

Forage Facts



Grazing Management

1) Animal Needs Vs Plant Needs—Finding The Balance

- a) There has to be a compromise between what is good for the plant and what is good for the animal.
- b) Never can obtain maximum plant yields and maximum nutritive value at the same time.
- c) With control of green leaf defoliation, trampling, manure and urine distribution one can meet most nutrient needs of animals while maintaining plants.

2) Understanding Animal Grazing Behavior (cattle, goats, sheep, horses)

- a) Because of differences in mouth anatomy, nutrient needs and social interactions, animals select what they eat differently.
- b) Grazing two or more animal species in the same pasture can have positive benefits on plant utilization and acre output.
- c) Young animals learn how to graze and what to eat from mothers
- d) Observing animal behavior in various situations can be useful in making decisions that minimize the stress on animals.
 - i) When do they ruminate, when do they prefer to graze, where do they prefer to rest, how do they act when fully fed vs when they are hungry, what do they do when disturbed during rumination,
 - ii) What plants do they select when given plenty of choice?

3) How To Get Started With Controlled Grazing?

- a) Taking the first step. Human nature is to accept change slowly. Begin by using only a small part of the farm. Subdivide pastures with temporary wire and plan a management schedule to allow the forage in each paddock to be grazed to the desired stubble in 1 to 3 days.
- b) Consider developing “on paper” the most detailed or “elaborate” system you think you could possibly want to have, and in the end decide which of the parts you want to put into practice first
- c) Just try something different tomorrow, like “squeezing” onto a smaller section of the pasture and observe what they do in the first 30 minutes and what they are doing in 2 hours.
 - i) Graze an area to the target height in one to 2 days
 - ii) Rest the area until plant growth is sufficient for regrazing.
 - iii) Have a place to put animals when pasture growth is not ready for grazing.

4) Equipment Needed For Control Grazing

- a) An attitude...that you can do it.
- b) Basic understanding of plant growth, animal needs and animal behavior
- c) Electrical fencing to control animal use and behavior
- d) Sufficient drinking water locations to keep animals distributed on the farm.