Growing Annual Forages

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Management Options

Needs

- Immediate
- Short-term
- Medium-term
- Long-term

Possibilities

- Nothing
- Hay/Supplemental feeding
- Wheat
- Soybean
- Alfalfa
- Perennial grass pastures
- Corn

Alfalfa

Stems (sq ft.)	Production potential
55	100
50	90
45	81
40	72
35	62
30	53
25	44

Univ. Wisconsin Coop. Ext. (2011)

Forage Options

Cool-season species

- Small grains
  - —Oats
  - —Cereal rye
  - —Triticale
  - —Wheat
  - —Barley

- Brassicas
  - —Turnips
  - —Radishes
  - —Rapeseed
  - —Hybrids

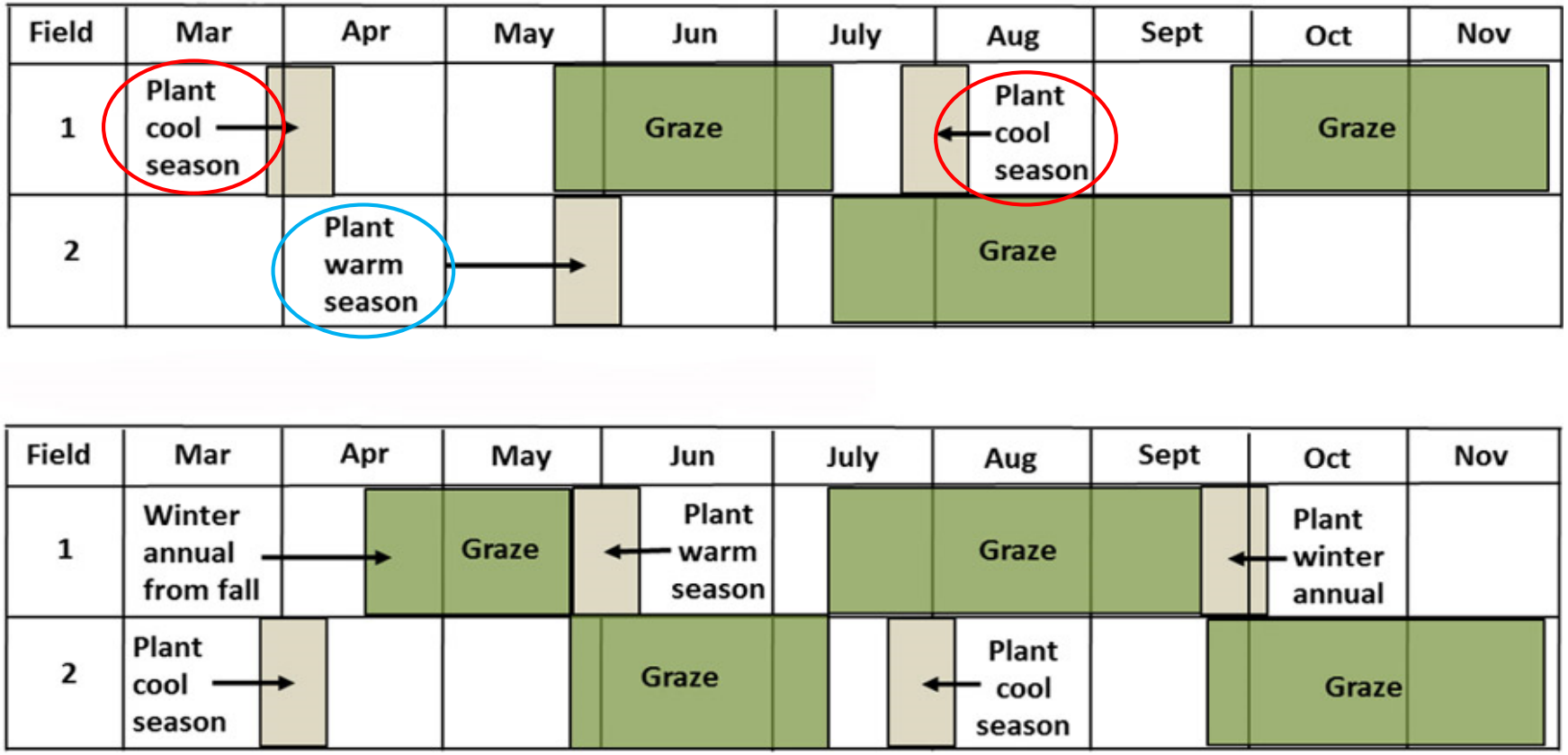
Warm-season species

- Summer annuals
  - —Sudangrass
  - —Sorghum x sudangrass
  - —Forage sorghum
  - —Pearl millet
  - —German (foxtail) millet

- Others
  - —Sunflower
  - —Cowpea, Mungbean
  - —Sunn hemp

Annual Forage Systems

Figure 1. Cattle can potentially have grazing forage from mid-spring through the fall using a well-planned annual forage system.



