

## Spring Green-Up, Don't Let Grazing Get Ahead of You

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As we start to see the robins flying, frogs starting to chirp at night, and the grass starting to green up, we need to think about acclimatizing our animals to pasture again. The microbes in the gut of ruminant animals (and also horses) need time to adjust to the different type of feed—the pasture. This is a process that should be done over a period of time to allow the microbes and the animal to adjust to the “new” feed. You especially don't want hungry animals going out on pasture in the spring.

To complete the transition, you want to continue to offer the normal winter feed along with the spring pasture. You may also want to offer hay as part of the transition process (i.e. supplementing a haylage diet with hay). This allows your livestock to nibble on the higher fiber feed from the winter when it is needed. Over the course of a couple of weeks you can then reduce the amount of higher fiber feeds in the animal's diet as long as there is adequate pasture growth. Make sure to “read” your animals though: if you see signs of diarrhea, you want to increase the amount of hay/high fiber feed supplied in the diet. You can read more about the transition process at <https://goo.gl/eQGRBk>.

One thing to remember is that you want to remember when turning out to spring pasture is to make sure there is adequate growth of at least six inches. Grazing on pastures with less than six inches puts your animals at risk of experiencing grass tetany. Grass tetany is a condition where the animal has low levels of magnesium in the blood, usually occurring when animals graze fast growing cool season grasses in the spring. You can read more about grass tetany at <https://goo.gl/qoOZPd>.

Another reason that you want your pasture plants to be at six inches or higher before you turn your animals out is that grazing done in the spring sets the bar for pasture yield throughout the summer. If your animals are allowed to graze plants below six inches, the plants are set back and are taking energy reserves from their roots, stressing the plant. This decreases yield of the pasture, especially if each grazing event takes the plants below three or four inches of height.

At some point over the course of the spring, the opposite problem may occur: the pasture gets ahead of the herd. If you are rotationally grazing, your animals will be grazing one paddock at a time. Spring green-up tends to have plants growing at about the same rate, so by the time you get to the last paddock in the rotation, it may be more mature than is ideal for animal palatability. There are a few strategies you can take to better utilize your pasture:

1. Stagger your last grazing in the fall.
2. Mow pastures or make hay when the forage gets ahead of the herd.
3. Adjust the number of animals utilizing the pasture.



## DATCP 'Rural Realities' Podcast to Focus on Farmer Stress, Adaptability

Given the variety of ongoing challenges facing the agriculture industry, from low prices and uncertain markets to inclement weather and COVID-19, it's no surprise Wisconsin farmers and their families are experiencing increased stress.

To provide relevant information and resources on this important topic and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues in rural communities, the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has created a new audio podcast series called “Rural Realities.”

“The goal of the podcast is to provide farmers, farm families and everyone in the agriculture sector with information and techniques to decrease stress in their lives and navigate the various challenges in farming,” said Jayne Krull, director of DATCP's Farm Center. “While the first group of podcasts will focus on stress on the farm, the podcasts eventually will cover a wide range of topics impacting farmers and rural audiences.”

To listen, visit <https://datcp.buzzsprout.com/1160120>

