Improving Productivity of Low-Producing Forage Stands

Around 80% of cattle feed is foraged-based; therefore, producing high quality forage and maintaining productive stands several years after forage establishment is critical to beef production. Depleted pastures pose a major issue for farmers, but rejuvenation can be a management strategy that provides rapid improvement, new vigor, or increased usefulness.

In an article recently published in *Crop, Forage & Turfgrass Management*, researchers report on a three-year field-scale study from a grazing reserve in northwestern Alberta where 11 pasture rejuvenation options were evaluated.

The team found that three methods (spray Roundup and direct seeding in the spring, fertilizer application, and broadcast seeding with aerate/spike in the spring) had consistently higher forage yield over control treatments (range: 18 to 90%). Legume composition was as much as 29% for spray Roundup and direct seeding in the spring compared with 2–17% for other methods including the control. The Roundup and direct seeding in the spring resulted in the most profit compared with the control ($380/ha).

Ensuring adequate weed suppression prior to direct seeding is critical to success, and while fertilization may provide an initial forage yield boost, it may not persist past the first couple of years after application.


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