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Post-wean gains vs. profit

NUTRITION Clay Mathis, a livestock specialist at New Mexico State University, describes results of two years of trials comparing low- and high-input pasture preconditioning systems. Researchers sorted calves into two groups after fenceline weaning. One group received 32 percent-protein range-cube supplements three times per week, with daily gains targeted at 1.25 pounds. The other group had free access to a self-fed pellet supplement. At sale time, the calves receiving the self-fed pellets were 42 pounds heavier and had a \$20 per head greater final value. However, their preconditioning feed costs were \$42 per head higher than the low-input calves. The calves receiving the more limited range-cube supplement had a net income advantage of \$20.54 per head.



Flog over-rested pastures

PASTURE MANAGEMENT CRP land often contains large quantities of old, dead grass that limits forage production and quality when the land is returned to grazing or haying. While haying and prescribed burning can remove the buildup, grazing it can provide additional benefits, says University of Nebraska agronomist Bruce Anderson, PhD. But not just any type of grazing will do the job. A method called "flog grazing" works best. Flog grazing, Anderson explains, places a very high concentration of animals in a small area for a short time period. He suggests using at least 100,000 pounds of cattle, or 100 cows per acre.

With that many cattle crowded into a small area, they will trample much of the dead litter into the soil. This increases soil organic matter, and it hastens the return of nutrients that were trapped in the dead forage back to the soil. Also, nutrients from the forage and supplements your cattle eat while flog grazing will be spread back on the ground as manure and urine, helping improve grass growth next year. As an added benefit, removal of litter and trampling by animals opens up areas for new seedlings and tillers to grow next spring.

Anderson says the intense grazing should last only for one to seven days. Then move animals to another spot and repeat the process until all overgrown acres in your CRP have been flogged. Start flogging as soon as allowed, before the snow flies and while at least some nutrition remains in the grass, using temporary electric fences as needed. Next spring those flogged CRP fields will grow fresh, high-quality grass for your cattle.

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