

Do You Have Problems With:

- Low pasture yields
- Low quality pasture
- Weeds in the pasture
- Poor livestock condition
- Supplementing hay in summer pastures
- Large bare spots in the pasture
- Numerous livestock paths across the pasture



Rotational grazing provides higher quality and better yielding forage.

Rotational Grazing Can Help

Benefits of Rotational Grazing:

- Increased pasture yields
- Better quality pastures
- Carry more animals on the same acreage
- Feed less hay
- Better distribution of manure nutrients throughout the pasture
- Healthier livestock
- Improved income (\$\$)



Healthy pastures = Healthy and productive livestock

Costs to Implement Rotational Grazing

- Example: A 40 acre pasture divided into 4 pastures can cost as little as \$200 for single strand fencing.
- To distribute water will be about \$.50/foot of water line.
- A portable watering trough costs about \$100 to \$160.



Portable watering tank connected to a hose

Rotational Grazing

Components needed:

- Light-weight fencing to subdivide large pasture areas – poly-wire, poly-tape, high tensile wire, electric netting, reels, rods for stringing fence on, fence charger, ground rods, lightning arrestors
- Portable water troughs with pipeline if stationary trough is over 800 feet away from some of the pasture area
- Handling area for livestock used to load and unload animals or work on them



A low cost single strand fence works well for dividing pastures.

Planning a rotational grazing system

A rotational grazing system works best when the number of livestock equals the carrying capacity of the pasture system. If livestock are overstocked then additional hay will need to be provided.

Generally 20-30 days are needed to rest pastures during rapid growth periods and 40 or more days during slow growth periods.

The chart below displays the number of days of grazing in each field based on the number of fields/paddocks in your system. Assume a 20 – 40 day rest period between grazings.

Number of Pasture Fields	Grazing Days per Field
2	20 – 40
3	10 – 20
4	7 – 13
5	5 – 10
6	4 – 8
7	4 – 7
8	3 – 6
9	3 – 5
10	2 – 4
11	2 – 4
12	2 – 4
13	2 – 3



Portable fence is an option for rotational grazing.



Cross fencing and gates make rotational grazing easier to manage.

Rotational Grazing

How to maintain rotational grazing

Springtime

Begin grazing a paddock at 5 inches high for cool season pastures. This is to avoid grass becoming too mature before the livestock graze it. Since the pasture is being grazed at a lower height, livestock will need to be moved sooner than normal. If possible, paddocks can be enlarged temporarily until the 8 to 10-inch high grass is present in the paddock rotation.

Fencing

Simple interior electric fencing can be a single strand of high tensile wire, poly-wire, or polytape on small diameter insulated rods for cattle and netting with insulated rods for sheep and goats with an energizer large enough to provide adequate shock through hair or wool. It is best to leave these fences fully portable to adjust paddock sizes as needed.

Water

Water troughs should be within an 800 foot travel distance for the animals in each paddock for even grazing and manure distribution. The troughs should be small and portable so they can be moved from paddock to paddock easily.

Weather

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 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.

Weeds

If grazing is uneven or weeds are left behind, use a mower to mow pastures down to a uniform height before any weed seeds appear. This proves forage quality and keeps weeds from setting seed and expanding in the pasture.



Numerous portable pump types are available to provide water for livestock.



NRCS can provide on site assistance to plan and implement a rotational grazing



Rotational grazing increases pasture quality and quantity.

SMALL SCALE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR FARM

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you with developing a rotational grazing system. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment and we will come to your farm.

You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance, through a state or federal program. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.



Helping People Help the Land

For More Information Contact the:

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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