



Getting Started: Stockpiling Fescue - Jessica Morgan, Livestock Agent, Anson County

It is certainly dry in the Piedmont, at least the lower piedmont and the last thing on anyone's mind right now is stockpiling grass for winter. Half of us don't have any grass now, let alone think about grass for the fall! However, with a little luck, and a little rain, we will have a flush of grass in the fall which leads us to discussing stockpiling fescue. Stockpiling is leaving grass in the field, without cows, to be grazed at a later time.

Fescue grass is ideal for stockpiling for winter grazing mostly because it grows very vigorously in the fall, stays relatively palatable in the field, and has an ability to resist deterioration due to freezing/thawing. Fescue responds well to late summer nitrogen applications and maintains nutrients better than other cool season forage options. Fescue will inevitably lose some quality as winter progresses, as all forages do, but is a great option, especially for December grazing. Ultimately, stockpiling some fall growth for winter grazing, instead of putting it up for hay can help to reduce production costs if done well. For more information about stockpiling fescue, or improving your pastures, contact John Cothren at 336.651.7348. Here are some tips to start thinking about now when it comes to stockpiling:

- *Most studies show that accumulation starting in late summer (August 1- September 1) is important, especially if rain is short.*
- *Do not overgraze pastures that you will stockpile in, especially during hot weather, which could reduce carbohydrate reserves in the plant, reducing yield in the fall.*
- *Nitrogen application is critical for maximizing fall growth. Apply based on soil recommendations, but no more than 60lbs of N/acre.*
- *Fertilizer applications made prior to August 15th may encourage warm-season weed growth. Wait til late summer/early fall to make nitrogen applications to promote fescue growth.*
- *Because ammonia in sources of nitrogen will volatilize in the hot, humid days of late summer, apply fertilizer immediately prior to a rainfall of >0.25".*
- *Quality and utilization of the grass are increased by controlled grazing and are maximized by daily strip-grazing of the stockpiled fescue.*

Selecting Replacement Heifers from Your Herd - Phil Rucker, Livestock Agent, Yadkin & Davie County

Cattle producers are looking at rebuilding their herds and many times growing replacement heifers from your herd is a good idea since you know the genetics you are adding. Here are a few tips for selecting replacement heifers.

1. **The first thing to do is cull heifers that are (1) born late in the calving season, (2) from cows that have big teats/bad udders, (3) are nervous or have an attitude problem, (4) from cows you had to assist in calving and/or (5) were small at weaning.**
2. **Select heifers from older cows in the herd. These cows have worked in your production system. There's a reason they've stayed in your herd a few years or more. Hopefully these heifers will continue these positive traits.**
3. **Look hard at the bigger heifers. More than likely they are older (born earlier in the calving season = fertility) and have good growth potential.**
4. **Heifers need enough condition to be healthy. Overly fat heifers could be below average milkers and thin heifers could be hard doers and have low fertility.**
5. **If you have access to EPD's use them to help you select traits to positively impact your herd's production.**
6. **Select for longevity. Sound udders, feet & legs and all around correct structure will allow these heifers to work in your herd for a long time reducing the cost of developing replacements more often.**
7. **Know your goals as well as your resources (feed, labor, management) and select heifers that will work under these parameters.**

There is not enough time to cover all the selection criteria but this is a good start. Knowing what you have and where you want to go will go a long way in helping you select replacements. Selection and management of your replacement heifers is very important. These decisions will impact your herd for years to come.

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Cattle Call



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The Liability of Cattle Ownership

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Ownership of any animal means taking responsibility for it. Obviously, this includes basic husbandry practices such as food, water, and shelter. However, we often forget about other responsibilities related to that animal, such as how it may impact other people or their property, especially in the case of an accident.



Cattle spend a good portion of their time outdoors in fields. We rely on fences and other structures to keep them where they are supposed to be versus out causing mischief. Whether the escape is caused by a faulty fence or an unlatched gate, cattle who get the chance to roam other people's property and public roads have the potential to cause serious damage. While negligence is often a factor used to determine liability in the case of an accident, a farmer may still be held responsible if damage occurs. This damage can be to a vehicle due to a collision or to any other type of property.

Cattle owners are most likely to be held responsible for damages if their negligence led up to the damage. This means ignoring needed repairs or failing to fortify a fence to contain an especially flighty animal. A farmer who knowingly fails to repair infrastructure or to improve it to contain their animals may even be charged with a misdemeanor. Additionally, animals who have strayed and have caused damage may be impounded by the property owner. The owner may hold them until they have been paid for damages plus the cost of upkeep for the animal. If the animal's owner cannot be found or refuses to pay, there is a procedure for providing public notice and also for conducting a public sale of the animal.

Another source of liability for cattle owners is the condition of their animals. If an animal is unreasonably thin or being improperly cared for, they may be seized by a county or city authority. Animals that are not in good condition will draw attention if they are being kept in the public's view. This can lead to a damaged reputation through gossip and even social media. Cattle owners need to be diligent about monitoring their animals' body condition scores and feed availability. If there is a persisting issue with maintaining an acceptable BCS, the farmer should reach out to a veterinarian or extension agent to help determine what is causing the issue. Some cattle who may appear to be thin may also be perfectly healthy. A farmer who has cattle like this needs to be prepared to explain this to people who may be concerned but who are uneducated about cattle. Healthy cattle who may raise concerns may include those with dairy breed influences, heat-hardy breeds like Texas Longhorns, and even animals in certain production stages.

The best way to minimize your liability is to be proactive. Liability insurance is essential- make sure to talk to your insurance company about your policy to be sure that you have adequate coverage. Routinely inspect fences and other infrastructure and be aware of potential problem areas. If sharing a fence, be sure to have a written contract that outlines the role of both parties in maintaining the fence. Make sure that people passing through gates realize how important it is to properly secure them behind them and that visitors are aware of how to behave around cattle. In the case that your cattle do get out, it is important for people to be able to contact you. Share your contact information with your neighbors and try to have a plan to implement in case cattle do get out. Additionally, take measures to make sure that your animals may be identified as belonging to you, such as ear tagging or branding.