

## Ten Reasons to Add Legumes to Your Pastures

1. **Lower Nitrogen Costs:** Legumes have the ability to obtain nitrogen from the atmosphere and fix it in nodules on the roots. The amount of nitrogen fixed varies depending on species, stand density, soil fertility, weather, and the amount of leaf surface on the legumes. The range is 60 to 200 pounds per acre per year.
2. **Improved Forage Quality:** Forage quality of legumes is generally higher than that of most grasses at the same stage of maturity. Legumes are generally higher in crude protein, digestibility and mineral content and are digested quicker than most grasses.
3. **Better Growth Distribution:** The addition of legumes to grass pastures often extends the grazing season and fills voids in grass monocultures. Some legumes can furnish quality grazing during the summer months, when cool-season pastures are less productive.
4. **Increase Forage Yield:** The total yield from grass/legume mixtures is usually increased over straight grass pastures. Studies at the University of Kentucky have shown that red clover grown with tall fescue pastures produces more total yield than tall fescue fertilized with 180 pounds of N per acre.
5. **Reduced Risk:** Mixtures of grasses and legumes constitute a lower risk than a pure stand of either. Mixed stands are less susceptible to devastation from disease, insects, and adverse weather.
6. **Added Benefits:** Legumes can improve soil tilth by creating deep root channels, which also improves soil drainage and the amount of air that is in the soil.
7. **Reduced Animal Toxicities:** Growing legumes with tall fescue is the number one strategy used to combat endophyte problems associated with tall fescue. Grass tetany problems can also be greatly reduced with legumes in the diet.
8. **Environmental Acceptance:** Because of the legume plant's ability to "fix" nitrogen through Rhizobium bacteria, legumes provide a natural, slow-release nitrogen. Because of their flowering habit, legumes furnish pollen and nectar for honeybees.
9. **Aesthetic:** legumes provide color and diversity to grass meadows and pastures.
10. **Increased Profit Potential:** More milk production, higher weaning weights, higher average daily gains, and higher reproductive efficiency are common, when legumes make up a significant portion of the forage mix.

Legumes are agronomically sound, environmentally friendly, and economically advantageous.

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