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Warm-season annuals mitigate summer foraging slump

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Holstein steers grazing a fresh allocation of corn intercropped with Kura clover after grazing for three days on the prior strip. Photo courtesy of Christine Nieman.

Midwestern pastures are dominated by cool-season perennial forages that are productive in spring but have slow growth in mid- to late-summer. This growth pattern causes challenges for livestock producers attempting to match the intake requirements of grazing livestock to the forage growth pattern.

In a recent *Agronomy Journal* article, researchers report on a three-year grazing study in Wisconsin where corn and sudangrass were intercropped with Kura clover. They were evaluated for forage yield, forage nutritive value, and stocker cattle performance.

The researchers found that both the sudangrass–Kura clover mixture and the corn–Kura clover mixture provided forage mass of high nutrient value in mid-summer and similar daily weight gain by grazing stocker steers. The ability to re-graze sudangrass-Kura clover, compared with a one-time grazing in corn–Kura clover, allowed for 30% greater yield and significantly greater cattle gain per hectare.

This study shows that either corn or sudangrass intercropped with Kura clover may offset the summer slump in forage production with high nutritive value forage; however, when choosing between the two mixtures, the number of grazing days is an important benefit for sudangrass–Kura clover mixtures.

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Nieman, C.C., Albrecht, K.A., & Schaefer, D.M. (2020). Corn and sudangrass intercropped with Kura clover for Midwestern pastures. *Agronomy Journal*, *112*, 2905–2915. **https://doi.org/10.1002/agj2.20244**

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