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Livestock

Stockpiling forage can increase profit

By **DOUG WARNOCK**
For the Capital Press

Greener Pastures
Doug Warnock



Part of having a sustainable and viable livestock operation is to make a profit. The level of profit realized depends partially on the cost of inputs used in the livestock business and one of the most costly inputs is winter feed. Practices that reduce winter feed cost, without harming production, help to keep overall expenses down and improve the level of profit.

Processed feed, such as hay, haylage or silage, is expensive and is a major expense for many livestock operations. One way to minimize winter feed costs is to stockpile a portion of the

available pasture for grazing after the growing season is over.

Stockpiling is defined as letting forage grow during the late summer or fall and deferring grazing until the winter. Depending on the plant species involved, the nutritional quality of stockpiled feed can be relatively high. Two extra months of grazing can significantly reduce the cost of winter feeding.

Stockpiled feeds can be fed by limit feeding, which is allow-

ing animals a specified number of hours of grazing per day, or by strip grazing. Strip grazing is done by controlling animal access to the forage through use of a movable electric fence.

Another way to feed stockpiled feed is to swath it and rake it into windrows. Livestock can graze the windrows made available to them by use of movable electric fences. This method increases the cost of the feed, due to the cost of tractor fuel and the driver's time on the tractor. This method is less suited to areas with higher winter moisture where windrowed forage can lose quality from mold and decay.

The quality of this feed

will depend upon a number of factors: the plant species, the relative stage of plant growth when the plant goes dormant, the type and severity of weather since dormancy and the length of time before animals are allowed access to the feed. Plants that retain green leaves into the winter are the most palatable and will be utilized first.

On improved pastures, tall fescue, orchardgrass, ryegrass, clover and alfalfa are the preferred species for stockpiling. Tall fescue is especially well adapted for this practice. In all species, the feed quality will deteriorate with time. Therefore, it is best to use stockpiled feed earlier in the winter while quality

is higher.

Another way to provide winter grazing is to plant an annual grain or grass in the late summer or early fall, so that it has enough time to grow and develop to a reasonable size before the dormant season. Graziers who don't have cropland can often contract with farmers who do, usually at a reasonable lease rate. Wheat, barley and triticale, a wheat-rye cross, can be used successfully for winter grazing. Only the awnless varieties should be used, because grain with awns or beards are less palatable and cause irritation and mouth problems for the animals.

Another source of lower-cost winter feed are the res-

idues from cash crops, such as corn stocks, grain stubble and alfalfa regrowth. These materials can supply a major portion of the roughage needed by ruminants, but may require some supplement to achieve nutrient balance.

Reducing the expense of winter feeding is a major step in cutting costs and enhancing profit for a livestock operation.

Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he writes about and teaches grazing management. He can be contacted at dwarnockgreenerpastures@gmail.com.

Top-quality Herefords a passion for ranchers

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

RIRIE, Idaho — Quality is more important than quantity for Bruce and Linda Sharp.

They raise a few registered Herefords near Ririe, Idaho, but their cattle are some of the best in the nation.

"I was raised on a cattle ranch in southeastern Idaho near Idaho Falls. That ranch is now under water, as part of the Ririe reservoir," Bruce says.

He is the fourth generation in his family with Herefords, but the only one who ventured into purebreds. He was in retail for 35 years, but retired a little early so he could have time to build a purebred herd and show it.

"I bought a small place near the old ranch that is now under water. We have 200 acres of dryland pasture, with springs for stock water and a pond," he says.

He wanted to build a good herd.

"I knew I could never have the quantity I wanted, so I've worked hard at developing quality. I usually have 45 to 60 cows and do a lot of embryo transfer. I bought the best cows I could find, and flush them to harvest embryos to put into recipient cows," he explains.

"My goal is to do everything I can to produce an exceptionally good female that has the desired qualities — femininity, udder quality, milk. I don't show a lot, but I go to the Eastern Idaho State Fair at Blackfoot to get my cattle used to the routine and being around people," he says.

