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## CC104 The Old and New about Pasture

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# THE OLD and NEW ABOUT PASTURE

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, AND THE UNITED  
STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING, H.G. GOULD ASSOCIATE  
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## THE OLD AND THE NEW ABOUT PASTURE

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### THE OLD

Too often we think of pasture in terms of a certain weed patch out on the east 80 that has little grass in it,--or we think of a field of bromegrass that has become stunted and the cattle don't do well on it,--or of the brome-alfalfa pasture where the alfalfa is all killed out and the brome isn't doing well,--or we might even think of the good cow that bloated and died on brome-alfalfa pasture,--or the long, dry spell when the grass didn't amount to much and the cattle lost weight,--or we think of the landlord who allowed the tenant only a small, depleted pasture for his milk cows--the milk flow goes down and the cattle break out of the pasture into the corn.

### THE NEW

Now let us take a look at the modern approach to good pasture.

1. We plant a bromegrass-alfalfa pasture (about 3 lbs. of alfalfa and 12 lbs. of bromegrass seed).
2. We divide the pasture into four divisions and graze these alternately. In this way the alfalfa is not killed out and thus it continues to provide nitrogen for the bromegrass. This keeps the bromegrass from becoming stunted, unpalatable, and low in nutritional value.
3. Oftentimes early in the season there is more forage than the animals can use. In this case one or two of the divisions may be mowed for hay.
4. As to the bloat problem, scientists have found that bloat is caused by the inability of the animals to belch. Belching is induced by giving the animals access to dry roughage.

This roughage is said to irritate the first stomach thus causing the animal to belch. In other words, bloat is largely eliminated in legume pastures if the animals are not turned on such pasture when they are hungry and when a stack of good quality hay is made available in the pasture. The animals will alternate between the hay and the lush vegetation. It must be recognized that some animals will bloat on most any kind of feed.

5. Old bromegrass stands that have become stunted because of nitrogen shortage in the soil, may be rejuvenated by applying nitrogen fertilizer at the rate of about 60 lbs. of the element nitrogen to the soil in the form of ammonium nitrate or other carriers. Seed production as well as grazing yield can be increased greatly by such application.
6. No pasture program is a good one unless provision is made to protect the pasture from overgrazing in dry weather. The best approach to this problem is to have available a plentiful supply of silage. It may be made from corn, sorghum or legumes. Experience has shown that such silage is practically a complete substitute for grass. Dairymen have demonstrated that milk cows may be shifted directly from pasture to silage without affecting the milk flow.
7. Another way to protect the pasture against drouth damage, is to have available a field of sudan grass. A temporary pasture of oats and sweetclover sown in April may be desirable. At the Nebraska Experiment Station this kind of pasture gave a return of about \$60.00 per acre in terms of steer gains.
8. At the North Platte Experiment Station \$7,693.00 worth of milk was obtained in one season from 22 acres of irrigated bromegrass-alfalfa pasture supplemented with \$643.00 worth of grain and other feeds.

9. At the Nebraska Experiment Station "sod-bound" bromegrass pasture, treated with nitrogen fertilizer, gave a return of \$2.00 for every dollar spent for fertilizer in terms of increased gain of yearling steers grazed on the pasture.
10. At the Nebraska Experiment Station under normal rainfall conditions yearling steers grazed on bromegrass-alfalfa can be expected to gain 225 to 275 lbs. per acre.
11. In one carefully conducted experiment grass produced 100 lbs. of digestible nutrients at a cost of 48¢. In the form of corn silage and alfalfa hay the cost was \$1.22.
12. In another experiment a good pasture produced 100 lbs. of digestible nutrients at a cost of only 10.4¢. Corn yielding 40 bushel per acre produced 100 lbs. of digestible nutrients at a cost of 32¢.