

ONA REPORTS

published in

THE FLORIDA CATTLEMAN AND LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

May-1998

Harvesting or Grazing Grasses 75 Days After Planting

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In the early 1980's, newly planted pasture grasses consisting of pangolagrass, hemarthria, stargrass and bermudagrass required 6-12 months before 100% ground cover was attained. However in recent years with improved techniques in pasture renovation these same grasses can be cut for hay or grazed 75 days after planting. Techniques that ensure rapid pasture establishment consist of the following:

1. Development of a clean seed bed. This can be done by 1) tilling a pasture for ryegrass in November followed by clean tilling in April after the ryegrass dies and drought conditions usually prevail. 2) following a winter vegetable crop. 3) applying a blanket application of a non selective herbicide with no residue. Research is presently being conducted to determine Roundup rates for total vegetative control which may eliminate several diskings.
2. Good quality vegetative planting material. Planting material should be free of broadleaf and other grassy weeds. Plant material should be well fertilized with a complete fertilizer including micronutrients and allowed to grow 60 to 80 days so stems are mature and hard. About 3 wk prior to harvest, apply 50 lb N/A which will aid in root and tiller development of newly planted grass.
3. Spread uniformly. Vegetative plant material should be spread uniformly on a well prepared seed bed. Be sure no areas larger than 1 ft sq are void of plant material.
4. Crimp plant material into seed bed within 15 to 30 minutes of distribution followed immediately by a firm packing. Vegetative plant material must be crimped into the soil 3-4 in deep, which allows 80% of the stem exposed or cover using a disk allowing 50% of stem exposed. Pack the entire area using a roller immediately after planting.

5. Spray for weeds and fertilize. Seven days after planting broadcast spray the entire area using Weedmaster or equivalent at 1 lb ai/A in 30 gal/A water to control broadleaf weeds and annual sedges (watergrass) in Pangolagrass, bermudagrass and stargrass. Hemarthriagrass must be sprayed with Dicamba (Banvel) at 0.75 lb ai/A in 30 gal/A water. Do not omit the spray treatment. If fields are wet, still apply the herbicide, by using equipment that minimize the field tracks.

Fertilizer 7 days after planting with a complete fertilizer consisting of 35-35-35 lb/A N-P₂O₅-K₂O. This initial application of fertilizer will encourage rapid grass establishment and root development, in addition to minimizing leaching losses.

6. Follow-up nitrogen application. About 37 days after planting grass apply a follow-up nitrogen application of 50 lb N/A. Apply this N even if fields are wet. This second application of fertilizer should be adequate to have a solid stand of grass 75 days after planting.

Do not omit any of the above steps. The most common mistake is to omit the herbicide and fertilizer treatment 7 days after planting because of wet fields. If dry fertilizer can not be applied, consider liquid fertilizer mixed with the herbicide.

If additional information is desired, please call 941-735-1314.