

# Grazing Bites

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I recently saw a cartoon that showed weather in different parts of the United States. Hot and dry in Arizona, cold in Wisconsin, raining in Washington and very windy in Nebraska. The following portion showed weather in Indiana for that same day and included all the same weather that each of the other states had. I've heard all my life that if you don't like the weather here in Indiana, just wait five minutes, it will change. Oddly enough, I am starting to think that that statement can be true!



Though some areas of the state have had some significant snow fall and a mixture of other wintery weather, I am glad to see that it has not kept some people from continuing to graze livestock on stockpiled forages and winter annuals. I watched some sheep munch happily on some frozen turnips recently. They were very content with their little feast and if anything, might have liked to have their mineral/salt feeder a little closer and I guess I would not blame them for that, I would too.

Livestock generally select and graze the best parts of the plant with the highest digestibility and protein concentration first, so supplement needs beyond trace mineral salt are likely to be minimal for the first part of winter grazing of stockpiled forage. If there is good legume content included in the stockpile, then that is better. As winter progresses and quality decreases because of weathering, supplementation may become necessary; a forage sample is a good way to find out. Strip grazing allows for more efficient use, resulting in more grazing days, and helps ensure a high-quality diet over a longer period of time by reducing selective grazing. I'm sure there is some poor quality stuff out there, but the worst stockpiled forage I ever had tested was late winter right before new spring growth. This "poor" quality tall fescue still had a crude protein value of 11% and digestibility of 58%...seen a lot worse hay fed...on a regular basis.

Work with your local livestock nutritionist or veterinarian and make sure that you are providing the needed salt, mineral and supplements, if needed, to meet your livestock requirements.

Winter weather and its associated conditions create challenges for livestock and the people that watch over them. As temperatures decrease, energy needs of the animals increase and if not readily available, they will burn available fat, undoubtedly lowering their body condition score over time. If you are feeding hay, it is usually better to feed any poorer quality hay earlier on when energy requirements were less and conditions better. It is also a lot easier to transition livestock to increasingly better quality hay than the opposite which also reduces waste. It is never a bad idea to test any stored hay for quality, and feed value to know if it will meet the animal requirements when needed.

Water is just as important in the winter as it is in the summer. Livestock will consume a certain amount of snow, especially if grazing stockpiled forages, but adequate, quality water should still be readily available for them. All-weather type tanks and spring developments make some of the best winter water sources. Those all-weather watering tanks can be either well insulated electric tanks with a specialized heating unit in them or an insulated "ball" tank that partially relies on some geo-thermal heat via a large insulated pipe below the tank going about four feet in the ground, the insulating factor of the floating

ball covering the watering hole. Frequent use helps keep them open under very cold conditions. Spring developments capture natural aquifers and pipe that usually very good quality water to a tank or tanks. Flowing water does not freeze up completely, so water is fixed in tanks to flow in, on the upward side, and go out an outlet pipe on the other end, and then back to a stable outlet or ideally to another tank if there is enough fall. Your local Soil and Water Conservation Office can provide technical assistance on these watering facilities.

Still not too late to do some frost-seeding of any additional or needed legumes into pastures and hayfields that could use them. These little snows are great for application and also serve as an ideal marker for the ATV increasing accuracy a little. Precision agriculture technology has been widely adapted by most farmers for row crops, but this technology can also be utilized for pasture management. You can lose a lot of efficiency and accuracy on some ground, especially rolling pastures that are odd shaped. There are a few GPS units that can be purchased for a somewhat reasonable price that are great for increasing accuracy for your ATV activities too. The more acres you use it on, the easier it is to justify it...usually in saved seed from overlapping too much. They are also very useful if used for pasture spraying too of course.

Spring will be here before you know it...see, there it is...was...sorry, gone again...

Keep on grazing!

## Mark your Calendar!

### **Indiana Grazing Conferences –**

**Northern Indiana Grazing Conference** – February 1-2, 2013; Michiana Event Center in Howe, Indiana. Speakers include Scott Stoller from Sterling, Ohio, Reuben Stoltzfus from Pennsylvania, Will Winter from Wisconsin (this is really a brain you want to pick), Howard Person, Jerry Perkins, and Jim Courtright, all from here in Indiana. For more information contact the LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation office at 260-463-3471, Extension 3, email Marsha Bogado at [marsha.bogado@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:marsha.bogado@in.nacdnet.net) or visit their website at <http://www.lagrangeswcd.org>.

**Southern Indiana Grazing Conference** – February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013; Simon Graber Community Center near Odon, Indiana. Speakers will include Walt Davis who raises cattle, sheep and goats and author of the book, “How to Not go Broke Ranching”, knows the tricks of the trade; David Hall from Missouri, selecting cattle for fescue; Gabe Brown from North Dakota, Gabe is adamant that a successful farm starts with a healthy soil, Gabe is backed by Jay Fuhrer from NRCS tying livestock into a healthy cropping system; Ed Ballard from Illinois, specializing in extending the grazing season, and Wally Olson from Oklahoma with years of experience in marketing strategies. For more information contact the Daviess County Soil and Water Conservation office at 812-254-4780 Extension 3, email Toni Allison at [dcswcd@rtccom.net](mailto:dcswcd@rtccom.net), or visit their website at [http://daviesscoswcd.org/main/page\\_sigc.html](http://daviesscoswcd.org/main/page_sigc.html).

**Livestock, Forage & Grain Forum** - February 11, 2013, JW Marriott, Indianapolis - Registration opens December 1<sup>st</sup> – more information is available at [http://www.indianasoybean.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=386](http://www.indianasoybean.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=386)

**Soil Health Workshops** – Multiple dates. The Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative and the Indiana Conservation Partnership are sponsoring a series soil health workshops across Indiana. There will be Introductory and Advance Level courses and farmer specific workshops. Contact IASWCD at [info@iaswcd.org](mailto:info@iaswcd.org) for registration and location details or go to <http://iaswcd.org/CCSI/ccsi-calendar.html> for dates and more information. Yes, they are applicable for pasture too!