shared, then the contribution of each party should be decided up front. Responsibility for unexpected expenses should also be determined at the time the lease is signed. Deciding these questions ahead of time protects both the owner of the bull and the producer leasing the bull. Leased bulls are usually only kept during the breeding season, so bull maintenance costs are not incurred outside of the time the bull is kept.

Finally, another good argument for shorter breeding seasons and selling/leasing bulls is disease transmission. There are several reproductive diseases that can be spread by mature bulls. Though some reproductive diseases are adequately prevented by vaccination of the cowherd, there are others that are much more difficult to prevent. One of these diseases is "trichomoniasis" or "trich." Older bulls are much more likely to carry the organism than younger bulls. When bulls transmit trichomoniasis to the herd, cows frequently abort. It is not uncommon to see 30-40% calf crops in trichomoniasis infected herds. Utilizing younger bulls will also reduce the risk of cow injuries. Mature bulls have been known to break the backs of cows in slippery conditions. Fortunately, good bull management and rotation largely prevents the occurrence of disease and injury, while advancing genetic improvement.