

Many of our pastures have more grass (and mud) than we know what to do with thanks to the mass amounts of rain we have received the past several weeks. This may cause you to be tempted to think that no special care is required to maintain these pastures. However, this is not true. Proper pasture management is mandatory, no matter what the weather is like, or how much forage you have in your pastures. Different types of forages require different types of care, so it is important to know what type of forage is in your pasture. This week we will discuss tips for managing pastures of native forages and clover in a way that is low maintenance for you, yet provides high nutritional grazing for your cattle. The key to achieving this is to do things now that will produce desired results in the future and set you up for success.

The first step in achieving this is to perform a soil test on your pasture(s). The soil test evaluates the levels of many things in the soil, such as Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium, but perhaps the one most closely analyzed by producers is the pH level. The pH in the soil can greatly impact how productive a plant is. With neutral pH at 7.0 anything less than 7.0 is considered to be acidic, and anything above 7.0 is basic. Low, or acidic, soil pH reduces the productivity of a plant. It is therefore important to aim for a soil pH of 6.0. This ensures a pH that is healthy for the plants, and allows the nutrients in the soil to be more readily available for the plant. If your soil test reveals that your soil pH is below 6.0, lime should be applied to correct this. Because lime raises the pH of the soil and makes it less acidic, the plants in this soil are now able to be more productive. It is usually best to apply lime around July or August to get the best results. Lime can be reapplied about every five years to ensure that the soil is maintaining a good pH and is not too acidic over the years.

The final step to create a more easily managed grazing plan that provides high quality nutrition is to plant clover in those pastures that have native grasses. The best time to plant clover is in the fall, but it is important to begin thinking now of ways to improve your pastures in a way that creates less work for you in the months and years to come. You may also find it necessary to spray excess weeds in June every year if they present themselves to be problematic. Begin now by sampling your soil to determine what you are working with. From there, you can decide what the best route to take is. Most often, the operation that is most successful is the one that gives the cattle the best scenario possible, while simultaneously creating an operation that is low maintenance for the producer. If you have any questions about soil quality, or any of the things mentioned above, please contact us.

Prices for feeder steers medium and large 1 sold through the Oklahoma National Stockyards on Tuesday, May 5, 2015, are as follows: 465lb- \$298.75, 581lb- \$264.88, 655lb- \$243.62, and 771lb- \$216.86. The price for August 2015 750lb feeder steers on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was \$218.175 on closing Tuesday, May 5, 2015.

Thanks,
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