

Conservation Assistance for Better Pastures in Connecticut

Rotational Grazing Systems

Helping People Help the Land

Do your pastures have ...

- low yields?
- low quality forage?
- weeds?
- muddy or eroded areas?
- numerous and random livestock paths?
- livestock drinking from streams or ponds?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you should consider implementing a Prescribed Grazing Plan.



What is a prescribed grazing plan?

A Prescribed Grazing Plan is a customized management system through which the farmer adjusts the intensity, frequency, timing, and duration of grazing to:

- Reduce soil erosion and compaction.
- Provide livestock with quality forage.
- Enhance pasture productivity.
- Protect the quality of streams and other water resources.
- Reduce production costs.



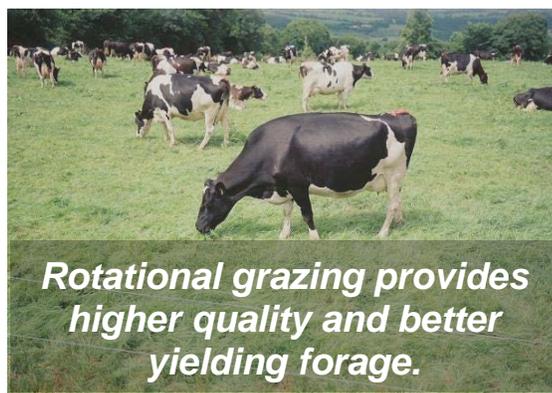
What do I need to get started?

At a minimum you will need:

- Permanent or movable fence such as Poly-wire, Poly-tape, netting, or high tensile wire.
- Fence charger, grounding rods, and lightning arrestors
- Clean water should be made available to grazing livestock. There is a wide selection of permanent and portable watering systems available.

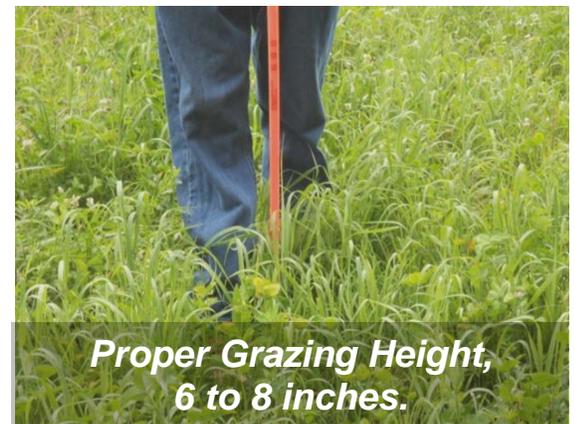
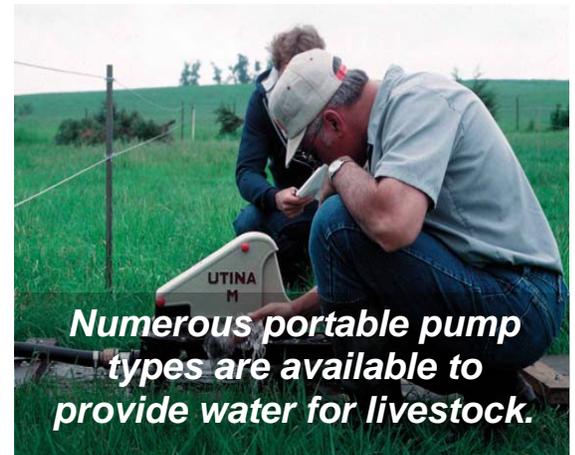
Other common components of grazing systems include:

- Animal trails and walkways to improve access to grazing areas and watering facilities.
- Manure collection and storage facilities for farms where livestock is confined for winter feeding, or during other periods when sufficient forage may not be available.



Grazing Principles:

- For a grazing system that will support grazing animals throughout the entire growing season, you should have close to 1 acre of land for every 1,000 lbs. of grazing animals.
- Graze or harvest forage before it reaches maturity (produces seed). Adequate grazing height is 6-8 inches for most forage grasses and legumes (the top of your boot laces).
- Move livestock to a new grazing area once they have grazed the forage down to 3 inches (the bottom of your boot laces).
- Provide reliable clean water. Water troughs should be within an 800 foot travel distance for the animals in each paddock for even grazing and manure distribution.
- Water troughs should be small and portable so they can be moved from paddock to paddock easily.
- Be ready to adjust. Unusual weather conditions and other variables that improve or hurt pasture production will require adjusting paddock size and grazing periods. If too much grass is left behind, decrease the paddock size. If grass is grazed lower than 2 inches over wide areas, increase paddock size or lower animal numbers. During slow grass growth periods, supplemental hay may be needed.
- Monitor and manage weeds. If grazing is uneven or weeds are left behind, use a mower to cut pastures down to a uniform height before any weed seeds appear. Weeds may also be pulled or spot treated with herbicides



Technical and Financial Assistance is Available

Your local NRCS office has experienced conservationists who can assist you in planning and implementing a rotational grazing system. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm. Financial assistance may also be available. For more information, contact your local NRCS office:

- Fairfield and New Haven Counties - (203) 287-8038
- Hartford and Tolland Counties - (860) 688-7725
- Litchfield County - (860) 626-8258
- Middlesex and New London Counties - (860) 887-3604
- Windham County – (860) 779-0557

Visit our website at www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov