

# Fall Forage Management Checklist

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## ***Item 1: Watch for Insect Pests***

Producers should continue to scout for the bermudagrass stem maggot and fall armyworm throughout the fall, especially in the southern portions of the state. If you have been in a drought, grass may be slow to regrow. Do not apply the first insecticide application until the bermudagrass is greening up and regrowing from the previous harvest event.

There are several insecticides available for the fall armyworm. Choose the option that matches your desired harvest date and length of residual. All available insecticides are only effective against armyworms  $\frac{3}{4}$ " or shorter. If you have larger armyworms, harvest is the only effective control options. Pastures or fields with limited growth may not allow for a hay harvest because of limited biomass. In these instances, use a rotary mower to clip the field and reset before applying the insecticide.

## ***Item 2: Don't Rush Your Grass***

It is tempting to turn cattle into pastures as soon as the grass starts to grow if you have experienced summer drought. Consider your pasture's recovery time and give plants time to replenish energy reserves in the roots. There are several factors that affect pasture recovery. Sandy soils tend to dry out quicker than heavier clay soils, so they may be slower to respond to rain. Grass covered ground retains moisture longer than open soils, so maintaining ground cover reduces the impact of drought. Deeper roots systems can access soil water resources deeper in the soil profile, again reducing the impact of drought conditions. Heavier stocked pastures that are not allowed to rest will see drought effects earlier and longer. Increase your stocking rate slowly and continue to supplement with hay, baleage, or other stored feeds until the pastures recover. If you need additional resources on drought, please visit: [UGABeef.com/drought](http://UGABeef.com/drought).

## ***Item 3: Be Cautious of Nitrates and Prussic Acid***

Wait at least 7 days after a drought ending rain to return to grazing to minimize the risk of prussic acid or nitrate toxicity. More time may be required depending on the length and intensity of the drought conditions. Do not turn the animals into a field until you see it respond to the rain and noticeably grow. Sorghums, sorghum sudan, and johnsongrass all have risk of prussic acid. Many forages have risk of nitrates. Visit the sites below and contact your local County Extension Agent to learn more.

#### ***Item 4: Stockpile Fescue***

Tall fescue should be fertilized with nitrogen in August/September depending on your location. Rates will depend on your field use and stocking rate. This fall nitrogen application is especially important if you are stockpiling the tall fescue. Phosphorus can be applied anytime of the year. Apply potassium based on soil test recommendations.

#### ***Item 5: Fertilize Your Warm Seasons***

Do not applying nitrogen to bermudagrass and bahiagrass fields after the last harvest or grazing event of the year. Again, phosphorus can be applied anytime of the year. Potassium should be applied to warm-season forages in late August/early September to ensure successful overwintering and a quick spring green-up. Do not wait until after your last harvest or grazing event to apply potassium. The grass must still be actively growing to take in the potassium before winter.

#### ***Item 6: Put Out Your PRE's***

Apply your pre-emergent herbicides if desired before ANY germination occurs on winter weed species. Indaziflam should be applied near Labor Day to control winter weed species. Indaziflam can be applied to bermudagrass or bahiagrass. Pendimethalin is often not as effective against winter weeds as it can be for summer weeds here in Georgia. However, if you have tall fescue this is your only option! Apply before soil temperatures drop below 60 F and germination begins. Regardless of your forage species, do not apply PRE's to new stands or those that will be used for winter grazing. Read the label instructions carefully before applying.

#### ***Item 7: Control the Pesky Weeds***

Rhizomatous weeds or those with extensive root systems are best controlled in the early fall. These include, but are not limited to, johnsongrass, vaseygrass, knotroot foxtail, and horsenettle. Products for each of these weeds may be found in the Georgia Pest Control Handbook. You can also work with your local County Extension Agent to refine these options for your farm.

Knotroot foxtail is rapidly spreading across our state and control options are limited. Please see UGA Bulletin 1464 "Foxtail Identification and Control in Georgia Pastures and Hayfields" for more information.

#### ***Item 8: Plant Your Winter Annuals***

Winter annual forages should be planted in September and October depending on where you are planting in Georgia. Updated varieties may be found on the Georgia Forages website. If you need help with determining the optimum planting rate, planting mixtures, or adjusting for pure live seed, please see UGA Bulletin 1510 "Preparing and Calibrating a No-Till or Conventional Drill for Establishing Forage or Cover Crops".

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### ***Item 9: Fertilize Your Winter Annuals***

Don't forget to fertilize your winter annuals! Starter nitrogen is critical to get the plants growing and later applications keep them going! Apply 40-50 pounds of nitrogen per acre soon after the annual grasses emerge to initiate growth.

### ***Item 10: Plan Ahead!***

Fall is a great time to create your forage management plan for next season. If you need additional information on any of these items, please contact your local County Extension Agent. If you need help finding your local agent, please call 1-800-ASK-UGA1.



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