

**By Bruce Anderson**

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With nitrogen fertilizer costing about 40 cents per pound this spring, you may be asking whether it pays to fertilize pasture? Nebraska research shows that you get about one pound of additional calf or yearling gain for every pound of nitrogen fertilizer applied.

However, this fertilization rule-of-thumb assumes that the amount applied is within our general recommendations, which are based on the potential amount of extra grass growth expected.

This is affected mostly by moisture. It also assumes that your grazing management will efficiently harvest this extra growth.

If you fertilize pasture in spring and then let animals graze continuously on one pasture throughout the season, much of the extra growth is wasted. They trample, manure and foul, bed down on, and simply refuse to eat much of the grass. Eventually, less than one-third of the extra grass ends up inside your livestock.

### **Get your Money's Worth**

To make fertilizing pasture pay, manage grazing so more of what you grow actually gets eaten.

- Subdivide pastures with cross-fences and control grazing.
- Give animals access to no more than one-fourth, and preferably less, of your pasture at a

time.

- Graze off about one-half of the growth before moving.
- If your pastures aren't already subdivided into at least four paddocks, your fertilizer dollar might be better spent on developing more cross-fences and watering sites.