



Seasonal Nutrition on Ventenata-Infested Rangelands

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What did we want to learn?

Ventenata is an invasive annual grass now found in several Wyoming counties. It has become a dominant component of many rangelands depended upon by livestock operations and wildlife. We wanted to show how ventenata compares to perennial forage grasses in terms of nutrition and biomass.

Findings

Ventenata has lower total digestible nutrients (TDN) than perennial grasses, but has crude protein content comparable to perennial grasses when it is actively growing. However, ventenata senesces earlier than perennial grasses. Once ventenata dries out, the nutritive content declines faster than perennial grasses. Unlike perennial grasses, once annual grasses are utilized or trampled, vententata does not regenerate. This means that once it is used, no more forage will be available until new plants grow from seed in the fall or the next season. Perennial grasses, on the other hand, have a higher nutritive content for a longer period of time. Ventenata is also not palatable. At higher densities, perennial grasses become engulfed in annuals, making them harder for livestock to access.

Recommendations

In the graphs below, annual grass biomass and nutrients are shown in yellow and compared to perennial grasses in grey. Perennial grasses have an upward trend in biomass and are generally higher in nutrients than annual grasses. For these reasons, annual grasses should be considered poor forage replacements for perennial grasses. When possible, control efforts should be implemented that will maintain perennial grass dominance for forage production.

