

# They're Using Bamboo For Winter Grazing

Edmund and Garth Brown raise grassfed cattle in upstate New York. They recently started growing bamboo for winter grazing and Edmund wrote about the experiment in *On Pasture*, an online newsletter for graziers which allowed FARM SHOW to excerpt from the article ([www.onpasture.com](http://www.onpasture.com)).

Brown has been experimenting with a 35-ft. dia. circle of bamboo that he plans to expand to an acre as a first step. The small area has given him experience with the plant and opportunity to evaluate feed value and quality.

As animals browse, they consume both the leaves and twigs, leaving the longer woody stems. Protein content is right at 16 percent. When calculated on an acre basis, total wet yield was about 7 tons. When sent to a lab

for analysis, it provided a little less than 3 1/2 tons of dry matter. Brown noted a neighbor's high quality hay production was 2 1/2 tons dry matter per acre.

"Hay and standing bamboo forage are not precisely equivalent, but for my purposes they are close enough to draw meaningful conclusions," he says. "Both will keep my animals fed through the winter. If I can get a roughly equivalent yield per acre per year, I'll be many dollars ahead."

He acknowledges the cost of strip grazing livestock through the winter. However, he expects bamboo to save the farm a substantial amount of money once he gets a big enough stand because it'll save the cost of producing more hay.

The next step is getting an acre plot

established and then evaluating the best grazing strategy. Brown plans to graze the bamboo stand with sheep in early spring before the new growth emerges. The goal here is to stunt emerging grasses that could compete with the bamboo.

"I run sheep and cattle together for most of the year, but not during lambing," he says. "Weeding the bamboo with sheep will align nicely with lambing. The shoots are quite delicate as they first emerge, and I'm worried cattle hooves will snap them off below the surface if the soil is damp."

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Edmund and Garth Brown recently started growing bamboo for winter grazing and are now evaluating its feed value and quality.

## Skid Loader-Mounted Log Splitter

"I burn a lot of firewood to heat my house, so I was looking for an easier way to split wood. About 8 years ago I decided to make use of the auxiliary hydraulics on my Case 1835B skid loader to build a hands-free splitter. It has worked so well I thought your readers might be interested in it," says Mark Majerus, Farmington, Minn.

He had an 8 by 8-in. I-beam and purchased a 5 1/2-in. bore by 30-in. stroke hydraulic cylinder. The cylinder is on the underside of the I-beam. Splitting is done with the wood laying on the ground.

"Instead of having this wood splitter in the typical straight out position away from the skid loader operator, I mounted mine perpendicular to the skid loader operator. This allows me to split wood with better visibility," says Majerus. "I welded up a type of quick-tach plate and welded it to the I-beam, leaving large rectangular openings in the middle that provide a good view for the operator.

"It's enjoyable to operate, and it's safe because the operator stays in the cab and can split alone."

Mounted on the skid loader, the splitter can be raised, turned and used as a thumb to pick up wood to split or load it onto a pile. "I can pick up the wood and split it on the way over to my firewood pile," says Majerus.

The splitter easily splits wood up to 27 in. long.

He started with a kit that he bought from Northern Tool which included the wedge and hydraulic cylinder and its housing. "The cylinder puts out a whopping 74,000 lbs. of pressure, so I welded a 2-in. thick steel plate onto the end of the I-beam to keep it from bending. I also welded a heavy-duty angled bracket into the I-beam to further withstand the pressure," notes Majerus.

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Mark Majerus made use of the auxiliary hydraulics on his Case skid loader to build this hands-free log splitter. It can be used as a "thumb" to pick up wood to split or load it onto a pile.



Water barrel mounts on top of a 5-ft. tall angle iron frame where hogs can't get at it. They drink from a 3-ft. long hose fitted with a nipple.

## Barrel Waterer System Is "Hog Tough"

By Klaire Howerton

Anyone who raises hogs knows how hard they can be on fencing, shelter, feed troughs, and waterers. Jim Criger, of Springfield, Mo., decided to build a watering system that would be a little harder for his Red Wattle hogs to tear up. He mounted a 15-gal. water barrel on top of a 5-ft. tall angle iron frame. Baling twine holds the barrel in place on top of the stand. A 3-ft. length of pvc hose attaches to the barrel via a hose clamp,

and at the opposite end of the hose is a large water nipple for the hogs to drink from. The watering stand is placed on the outside of the hog fence and the nipple wired to the fence so it's the only part of the system the hogs can touch.

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