

## **GRAZING MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM**



### **MANAGE 8 OR MORE PASTURES PER HERD WITH AN AVERAGE OF 3 DAYS GRAZING PER PASTURE**

#### **WHAT:**

Manage 8 or more pastures per herd with a grazing period per pasture averaging 3 days and a rest and re-growth period of 14 to 45 days. Pastures can be divided with a temporary fence if livestock are controlled. Rotations should be based on grazing heights instead of days. Days are used for estimating rotation periods. Estimated days will vary depending on time of year and rainfall. Detailed management records must be kept by recording date, field number, and days grazed.

#### **WHEN:**

Manage pastures according to growth, grazing pressure, and grazing heights. Rotation will occur from April through November. When minimum forage heights are reached, rotate until re-growth occurs or confine livestock to one field and feed supplement until fields re-grow. If livestock are confined to one field, runoff will be filtered before entering sensitive areas such as drainage ways, water bodies, wetlands, sinkholes, depressions, etc. Runoff can be filtered by another field if runoff travels 100' or more through vegetation before entering a sensitive area or runoff can be filtered by 30' of ungrazed vegetation between the confinement "sacrifice" area and the sensitive area.

#### **HOW MUCH:**

This enhancement provides an annual payment of \$20.00 per acre per year for all pasture acres included in the 3 day rotation.

#### **HOW:**

Prescribed grazing will increase forage production, persistence and quality. This practice will improve soil, water, animal, plant and air resources. The practice has the potential to increase economic returns by decreasing inputs and increasing outputs. Increased management is required.

➤ **GRASS HEIGHT:**

Maximum intake of forage is achieved when the forage height is 5 to 8 inches tall. Forages taller than the maximum grazing height (generally greater than 8 - 10 inches) lose palatability and digestibility and are more prone to damage from trampling. When forages within a rotation get taller than 10 inches then it is best to use this paddock for hay and skip ahead to the next paddock in the grazing rotation. However, harvesting a field for hay that can be grazed does not make good economic sense. An exception would be stockpiling cool season grasses in the fall.

**RECOMMENDED GRAZING HEIGHT:**

Kind of Forage	Ending Grazing Height <sup>1.)</sup>	Start Grazing Height <sup>2.)</sup>
Cool season grasses (i.e., orchardgrass and tall fescue)	3 - 4"	5 - 8"
Bermuda	2 - 3"	5 - 8"
Tall Grasses (i.e., pearl millet, sudan grass)	6 - 8"	12 - 24"

- 1.) Ending Grazing Height (when 80% of plants are desired ht.) —the forage height to rotate off.
- 2.) Start Grazing Height (when 80% of plants are desired ht.) —the maximum forage height at which grazing should begin (forages above this height should be considered for hay).

Forage heights less than recommended are acceptable during late winter (February-March) just before green up and may even encourage additional legumes.

➤ **DETERMINING WHEN TO ROTATE:**

Use the look down, look ahead, look back, and look at the weather technique.

1. **LOOK DOWN;** is the forage height within the recommended height? When forage is at or is approaching minimum grazing height, consider moving to the next field. It is better to leave too much rather than too little.
2. **LOOK AHEAD;** is the next paddock ready to graze or getting beyond grazing height? When forage in the next field is at the maximum grazing height or above consider; speeding up the rotation or cutting for hay and skipping to the next field.
3. **LOOK BACK;** are paddocks previously grazed re-growing adequately? When re-growth is inadequate either leave higher residue (higher stubble height) or rest longer.

**LOOK AT THE WEATHER;** is frost, rain or drought anticipated? When frost is predicted, avoid grazing sorghums (i.e. johnsongrass) due to prussic acid poisoning. When rain is predicted forage growth will be increasing. When grazing wet natured ground move livestock off before a rain to prevent pugging. Pugging causes:

- poor drainage – the soil will stay softer and wetter making it more susceptible to further pugging
- poor plant growth – a reduction in pasture yield
- greater fertilizer requirements
- more topsoil and contaminants to be transported by runoff to waterways.