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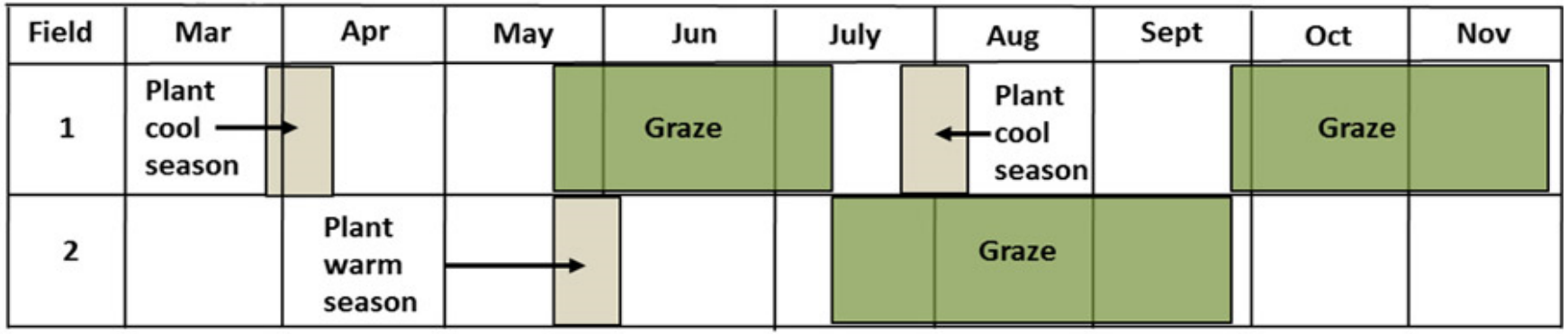

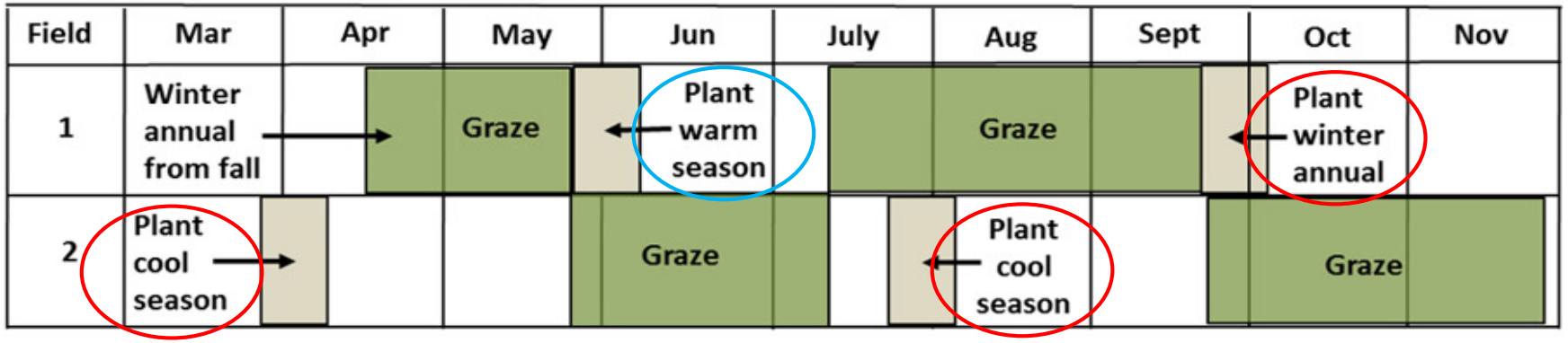

Important planting dates

- **Before August 1**
  - Summer annuals are best choice.
  - Cool-season annuals are risky (maybe oats, other spring species).
- **August 1 to September 1**
  - Cool-season annuals are best choice.
- **After September 1**
  - Cool-season annuals are best; some risk with spring species.
  - Summer annuals not recommended.
- **After October 1**
  - Cool-season winter annuals are best choice.
  - Summer annuals not recommended.
  - Cool-season spring annuals are too risky.

Take-home Messages

- **Planting date is most important.**
  - Delayed planting reduces fall growth potential.
  - Effects of late fall planting carry over into the spring.

- **Data on mixtures is not clear.**
  - One or two dominate, three or four contribute.
  - Grasses are the biomass producers.
  - Legumes and other broadleaves do not compete well with the grasses.

- **Yield and quality of annual forages can be high (and stay high).**

Questions

Email dredfearn2@unl.edu

Websites **Range Pasture Forages**

agronomy.unl.edu/range-pasture-forages

Beef Forage Crop Systems

beef.unl.edu/beef-cattle-production/beef-forage-crop-systems

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