

SEPTEMBER IS THE TIME FOR STOCKPILING

*Dr. Gary Bates, Director
UT Beef and Forage Center*

There are a few things I do very consistently. I wear a hat on sunny days, shave on Saturday night, and write an article about stockpiling tall fescue every fall. The hat prevents sunburn, the shaving is for church, and the stockpiling article is to promote one of the most economical recommendations we have.

Stockpiling is nothing more than saving forage in the field when it is growing for grazing later as needed. The purpose of stockpiling is to delay hay feeding by one to two months, which will decrease the amount of hay needed during the winter. The guidelines for a good stockpiling program are simple and straight forward.

- (1) Graze or clip fescue pastures short in early August.** Make sure that all of the old, mature forage has been removed.
- (2) Apply up to 60 pounds of nitrogen per acre in September.** This will promote as much new growth as possible. A couple of important points to remember.
 - *Use ammonium nitrate is possible.* If you have to use urea, be sure to get it coated with a urease inhibitor like Agrotain.
 - *Wait to apply until you have good soil moisture.* Without water the tall fescue won't grow.
- (3) Keep cattle off one or two of the pastures,** which will allow the fescue to accumulate.

Later in the fall or winter when the forage is needed, it can then be grazed. Nitrogen should be applied to all tall fescue pastures in the fall, even if they will not be stockpiled. Applying nitrogen will help increase fall growth, some which can be grazed early and some which can be stockpiled for later.

Fall stockpiled tall fescue is higher quality than in the spring because it is more leafy, higher in protein and carbohydrates, and lower in fiber. A fall application of nitrogen on fescue will help lengthen the grazing season, and decrease our hay needs and winter feed bill. Hay production and feeding is one of the major expenses of cattle production. Stockpiling fescue can help us decrease the amount of time and money that will be "eaten up" by hay.