

# Promoting Summer Pasture Growth

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August forage will not equal May forage. However, the grazer can implement some practical management practices, which will increase both the quality and quantity of available summer pasture production. Consider these:

1. **Use a managed grazing plan.** The grazer who maintains the forage plant in a vegetative state will cause the plant to grow longer into the summer months. The dormancy after seed production can be eliminated; however, temperature and moisture factors will still be at work. A vegetative plant will continue to produce summer foliage.

2. **Early summer fertilization.** Although early Spring fertilization can significantly increase yield, a late May or early June application will help extend growth into the summer months. Forage which is vegetative at the time of application will be "jump-started" to produce another "flush." This application should be just prior to a significant (1/4 inch plus) rainfall.

Nitrogen application alone may increase growth, but it may translocate phosphorus and potash from root stores. Develop a fertility management program which gives balanced nutrition to the plants.

3. **Maintaining root development.** Although developing a grazing plan is a distinct subject, a vegetative plant must have rest periods to restore root stores to continue to make significant growth. A short (2-4 days) grazing period, followed by significant rest period (16-18 days spring and 30 days summer) to restore root reserves is critical. The above-ground plant growth will be a reflection of the below-ground growth. Healthy, abundant roots will result in greater top growth to be grazed.

4. **Leave more forage stubble.** By leaving a greater stubble after grazing, the soil surface will be shaded to allow less evaporation from hot summer weather. At the same time, longer stubble will leave more leaves. Therefore, initial regrowth can be from energy produced by photosynthesis in these leaves rather than root reserves. A large part of maintaining more stubble is to lengthen rest periods between grazings. Greater length of growth will help keep animals from grazing as closely so stubble length can be maintained.

5. **Use deep rooted forages.** Deep rooted forage legumes and grasses help capture moisture and fertility from greater depths.

6. **Clipping overgrown plants.** Pasture clipping to keep plants from seedhead production can be useful in maintaining forage in a vegetative state. Clipping after seed formation is mostly cosmetic; it looks better, but it does not make plants more vegetative.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, many of these factors are highly related and management in one area can also assist other areas.