

River View Veterinary Service Newsletter

October 2017

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 10

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News and Upcoming Events:

- Dr. Terry will be attending the WVMA conference from October 12-14!
- Weaning soon? Ask us about implanting calves!

Welcome to the River View Veterinary Service Newsletter!

This newsletter is designed to provide cattle producers with timely information and education on a variety of topics. Got a topic? Let us know!

Sarah Foust, DVM and Terry Foust, DVM

Fall Pasture Management

(Adapted from Penn State University Extension; Sept 27, 2017)

Fall pasture growth often provides additional opportunity for grazing livestock; however, careful management of pastures is essential for the over-wintering of forages and improvement into the next growing season. A dry end to our summer has stunted fall pasture regrowth dramatically, but as rains begin to increase in frequency in most regions, fall grazing is beginning to look a little more promising, but could be detrimental to your forage stand if not managed carefully.

During the fall, perennial pasture forages are experiencing the development of new shoots—which gives us the accumulated forage to graze—as well as root regeneration. During the period of root regeneration, carbohydrates are being stored as an essential part of the root rebuilding process, which provides the necessary stores for proper over-wintering. These carbohydrates are stored within the crown and roots of the plant, which is generally in the lower 3-4 inches of the plant in cool season perennial pastures, so it is critical that pastures are never grazed below a 3-4 inch stubble height at any point in the season, but especially during the fall. It is often recommended to leave a higher stubble height—often 4-5”—in the fall to give pastures a chance to store those carbohydrates that will give them a “jump start” the following spring. If plants are grazed below the growing point, nutrient stores will be depleted and the “protection” from stress will be dramatically reduced. Overgrazing during the fall inhibits regeneration of the root system and the development of new shoots for the next season’s growth. Implementing a rotational or strip grazing system can help to manage grazing height by reducing paddock size and increasing the ability to monitor plant residue height.

Early fall is a great time to apply nutrients such as lime, potassium, and phosphorus, as this aids in root regeneration and regrowth. Soil tests should be completed, and if pH is below the recommended level for the targeted forage species within that pasture, liming at the recommended rate to improve soil neutrality will help with forage growth and competitiveness with weeds. If moisture is available, pastures will respond to a fall nitrogen application and lower rates of fall-applied nitrogen will not negatively affect legume population within pastures. However, pasture plants’ response to nitrogen is directly correlated with the amount of moisture available, fertilizer application date, and rate of application. It is generally recommended that for cool season mixed species pastures, no more than 40 lb of nitrogen per acre should be applied in the fall of the year. High rates of nitrogen application could lead to winter kill. If a fall application of fertilizer is desired, no later than an October 1 application date is generally recommended, so now is the time.