

SI Aide Memoire Growing Season Planning grazing rules summary

Notebook: 5-star watershed stewardship

Created: 3/5/2013 11:34 AM

Updated: 3/5/2013 11:54 AM

Condensed by Tip Hudson

Determine what recovery period you think you need for each paddock/pasture. The greater danger is in short recovery periods, not in going a little longer in grazing period. "When in doubt, slow down."

Paddocks should not be heavily grazed at the same time of the biological cycle in two consecutive years.

Do not graze a plant twice in a row during early growth.

Do not graze more than once during late growing season without allowing time for nutrient translocation before going dormant.

Plants are overgrazed if a grazing period is too long or a recovery period is too short for root recovery to take place

In general, the shorter the grazing period and the longer the recovery period the better, provided adequate animal impact has been achieved.

Plan backwards, starting from periods when livestock nutrition or other needs are critical; lactation, for example, requires higher nutrition for cows because they are both building milk and regaining body condition to return to estrus.

Consider practical factors in planning:

1. Bare ground that needs coverage
2. Weeds to reduce by grazing
3. Toxic plants to avoid in either time or space
4. Wildlife factors, such as ground-nesting birds
5. Parasite cycles
6. Avoiding neighbor's bulls
7. Proximity to crops
8. Tourism activity

General guidelines:

1. On semi-arid rangeland, 30-90 days recovery is usually sufficient. In pastures with higher rainfall and more sod-forming grasses, 15-30 days is enough.
2. Under adverse growth conditions, 150 days rest may be necessary.
3. Grazing periods should not exceed 3 days. If they do, increase the number of paddocks using electric fence or use more active herding.

THIS IS AN OPEN-ENDED PLANNING PROCESS. WHEN PLANT GROWTH STOPS, SHIFT TO A CLOSED PLANNING PROCESS.