

Grazing Bites

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200th Issue

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This is the 200th issue of *Grazing Bites*—time flies, but the need for good pasture management remains as crucial as ever.

In the book "Observations on the Means of Improving the Cultivation of the Soil and the Management of Livestock," Scottish gentleman farmer, botanist, essayist and scholar, James Anderson, provided a detailed approach to managing livestock on pasture. He strongly advocated for rotational grazing, a method that involves moving livestock between different pastures. This technique helps prevent overgrazing and allows pastures to recover, thus maintaining soil fertility and forage quality.



With each sunrise, new grazing opportunities arise!

Anderson also emphasized the importance of avoiding overgrazing to prevent soil degradation and ensure adequate forage availability. He urged farmers to closely monitor grazing intensity to avoid depleting pastures excessively. Alongside this, he highlighted the need for maintaining high-quality pastures through effective soil management practices, such as applying manure and managing soil pH.

A key aspect of Anderson's recommendations was providing access to fresh, nutrient-rich forage. He noted that livestock perform best when grazing on nutritious, fresh plants. Anderson suggested that pastures should be grazed when plants are at their most nutritious and allowed to recover between grazing periods to promote optimal regrowth.

While Anderson supported effective pasture management, he also acknowledged the necessity of supplemental feeding during periods when pastures are insufficient to meet livestock needs, such as in winter or during droughts. His recommendations aimed to ensure sustainable practices that support the long-term health of both pastures and livestock.

James Anderson wrote about grazing management to improve agricultural efficiency, soil health, and livestock productivity in 1777. He aimed to optimize pasture use, enhance soil fertility, and ensure sustainable practices that would benefit both the financial stability of farms and the well-being of livestock. His work focused on systematic grazing methods to prevent overgrazing, reduce feed costs, and promote long-term environmental and economic sustainability. Does this seem familiar?

The message of effective grazing management remains critically important today due to its significant impact on agricultural sustainability, environmental health, and economic efficiency. Ensuring that grazing practices support long-term pasture health is vital for maintaining agricultural productivity and meeting the growing food demands of an increasing global population.

Proper grazing techniques are essential for preserving soil health. They help prevent soil degradation, erosion, and nutrient loss, which are pressing concerns in modern agriculture. By promoting effective grazing management, we support regenerative agricultural practices and safeguard soil quality for future use.

The environmental impact of grazing management practices is also substantial. Effective grazing can influence biodiversity, water quality, and carbon sequestration.

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Economically, efficient grazing management reduces the need for costly supplemental feeds and inputs. With fluctuating input costs and economic pressures on farmers, optimizing pasture use helps improve financial stability and farm profitability. This economic benefit is crucial for the long-term viability of farming operations and keeping the next generation on the farm.

Additionally, proper grazing management supports better livestock health and productivity. High-quality, well-managed pastures provide adequate nutrition and reduce the risk of health issues related to poor forage quality, ensuring the well-being of the animals.

As weather patterns and forage availability fluctuate, adaptive grazing practices become increasingly important. Effective management helps pastures withstand extreme weather conditions and maintain farm resilience, contributing to overall adaptability.

Finally, ongoing advocacy for grazing management is necessary to keep farmers informed about the latest practices and technologies. By sharing knowledge and promoting effective practices, we support industry-wide progress toward sustainability and address contemporary agricultural challenges.

Jonathan Swift, an Irish writer and satirist best known for his works such as "Gulliver's Travels," once remarked on the value of practical contributions to society, particularly in agriculture: "And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a foot of ground, where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together."

I share this quote to underscore why I am passionate about what I do. It's not about the accolades but the tangible benefits that effective pasture management can deliver.

Advocating for effective pasture management is crucial for sustaining long-term agricultural productivity and environmental health. It maintains land productivity, supports a high-quality forage supply, and ensures the well-being of livestock. Proper management practices enhance soil health, contribute to environmental conservation, and improve economic efficiency. They also promote better livestock health and adaptability to varying conditions, while adding to the visual and economic value of rural landscapes. Overall, these practices are fundamental to productivity, sustainability, and the well-being of both livestock and land.

As Jonathan Swift aptly put it, practical contributions to agriculture can have a profound and lasting impact. My passion for pasture management stems from this very belief—it's about making meaningful improvements that benefit both the land and those who depend on it.

So, as we move forward, remember it's not about optimizing just one grazing event, but about maximizing the entire grazing season. Here's to continuing the journey of effective pasture management. Keep on grazing!

Reminders & Opportunities

Forage Management Day at SIPAC – September 17, 2024 - Topics include hay & pasture evaluations, tour the toxic plant exhibit, fencing & water solutions, and the animal diagnostic lab. Register for this great event @ purdue.ag/foragemgmt or call 765-494-4783. Register by 9/12/24. \$40 per person.

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