Research Facts
Research & Technology Development for the Canadian Beef Industry

Annual and perennial forages for stockpiled grazing of beef cattle

by Manitoba Beef Producers

Project Title:	
Building long-term capacity for resilient cow-calf production systems through research in forage evaluation and utilization	
Project Code:	FRG.14.13
Completed:	*In Progress.*

Researchers:

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Background:

Forages are an integral part of cow-calf production systems and although there is growing interest in stockpiling tame pastures, knowledge gaps exist. Stockpiling can refer to forage growth from spring re-growth or to forage growth accumulated after early season grazing or harvest. As the objective is low-cost, pasture based feeding systems during fall and winter, forage species that can maintain persistence of quality into the fall/winter seasons, have spring regrowth potential, and maintain physical plant uprightness with and without snow are desirable. Although the economic advantages of overwintering systems have been well documented, additional work is required to identify forages that are suitable for extended grazing systems. This includes an examination of the impact of forage quality in fall/winter grazing systems on animal performance, grazing behaviour, feed intake and energetic efficiency. This utilization trial will address these issues and evaluate economic return on existing land base.

Objectives:

To evaluate annual and perennial forage species for their potential as stockpiled forages for overwintered beef cattle.

Evaluation of beef heifer performance, feed intake, energetics and grazing behaviour during stockpiled grazing of perennial and annual forages in late fall/early winter.

Economic impact and risk analysis of stockpiled perennial and annual forages and comparison to conventional/standard overwintering system.

Implications:

One of the key outcomes for this project is identifying forage varieties with improved yield, quality, persistence and productivity for use in extended grazing systems, leading to increased land productivity and cattle performance.

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