West Virginia Pasture Management
Managing Legumes in Pastures
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for W.Va. Grassland Limited Resource Farmer Program

Objective
To maintain and/or improve the quantity of legumes in pastures.

Introduction
A good mixture of legumes and grasses is desired in West Virginia pastures. Legumes tend to maintain their quality later in the growing season. Nutritional values are generally higher for legumes than grasses. The amount of legume desired in a clover-grass mix is 30 percent.

Species Selection
In West Virginia, the most common legumes in pastures are white clover and red clover. White clovers, because of their stolon-forming habit and the resultant ability to withstand heavy grazing, are the best choice for heavy or intense grazing.

Tips
1. Lax grazing will favor legumes
2. Hard grazing will favor grasses
3. White clover is a creeping perennial that can withstand some hard grazing
4. The amount of legume in a pasture should appear to be about the same as the amount of grass.
5. Keep pH at 6.3 or higher
6. Have soil tested at least every two years
7. Legumes generally require more phosphorous, potassium and trace elements than other plants.
8. White clover leaves grow from the stolons that creep along the soil surface. Do not graze to the point that the animal consumes the stolons. Stolon consumption will eventually eliminate white clover from the stand.

Warning
White clover may cause bloat! If white clover makes up more than 30 percent of the stand, turn the cattle in for about thirty minutes the first day, an hour the second day and so on. This will reduce the risk of bloat. Also, do not turn livestock onto wet clover pastures. The digestion rate is increased allowing more bloat-causing gas to form.

Summary
Strive to maintain a 30 percent legume content in your pasture. This will require consideration of the eight tips listed above. Also, other legumes could be utilized besides white or red clover. This fact sheet is an attempt to address what is most common in West Virginia and is a "first step" for those aspiring to become intensive managers. Happy grazing!
For more information about managing legumes in pastures, contact your local office of the Soil Conservation Service or the West Virginia University Extension Service. They are listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government" and "West Virginia," respectively.