

How To Get Started

Evaluate your existing resources (forage base, infrastructure, etc.) and management to assess what changes may be required to move the farm toward rotational grazing

Consult with local SWCD, NRCS, WAC, and CCE personnel to help develop a Prescribed Grazing Management Plan that will detail paddock numbers, sizes, and layout, as well as, infrastructure (fence, water, lanes) designs and locations.

Consult with a qualified nutritionist to evaluate and modify your feeding program.

Start simple with what pasture and resources you have. Begin dividing pastures. Test soil for fertility and make any needed improvements to enhance pasture production. Install and improve infrastructure. Be flexible; adjust, adapt, and improve your system and management as you progress.

Gather information and educate yourself. Attend pasture events like walks, workshops, and conferences. Read periodicals. Visit neighbors and ask how others manage their grazing systems. Learn more about fencing, watering options, forage alternatives, and management techniques. Start with the resources outlined on the back panel.



Assistance

Watershed Agricultural Council (nycwatershed.org)
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (ny.nrcs.usda.gov)
NYS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (glci.org)
Soil & Water Conservation Districts (nyacd.org)
Cornell Cooperative Extensions (cce.cornell.edu)
Resource Conservation & Development (nyrcd.org)

Resources

Books/Guides

Prescribed Grazing & Feeding Management for Lactating Dairy Cows (NYS GLCI)
Pasture Production Pasture & Grazing Management for NY (Cornell)
Pasture Management Guide for Livestock Producers (Iowa State)
Management Intensive Grazing (Gerrish)
Quality Pasture (Nation)

Online

attra.ncat.org
uwrf.edu/grazing
ohioline.osu.edu/gsg/index.html
cias.wisc.edu
umaine.edu/grazingguide
extension.umn.edu/agriculture
agry.purdue.edu/ext/forages
glti.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/publications/index.html
eatwild.com

Periodicals

The Stockman Grass Farmer
Graze

Watershed Agricultural Council

www.nycwatershed.org



East of Hudson Program

1275 Hanover Street
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
(914) 962-6355

Agricultural Program

44 West Street
Walton, NY 13856
(607) 865-7090

The WAC is funded by the New York City Environmental Protection, U.S.D.A., U.S. Forest Service, and other federal, foundation and private sources. The Watershed Agricultural Council is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer. © 2011

PRESCRIBED GRAZING MANAGEMENT



GETTING STARTED WITH ROTATIONAL GRAZING



What is Prescribed Grazing Management?

It is the management and controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing or browsing animals with the intent of achieving a specific objective. While there are several different methods of Prescribed Grazing, a rotational stocking method provides the greatest opportunity for enhanced livestock and pasture performance and economic benefit.

Why Utilize Rotational Grazing?

Save time, money, soil, resources.

Improve profits, forage production and utilization, animal health, water quality.

Reduce stored feed costs, energy/fuel use, herbicides/pesticides applications.



Rotational Grazing Basics

A rotational stocking method utilizes multiple paddocks that are alternately grazed and rested during the grazing season. The size and number of paddocks required is dependent on the number and type of livestock, the productivity of the pastures, and the level of managerial control desired. Generally, more paddocks result in greater control, pasture utilization, and overall system success.

General Guidelines

Grazing Period (Residency):

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| dairy (1/2–1 day) | beef (2–4 days) |
| sheep/goats (3–5 days) | horse (up to 7 days) |

Paddock Number:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| dairy (31–61) | beef (9–11+) |
| sheep/goats (7–10+) | horse (5+) |

Grass Heights: (somewhat dependent on forage species) start grazing: 6"–10"; stop grazing: 2"–4"

Forage Species: In general, orchardgrass and improved white clovers are well suited to rotational grazing in the northeast. Other forages to consider, depending on weather and soil conditions, include canary grass, ryegrass and red clover.



GRAZING SYSTEM COMPONENTS

Soils & Forage: Pastures should consist of native and improved mixes of grasses and legumes that are adapted to your farm's soils and growing conditions. What you can grow and how well it grows will depend largely on your soils and their productivity. With rotational grazing, pastures need to be managed and maintained just like any other important forage crop, corn or alfalfa.

Animals: Rotational grazing can work for all types (species/breeds) and classes (young/mature) of livestock including beef, dairy, sheep, goats, poultry, horses, pigs, alpacas, and fallow deer.

Fence: Fencing is the key component for controlling livestock in a rotational system. Generally, a combination of permanent and temporary electric fence provides the greatest flexibility and control at the lowest cost.

Water: Water is essential for high animal performance on pasture. Water should be made available in an environmentally sound manner, in ample quality and quantity, and in close proximity to the grazing livestock.



Laneways: Livestock trails should be improved or constructed to facilitate safe, clean movement to and from pasture, between paddocks, and to the water supply.

Shelter: Depending on your livestock's needs, temporary or permanent shelter during inclement weather may be appropriate. Run-in sheds, hay-bale windbreaks, forested areas or barn access all provide suitable shelter options.