



Rejuvenation of Hay and Pasture

By John McGregor, MFGA Extension Support

Rejuvenation of a forage stand, whether hay or pasture, involves using one or a combination of methods to increase productivity with a shift towards higher yielding forage species that provide improved nutritive value for livestock. The Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) revised this article in June of 2019 and it contains a lot of good information on rejuvenating hay and pasture fields.

Some of the key points covered include:

- Soil moisture is the most important variable when rejuvenating a forage stand and must be considered in timing and method of rejuvenation
- If a forage stand does need rejuvenation it is critical to identify the reason for decline in productivity
- Native rangeland should be retained, with management based on sound ecological principles, and not enhanced or replaced with non-native plant species
- Grazing management should be the first rejuvenation technique considered. Until any grazing management issues are addressed, no other aspect of rejuvenation will maintain healthy stands
- A soil test is important to determine which nutrients are available and which may be deficient with results determining the optimum fertilizer application rates for your specific soil type and forage species
- Mechanical disturbance increases the decomposition of root material, releasing nutrients into the soil and making them available for plant use
- Selective herbicides can be used to control unwanted plants that are competing with desirable forage species but can be costly and difficult to apply
- Mowing can be used to remove unwanted plants providing a competitive advantage to the more desirable forage species, allowing them to make use of nutrients, sunlight and moisture and potentially out-compete the less desirable plants
- Advantages of direct seeding into sod include not exposing the land to erosion, as may occur with breaking and reseeding, plus conservation of available soil moisture

- Over-seeding a legume into an existing stand is a relatively inexpensive rejuvenation technique however, establishment success is highly dependent upon favourable conditions
- Significant drawbacks to breaking an established stand and reseeding include the loss of production in the initial year, potential for erosion, loss of soil moisture, and cost

Below is the table of contents for the article. You can click on any of the topics or go to <http://www.beefresearch.ca/research-topic.cfm/rejuvenation-of-hay-and-pasture-98> to read the entire article.

- [Key Points](#)
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Disclaimer: Available research results are included where possible throughout this article. For some rejuvenation methods, region-specific information is limited or not available. The BCRC has made every effort to provide as much up-to-date information as possible. Contact local forage, grazing or cattle association, extension specialist or agrologist in your area to check if additional information specific to your region exists.

For more information on managing pastures or hay fields go to:

[Forage Production and Management](#)