

South Dakota Rancher[®]

Management tips for South Dakota livestock and grassland managers

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Controlling Yucca on Rangeland

Yucca plants, also referred to as soapweed, are getting thick in many West River pastures. Aided by drought weakened grasses, yucca has nearly taken over some pastures. Although yucca does produce attractive flowers, dense stands of yucca can devastate grass production.



Photo: NPWRC USGS

Yucca plants develop rapidly once established on drier rangeland sites. They produce an extensive taproot that can aggressively compete with forage grasses for limited soil moisture on these sites. Livestock rarely eat yucca during the summer grazing season allowing grass production to decrease while yucca production explodes.

Several herbicides are available that will readily control yucca. Remedy, Tordon, and Velpar are effective, but only if applied directly to the individual plant. So broadcast spraying of range is

cost prohibitive and generally not a good idea, although small patches can and should be spot sprayed before they expand.

When yucca covers too much land area to effectively spray, the only cost effective way to reduce its impact on forage grass production is to winter graze. During the winter grazing season, yucca often is the only green plant in the pasture. Cows, for example, will actually get down on their knees, lay their heads sideways on the ground, and chew through the base of the plant to get the lush, tender leaves. After several consecutive winters of grazing, yucca stands can be reduced, allowing forage grasses to increase summer production.

Winter grazing does very little damage to pasture grasses. The winter months may be a good time to reclaim some rangeland back from yucca.

Sample and Test Hay Before Winter Feeding

Any idea how much protein and energy your cows will get when you start feeding hay? Testing hay for quality characteristics is much cheaper than overfeeding or underfeeding livestock in the winter.



E. Mousel, SDSU[®]

Photo: E. Mousel, SDSU[®]

NAP Insurance Deadlines

Specialty Producers,

Just a reminder for those of you with perennial crops: Sign-up for NAP Insurance for these crops is due by Dec. 1. See your local Farm Service Agency for more information and to sign up.

Apples 12/1/2005
Asparagus 12/1/2005
Grapes 12/1/2005
Honey 12/1/2005
Mint 12/1/2005
Plums 12/1/2005
Raspberries 12/1/2005
Rhubarb Root 12/1/2005
Strawberries 12/1/2005

Spring-seeded crops: March 15, 2006

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Whether using hay as a primary feed source or a supplement on winter range, using proper sampling techniques and lab tests for forage quality are necessary for livestock producers who want to get the most value from their hay and profit from their animals.

Possibly the most important, and sometimes the most difficult step in sampling hay is deciding which bales, loaves, or stacks should be included in each sample. Categorizing hay into groups under which harvest conditions are nearly identical is the obvious place to start. Grouping hays into types, e.g. alfalfa, upland range grass, meadow grass, or winter annual hay is simple and takes little effort. Each cutting of hay likely provides a different forage quality as well, so these groups should be separated. Hays from different fields or meadows also should be separated as two fields rarely produce exactly the same quality hay. Separate any hay that was rained on, cut late, or has significant amounts of weeds in it.



Photo: Hugh Aljoe, Noble Foundation, Ardmore, OK

Once these categories have been established, it is time to sample. From each category, take core samples from twelve to twenty similar bales or stacks and combine them into one sample. Be sure to use a good hay probe that will core at least a foot into the bale or stack.

Send the samples to a certified lab for a crude protein (CP) test and energy content and any other nutrients of interest to you. You can use this information to feed livestock as profitably as possible.