

How Grazing Plans Are Carried Out on a North Florida Farm

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Our program basically starts the first of September. Pasture that will be used for fall grazing is fertilized with nitrogen to increase quality. Approximately 25% of pastures are stockpiled.

By the middle of October the pastures that are grazed short or hayed are planted to ryegrass and clover. Pastures are disked once with a grove disk, and twice if a lot of common bermudagrass is present. Pastures planned for earliest grazing are planted with a higher seed rate: 30 to 35 lb per acre. Clover may or may not be added to the early pasture. Ryegrass, clover, and fertilizer are applied in one application over the disked ground. Phosphorus and potassium are applied according to soil test. On sandy soils only $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount of potassium is applied at planting.

Calving season starts in October along with grazing of stockpiled pasture. Each stockpiled pasture is divided by electric fence into areas that will be consumed in two days.

Whole cottonseed is supplemented from the end of October through November. Usually, supplementation lasts 5 weeks.

Due to the fall and winter rains, stockpiled pastures normally play out by the first week of December. Hay is then fed until the first of March.

Winter ryegrass is ready by the first week of December and is grazed through May. December through February, ryegrass is grazed for two hours per day as a protein and energy supplement, along with hay.

The first of March, cows and calves are given access to ryegrass pasture full time. Hay feeding is discontinued. Calves and cows gain weight rapidly

during this period, and cow body condition scores increase to 6 and 7.

During April, paddocks not needed for grazing are dropped from rotation and are stockpiled for the dry month of May. If sufficient rain falls in May, then hay is cut in early June. If good grazing persists during May, calves are sold the first of June.

June through August, cows are maintained on bahiagrass pasture. No fertilizer is applied to summer pastures. These pastures have been supplied with nitrogen from clover, and phosphorus and potassium from winter pasture fertilization.

Our farm is small, and we employ a variety of forages and forage management techniques. Stockpiling and rationing are tools we use to increase grass utilization and to stretch the grazing, thereby reducing the number of days we feed hay.

Intensive grazing may not increase average daily gain but may increase total live weight gain per acre. Increased gain per acre occurs because intensive grazing generally allows a farm to increase stocking rates or set aside paddocks for hay production.

Intensive grazing also allows us more direct observation of cattle as we move them from pasture to pasture. Once cattle become accustomed to changing pastures, there is little or no problem moving them.

The principles of our operation can easily be applied to any operation; for larger operations, pastures and herds would simply be larger. I hope this brief description of our farm will leave you with more questions than answers. Use of inten-

sive grazing and stockpiling is but one technique to help make any operation more profitable.

NOTES: