



Woodland Grazing For Small Ruminants



Introduction

The practice of “Woodland Grazing for Small Ruminants” facilitates the use of woodlots for rotational grazing systems for livestock. It can serve three purposes within a farming operation:

- 1) Provide alternative grazing for livestock in combination with forest production.
- 2) Allow multi-species plant management with small ruminants such as goats and sheep.
- 3) Improve the management/usage of woodlots while increasing the production of food, cover, and habitat for alternative livestock.

Preparation and Planning

This practice may be applied on any woodland area that will “not” create erosion when openings for fence construction are created to implement rotational grazing on the site.

The maximum size of woodlots for practice payments through the Alabama Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for Limited Resource, New and

Beginning or Socially Disadvantaged farmers is 100 acres. Additional acreage can be applied at the discretion of the producer without practice payments.

Using 100-acre or less woodlots, land clearing of woody vegetation to accommodate boundary fences, and woodlot paddocks will not exceed 20 feet in width. The installation of net wire or high tensile electrical fencing will be used to sustain and manage the practice within a rotational grazing system (see Fence Standard 382 and Obstruction Removal Standard 500).

Livestock Watering Facilities (see Standard 614) will be used with this practice to accommodate rotational grazing. Livestock will be managed in a manner that will “not” cause over-grazing and depletion of weeds, shrubs, and bushes that are used in the grazing system of small ruminants (see Prescribed Grazing Standard 528).

Considerations

Where feasible, the removal of obstructions such as trees and shrubs will be completed around the boundaries of the proposed woodlot. This is done to facilitate fence construction and the implementation of a

woodland grazing plan that includes rotational paddocks designed to accommodate the proper number of animal units per acre (paddock acreage includes the cleared area used to construct the fencing).

Prescribed Grazing Plans will be designed to ensure that an adequate stand of vegetation exists in the cleared areas as well as the woodlot acres. Failure to maintain adequate forage for livestock can result in species depletion and possible soil erosion, depending on the slope of the woodlot.

Consideration will be given to provide an adequate water supply for small ruminants with this practice. Generally, a water trough system supplied by well water or a rural water system is preferred.

Shelters should be provided where needed to protect small ruminants from inclement weather. A practice payment for shelters is not a component for this practice.

Plans and Specifications

Specifications for applying this practice will be prepared for each site and recorded using approved NRCS Specifications Sheets, Job Sheets, and Narrative Statements in the Conservation Plan or other acceptable documentation.

More Information

Visit the Alabama NRCS website - Environmental Quality Incentives Program - at:

<http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

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