Then he goes to the National Hereford Show in Reno, Nev., in December, and to National Western Stock Show in Denver in January.

He has always enjoyed Herefords.

"The two associations (horned and polled) merged some years ago and I think that strengthened the breed," Bruce says.

"I am very strict about the bulls I keep. I've had some that looked really nice but had some kind of issue and I've cut them," he says. "That works out well, however, because people want my steers for show calves. I am a strong supporter of FFA and 4-H."

His steers have done extremely well for their young owners.

"When people come to look at my bulls, the first thing I show them is the bull's mother," Bruce says, adding that the daughters of that bull will be a lot like his mother.

"I really enjoy my cattle and the baby calves. I can't get down there fast enough to see those new ones — the results of selected matings. I also enjoy watching the cows doing a great job and the calves out there

playing," he says.

He takes his role seriously. "The stewardship that we have, as cattle people, is a great responsibility. I feel obligated and honored to be a part of this," he says. "Taking care of cattle gives me a purpose."

He and Linda encouraged their five children to get good educations.

"Our three boys and two girls have done extremely well. It's great for their families, but unfortunately I don't have their help! They have gone off in various directions," he says.

"My mother was very passionate in the cattle business; she was involved in the Cowbelle program, and helping Dad. In later years when she came to visit, she liked to see my cattle, but especially liked to see the OJJ brand on them. Her dad was Oscar Johnson Junior, and that brand was from grandpa," Bruce explains.



Heather Smith Thomas/For the Capital Press
A Hereford bull, belonging to Bruce Sharp's herd, that bears the OJJ brand.

"I am passionate about the cattle, and feel blessed to be able to do this, in tune with the cattle and Mother Nature. The most important thing to me, however, is family. I hope that someday some of the grandkids will take an interest, but for now they all love to come visit and be around the ranch life," he says.

Mark Holt, Western Regional Manager, American Hereford Association, has known Sharp a long time.

"I don't know anyone in the seedstock business who is more passionate about his cattle and their genetics," Holt says. "Bruce and Linda love their cattle and enjoy being hands-on day-to-day with them. They do all the work themselves. Bruce knows his cattle inside and out. He has purchased some of the top genetics around the country, and is blending those genetics to produce outstanding cattle."



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SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AWARDED TO 4-H MEMBERS



With a long tradition of supporting local 4-H Youth, Avista and Northwest Farm Credit Service each donated scholarship funds to be awarded to 14 outstanding 4-H members in Adams, Asotin, Grant, Klickitat, Lincoln, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman counties.

In an effort to expand their impact Avista and Northwest Farm Credit Services teamed up to recognize 4-H high-school seniors and juniors for their leadership, core values and personification of the 4-H mission throughout their entire 4-H career, including project completion and service to their communities.

Through the Washington State 4-H Foundation, a Rural 4-H Scholars Program was established for outstanding 4-H members to apply for the \$1,000 scholarships; \$500 from Avista and \$500 from Northwest Farm Credit Services.

4-H Scholarship recipients are as follows:

- Adams: Annabelle Booth and Allison Joslin
- Adams/Wheatland Fair: Taylor Kulm
- Asotin: Rachel Belanger
- Grant: Stephanie Yonko and Alison Freely
- Klickitat: Beyyine Ozkan and Tanner Tallman
- Lincoln: Mariah Wollweber and Trevor King
- Stevens/NE WA Fair: Josephine Huguenin
- Whitman/Palouse Empire Fair: Clare Jacobs
- Spokane: Taylor Ruggles and Jorin Graham



4-H member Taylor Kulm from Lind, Wash., received both a \$500 scholarship from Avista and a \$500 scholarship from Northwest Farm Credit Services at the Wheat Land Communities Fair on Sept. 6. Paul Kimmel, Avista regional business manager, presented the scholarship certificates on behalf of Avista, Northwest Farm Credit Services and the Washington State 4-H Foundation.

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