

## Grass Production

By Jacob Hadfield

One of my favorite agriculture topics to discuss is pasture and grass hay production. While many of us, myself included, have primarily focused on alfalfa throughout our lives, it's essential to recognize that treating our grass pastures the same way may not be optimal. I want to share some tips and tricks specific to grass-producing fields that differ from our usual practices.

A common issue, especially in pasture management, is the tendency to harvest too much grass. The desire to maximize yield, which works well with resilient crops like alfalfa, may not be as suitable for grasses. Unlike alfalfa, which boasts a large tap root system with thick roots for nutrient storage, grasses have thin, floss-like roots that provide limited storage space. Approximately 85-90% of a grass's nutrients are stored in the bottom 4 inches of stubble.

When harvesting or grazing pasture, we often target this crucial 4-inch layer. Unfortunately, doing so can set back grass growth, leading to a slow recovery period until the grass can establish itself again. To promote healthy grass pastures and enhance competitiveness against weeds, consider the following rules of thumb:

**Grazing Rule:** Adopt a "take half, leave half" approach. If you have ten inches of forage, graze 5 inches, leaving the remaining 5 inches untouched.

**Hay Production Rule:** When producing hay, leave a 4-inch stubble. This practice ensures that a significant portion of the nutrients remains in the stubble, supporting regrowth.

By adhering to these guidelines, we can maintain the health of our grass pastures and bolster their resilience against weed competition. If you're interested in further discussions on pasture and grass hay production, feel free to reach out to me at the Juab County Extension Office. I'm always eager to share more information and insights.