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Abstract

Late summer grazing of alfalfa or sudangrass by cattle coming off half-season, double-stocked native grazing showed no advantage over immediate feedlot finishing. Late-summer grazers gained less in the feedlot and required about the same feeding period as those animals taken to the feedlots in midsummer.

Keywords

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Following Half-season Intensive Grazing on Native Pasture with Alfalfa or Sudangrass Grazing and/or Feedlot Finishing

R. M. Helsel, G. L. Posler, J. G. Riley, E. F. Smith, and G. M. Ward

Summary

Late summer grazing of alfalfa or sudangrass by cattle coming off half-season, double-stocked native grazing showed no advantage over immediate feedlot finishing. Late-summer grazers gained less in the feedlot and required about the same feeding period as those animals taken to the feedlot in midsummer.

Introduction

Half-season, double stocking of native pasture is feasible as measured by weight gains and pasture recovery. Feeding systems that complement removing growing cattle from native pasture in midsummer need to be investigated.

Mid- to late-season grazing of alfalfa or sudangrass is possible in this area, and is reliable where irrigation is available.

We compared alfalfa pasture and sudangrass pasture, each followed by finishing in feedlot with immediate feedlot finishing after cattle were removed from native pasture in midsummer.

Experimental Procedure

Thirty-three steers and three heifers coming off native pasture July 15 were assigned to three groups. One group went to the feedlot for finishing; one, to rotational alfalfa grazing; and one, to rotational sudangrass grazing. Grazing continued 61 days. The grazed groups were finished in the feedlot later.

Six 1½-acre plots of each species were rotationally grazed for 5 days, then clipped and rested 25 days. The plots were irrigated as required to maintain active growth. Poloxalene block, a bloat preventative, was available to the grazing cattle.

The feedlot ration consisted of 83% cracked corn, 13% corn silage, and 4% supplement. Target weight in the feedlot was 1050 lb.

Results and Discussion

The alfalfa grazers averaged 1.18 lb. gain per day for the 61 days compared with .95 lb. per day by those on sudangrass. The animals were in good flesh at the beginning of the trial; better grazing gains in

late summer by fleshy cattle is not probable. No bloat was observed.

Feedlot gains were faster for the cattle that went directly from native grass to the feedlot in midsummer (Table 10.1). In fact, they were marketed two months earlier than the two grazed groups. Their faster gains in the feedlot offset any advantage gained by the 61-day grazing in late summer. Nearly identical quantities of feed were required in the feedlot for all groups whether they grazed in late summer or not. Carcass quality was nearly identical for all groups.

Although the study needs to be repeated before recommendations are made, immediate finishing after early-summer grazing appears to be advantageous.

Table 10.1. Performance by animals going under indicated feeding systems from half-season, intensive grazing.

	Management		
	Feedlot	Alfalfa-feedlot	Sudan-feedlot
No. of animals	12	12	12
Weight into native pasture, lb.	531	534	533
Weight from native pasture, lb.	651	649	651
Weight gain, 80 days, lb./day	1.50	1.44	1.48
Weight after grazing alfalfa or sudan, lb.		721	709
Weight gain, 61 days, lb./day		1.18	.95
Days in feedlot	114	112	112
Finished weight, lb.	1066	1082	1073
Weight gain, lb./day	3.62	3.08	3.01
Feed used*, lb.	2838	2928	2897
lbs. feed/lb. gain	6.87	8.40	8.59
Carcass grade			
Choice	7	8	8
Good	5	4	4

*83% cracked corn, 13% corn silage, 4% supplement.