

Rotational Grazing

With the price of pasture land on the rise, the need for a more economic approach to grazing is clear. Many people may think that rotational grazing is a complex task. It does require more planning, however, studies have shown that you can get more than two times the production by utilizing rotational grazing. Continuous grazing (grazing to one paddock) may be easy to manage, however, you pay for it in the long run. Continuous grazing leads to selective grazing (which leads to out-of-control perennial weeds), and also contributes to over-grazing (which leads to higher seed costs). Other issues involve highly variable forage supply/quality, and a risk of erosion. You don't have to start out with a complicated 12 paddock system. Start with an easier to manage 2-4 pasture system and find out how well this proven technique works. The key is the rest period....Rotation the livestock to a new pasture at the proper time, letting the plants regrow and strengthen, is what makes rotational grazing such a profitable management tool.

Let's look closer at the "Rest Period". Sufficient time must be provided for the grazed plant to recover before another grazing. Good pasture management will constantly be looking ahead to when the recently grazed paddock can be grazed again. Allowing rest periods for all grasses, during the growing season (yes, even the most palatable grasses) permits all grasses time to regrow, and stay productive and healthy.

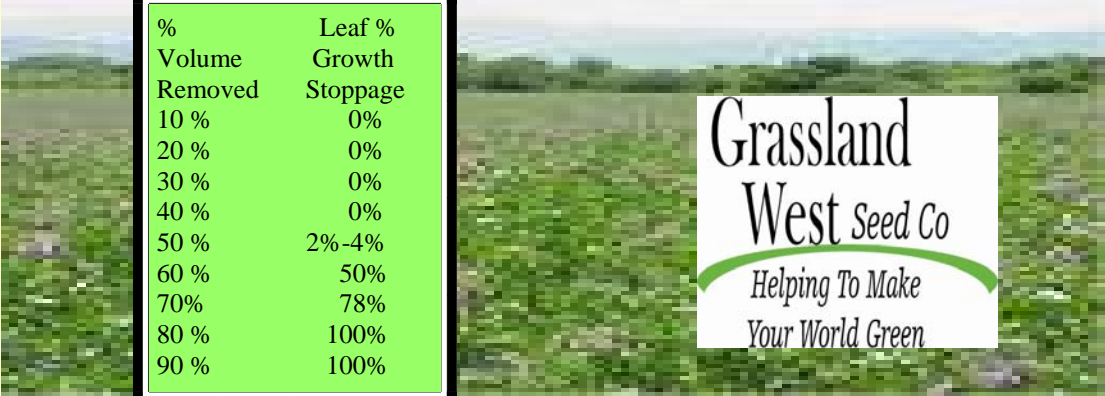
It requires a full understanding of the plant regrowth rate of each pasture grass. It can take anywhere from 20-40 days for a grazed pasture to recover. The time of year also needs to be taken into consideration, a plant may take more than 40 days to recover during the slow growth periods or periods of low moisture. Ideally, the period of rest will occur at a different time each succeeding year.

Using both cool season and warm season plants in a rotational grazing regime allows for diversity and options...and a greater rest period for both types of plants. Your grasses respond to proper rest by producing higher leaf and root volumes.

Bottom line: Take Half, Leave Half.....and let it rest!

The table below illustrates how important it is to rotate crops At 80% growth stops completely for days. When 90% of the leaf volume is removed, the root growth is stopped for 18 days.

% Volume Removed	Leaf % Growth Stoppage
10 %	0%
20 %	0%
30 %	0%
40 %	0%
50 %	2%-4%
60 %	50%
70 %	78%
80 %	100%
90 %	100%



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