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# POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

September 6, 2021



An eNewsletter by the Rich Mountain Conservation District

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Thanks to Jeremy Huff, Arkansas NRCS Grazing Lands Specialist, for this week's article which originally appeared in the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association magazine in July 2021. [Click here](#) to go to the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association web page.

## Q&A

### What causes soil compaction?

The factors influencing soil compaction includes texture (clay, silt and sand content), moisture, heat and physical force applied. We've had an unusual wet spring in most parts of Arkansas. Farms with a high clay content will be more susceptible to compaction compared to farms with a high silt or sand content. Furthermore, if compaction susceptible pastures are grazed during very wet conditions, the cow's weight will cause the soil's pore space to collapse and reduces water infiltration. What often comes after a wet, cool spring? Yes, a hot summer that can cause a perfect situation for soil compaction. So, what should you do about it?

1. In the future, defer grazing from poorly drained pastures with a high clay content particularly during a wet spring. If your entire farm is susceptible to having poor drainage, your options are unfortunately restricted.
2. Pastures with good top growth add an additional level of protection to the soil and further assist the infiltration process compared to a pasture with minimum cover. The additional top growth will also provide more roots which in return will decrease soil compaction.

### Should I consider an aerator or disk on compacted soils?

Aerators have been studied through research and trials. The conclusion is an aerator doesn't provide a significant increase in forage yields compared to non-aerated pastures. Disking would certainly make the compacted pastures appear less compacted. However, the soil structure would be even further broken which would result in poor infiltration. Therefore, it may appear disking would make water infiltrate more efficiently, but it does the opposite.

### What factors influence the importance of shade in pastures?

First, cattle breed is a major factor in the importance of shade for each farm. Cattle breeds with Brahman influence are more adapted to heat compared to European and Continental breeds. Secondly, the existing forage base also has a role in the importance of shade. Cattle grazing predominantly K-31 tall fescue pastures will need more shade compared to cattle grazing other forages.

### What trees can I plant to provide the quickest shade for cattle?

I have asked foresters this question. Unfortunately, there is not a fast growing tree adapted to Arkansas that provides quick results. Based upon their response, loblolly pine provides the quickest growth in Arkansas compared to other tree species.

### What about artificial shade structures?

Artificial shade structures will assist in heat relief for cattle. Portable shade structures provide much more flexibility and reduces concentrated areas of use compared to fixed structures. For portable shade structures, make sure they are big enough for the herd but sized to fit through gates. NRCS recommends 35-50 square feet per head. Overall, trees provide a 3-D source of shade and improved ventilation that is preferred over artificial portable shade structures. However, artificial portable shade structures should also be considered if shade is a concern.

### My farm has been getting rain and the soil is still moist from spring and summer rains. I am interested in planting bermudagrass since we still have moisture. Any problems?

First, bermudagrass can be slower to germinate compared to other common introduced forages. The conditions may be ideal now but may be drastically different when the seed actually germinates. Secondly, seeding bermudagrass in July or August provides a short window for the plant to establish an adequate root system before dormancy. Planting bermudagrass in a more optimum planting time such as April 1-June 1 will help increase the chances of a successful second year stand due to a good root system going into winter.

### What should I be thinking about now regarding grazing and pasture management for future months?

It's already time to start thinking about fall grazing. Bermudagrass, dallisgrass and bahiagrass pastures can be stockpiled for fall grazing by clipping or grazing the existing forage down to 2-3 inches in late July to early August and defer grazing until fall. In early to mid-August or late August in south Arkansas, fertilize this pasture with 50-60 lbs of nitrogen per acre. Hold cattle out until late October or when needed for emergency forage.

Folks always raise concerns that cattle will not eat bermudagrass in the fall months. This situation occurs when bermudagrass is near 5-8 inches or at maturity in July and is carried over at a similar growth into the fall months. The result is very low quality, high fiber forage that isn't palatable to cattle. The key step in this process is to set back the growth enough in late July through early August so that the re-growth is nutritional in October.

Can I get by without applying nitrogen fertilizer for stockpile purposes? Yes, however, the stockpile yield needs to be high enough to make the project worthwhile and compensate for the grazing deferment time. Nitrogen will provide this added growth. Do not wait until September to fertilize bermudagrass for stockpile purposes. The majority of the growth potential will be passed with the arrival of cooler nighttime temperatures. Remember a ton of forage in November is worth more than a ton of forage in May.

How many acres should I stockpile? Simply 5-30% of your total farm acres is reasonable. If you've never tried to stockpile any forages for fall grazing, try stockpiling a lower percentage the first year.



**Upcoming Grazing Meetings and Seminars:**

- ▷ **September 7, 2021— Brassicas for Forage (1PM—online seminar)** you are invited to attend the weekly grazing training sessions by Jeremy Huff, the USDA/NRCS state grazing specialist. He offers these training sessions as a Zoom meeting and the instructions for logging in are included in attached flyer. If you have the Zoom app on your phone you can just scan the QR code on the flyer. If you want to see it on your computer there is a link included in the attachment. There are sessions normally every Tuesday at 1pm so [see the attached flyer](#).
- ▷ **September 14, 2021— Let's Talk About Regenerative Grazing (1PM—online seminar)** next week's online grazing seminar.

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## **WE'VE GOT NUTS!!!!!!!!!!**

The Rich Mtn Conservation District is now taking orders for our annual nut sales to benefit our conservation scholarship fund.

There is a variety of nuts to pick from. We are offering pecan halves and pieces, praline pecan halves, white chocolate pecan halves, chocolate amaretto pecan halves, dark chocolate pecan halves, milk chocolate pecans, deluxe mixed nuts roasted/salted, double dipped chocolate peanuts, chocolate almonds, whole cashews roasted/salted, English walnuts, chocolate raisins, and gourmet pecan log rolls. There is also a conservation sampler option that includes 1 lb bags of pecan halves, cashews, honey roasted peanuts, chocolate raisins, chocolate amaretto pecan halves, chocolate peanuts, chocolate almonds and walnuts. This year we have added flavored peanuts they come in a 10-ounce tin. You can get Dill Pickle, Jalapeno, Salt & Vinegar and Southern Heat peanuts. These make great stocking stuffers.

All proceeds from the nut sales go towards our annual scholarship that is awarded to a Polk County student who will be going into an ag-related field in college. With your support we were able to fund \$3000 in scholarships to four local high school and college students this last year.

Orders will be taken until October 15, 2021 and will be ready by Thanksgiving!

Please help to support this worthy cause by purchasing some of these items. By doing so you are supporting our local youth with the opportunity to continue their education.

**Attached is an order form;** or, you can pick up an order for at the office at 508 7<sup>th</sup> St. in Mena or you can call and request one to be mailed, faxed or emailed to you at 479-437-6054. There is also an order form on our website [www.rmcd.org](http://www.rmcd.org) or you can email [richmountainconservation@gmail.com](mailto:richmountainconservation@gmail.com).

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Sent on behalf of the Rich Mtn Conservation District.  
Thanks for your interest in grazing management,

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