



ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

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Pasture Management

Most of the area looks significantly better this year than at this time last year and we are thankful for that. However, many still do not have excess moisture as we head to grass, so managing the pastures as well as possible is still important.

Rotational grazing is one of the best pasture management tools that we can implement.

Sometimes it is also called Management Intensive Grazing, but sometimes the grazing ends up being intense instead of the management. With rotational grazing systems, moving the cattle in a timely manner is key. If the cattle are continuously allowed to re-graze certain parts of the pasture, you end up with less of the desirable forage. Moving the cattle every 3-5 days is necessary to keep the cattle from grazing the regrowth of the plants in that area. While it may not appear that they have grazed anything, it is still important to keep moving because by the time you can see the grazing impact, you have lost forage production for the next rotation on that area. Rotation can improve total forage production and forage quality.

Weed control can also be key for forage production. If you take care of weeds, you have the potential to boost forage production by as much as 40%. Talking with an agronomist about your options for pasture weed control can help you determine which product would have the best fit for your needs. When you consider the payoff in forage production for taking care of weeds in at least a portion of your pastures, it is definitely worth looking into.

Fertilization of pastures is often overlooked as a management tool. Application of nitrogen by the livestock themselves (aka urine) are usually pretty obvious in a pasture, so consider the impact of a little nitrogen across the pasture in a more uniform pattern. Fall application of fertilizer may be worth considering.

While we are hoping the growing season turns out better than last year, early weaning maybe should still be on your radar as a forage management tool. Early weaning helps drop the nutrient requirements of the cows and removes the grazing pressure of the growing calves, saving a substantial amount of forage. Forage quality typically declines later season and while many times we look at supplementation to continue meeting nutrient needs, early weaning allows us to meet the cows nutritional needs without significant supplementation costs. If your pastures could use a little more time to recover from dry conditions last year, early weaning could help them be in better shape next year.

We only get so much rain every year. Making sure that it gets to the roots to help grow grass is pretty important for us to do. The NRCS conducts infiltration rate tests in which they have soil from different types of production environments including rotationally grazed pasture, continuously grazed pasture, and cropland. The soil type is the same and the area the samples were taken from are all close. But, the water infiltration rate is wildly different. The rotationally grazed pasture takes significantly less time to take on an inch of water (10 seconds) than continuously grazed pasture (7 min). Both grazing situations were much better than cropland of the same soil type, which took over 30 minutes to take on 1-inch of water. Watch a video of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqB4z7lGzsg>

In a Nutshell:

- * **Rotational grazing can increase total forage production**
- * **Weed control increases forage production**
- * **Consider fertilization of pasture acres**
- * **Early weaning is an option to help save forage**
- * **Consider management impact on water infiltration**
- * **Supplements can help enhance pasture utilization**
- * **Diversification of forage or cattle type are options**

PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Grazing distribution in pastures can be influenced with supplements. Research at the Purina research farm have shown that moving molasses-based mineral or protein tubs can help entice cattle to graze areas of pastures that may be underutilized. After establishing intake by placing tubs initially near a water source, moving the tubs out of the traffic pattern draws the cattle to tubs and to improve grazing distribution in a pasture.

Diversity in your operation is probably as important today as it ever has been. While the days when everyone had all species of livestock on their operation appear to be a distant memory, some level of diversification can still protect you from market pitfalls. Access to land is commonly limited and access to grazing acres is even more scarce. But, if you can graze corn stalks and cover crops, you may have cheaper cow costs than someone with all pasture. Planting rye or other forage for early spring grazing can allow you to have forage available and still plant a cash crop.

Another method to increase diversity in your operation would be to increase diversity of the type of cattle you manage. Many producers are strictly cow-calf operators. But if we plan to have some yearling cattle in our mix at grazing time, it can help us utilize early grass and then sell cattle that are not in your reproductive herd. The group of cattle can also be used as a drought tool in which you can sell livestock that are not the heart of your producing cowherd when forage gets tight. Grass cattle can provide some added flexibility and diversity to your operation. Short-term pairs may be utilized the same way. Graze early, wean early and then finish the cow for a white fat cow market.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Change can be difficult, but not changing can mean missed opportunity. The pace of ag technology development is astounding and in 10-20 years, we will all likely be amazed at what is possible. First adopters often benefit the most from new technology. Outside-of-the-box thinking can make your operation more profitable. I have a quote from Henry Ford on my desk that says, "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." It is a reminder for me to start with the goal in mind. If the goal is to maintain a healthy, productive cow to produce a saleable calf (and income) on as little expense as possible, then we need to be open to some new ideas about how we manage our resources including our pasture.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

Orphan Calves: If you ended up with some orphan calves, take care of them right. Plan on at least one bag of milk replacer per calf. For the best performance, upgrade your milk replacer from HerdMaker to Amplifier Max. For dry feed, utilize the Intense Calf Mixer pellet and mix 1/3 pellets with 2/3 corn to supply the needed protein for the calves. Creep feed is not adequate for orphan calves. Hold off feeding hay until the calves are 10-12 weeks old to avoid the hay belly on your orphan calves.

Things to be thinking about:

- *Get your creep feeders in shape to put out in pastures and **get creep feed out for spring-born calves**
- * Keep mineral in place for the cows on pasture
- * Feed **Altosid** to control horn fly populations
- * Implant calves at branding time
- * Get prepared for heat stress for cattle in the lots- shades, sprinklers, extra water tanks, etc.
- * Order wasps for feedlot fly control or ask about **Clarify** for feed-through fly control in the feedlot
- * Make sure the bulls have mineral too! Stress Tubs or Ultimate Breeder mineral provide the Availa-4 mineral
- * Have a breeding soundness exam and semen test done on your bulls to help ensure high pregnancy rates