KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

July 10, 2026

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

**Bromegrass Grazing Management**

If there was ever one plant that I have a love/hate relationship with, it is smooth bromegrass! There isn't much that can beat the production and quality of brome early in the growing season, but as all cool-season grass does, heat shuts it down and summer slump is real! David Hallauer and I recently did a "Tailgate Talk" discussing this topic (*check it out on MED Facebook and/or YouTube*) so while it is fresh on my mind it seems like a topic to discuss today.

Smooth bromegrass is a cool-season introduced grass with an advanced root system that tolerates temperature extremes and drought well. As a sod-forming perennial grass, it spreads rapidly through seeds and rhizomes which can aggressively begin to dominate pasture and range sites, especially with supplemental fertility. In its vegetative stage, this is a highly palatable, high-quality grass, but rapidly declines as it turns to reproduction in the summer months.

Bromegrass grows best when temperatures are between 60 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Growth begins in mid-to late April followed by a rapid growth phase in early to mid-May. During the summer, growth slows considerably and the plant will go dormant through July and August. Fall regrowth typically occurs in early September through mid-October. During the rapid growth phase, the amount of forage produced quickly outpaces animal intake which can lead to poor forage utilization.

Smooth bromegrass has a shorter effective grazing window compared to pastures dominated by native cool and warm-season grasses. As pastures become dominated by smooth bromegrass, native grass species are less able to compete and can get squeezed out of the plant community. As the native plant population declines, the ability to evenly and effectively utilize the available forage through grazing becomes more challenging.

While this can seem like a task, there are strategies that the ranch manager can implement to achieve more effective forage utilization. The following are guidelines for spring, summer, and fall grazing periods to assist ranch managers in developing a grazing strategy for pastures where smooth bromegrass dominate.

If bromegrass is grazed the entire season, moderate stocking rates must be used to ensure that enough forage is available during the summer months when forage production decreases. Initial turnout in spring should occur when forage height reaches 12-14 inches. Smooth bromegrass should not be grazed to a stubble height below 4 to 6 inches.

If another native warm-season grass pasture is available, an alternative strategy is to increase stocking rates on smooth bromegrass during spring, move to the native warm-season pasture in summer, then return to the smooth bromegrass in the fall with moderate stocking rates. Additionally, rotational grazing systems can help better utilize smooth bromegrass during the rapid growth phase.

Smooth bromegrass quality is lower during the summer months, which makes mineral supplementation necessary during this period. At least 8 to 10 inches of regrowth should be available in fall grazing pastures. Grazing animals should be removed from fall grazing pastures when stubble height reaches 4 to 6 inches.