

Pasture Improvement Tools

Why Management-intensive grazing? Our animals are already on grass.



Management-intensive grazing (MIG) rotates high density livestock through pastures for short periods of time offering them highest quality forage. Grazed paddocks are allowed enough resting time for a vigorous re-growth.

Several studies suggest that MIG presents a great opportunity to livestock producers. However, achieving the best management requires knowledge, observation and patience. It can take a year for farmers to learn the basics of the transition to MIG. But it's generally at the three-year mark that the most significant improvements in animal performance, forage yield, quality and composition are revealed.

With pastures subdivided using a portable electric fence, animals rotate grazing fresh mature forage at 6" - 8" high, leaving 2" - 4" of residual forage. After being grazed, animals move to a new paddock allowing pastures rest and recovery for several days before being occupied again.

Laneways are not recommended places for water tanks. Shade -natural or artificial- provides shelter which eases stress. Drinking water using a portable water tank connected to an inexpensive pipeline, must be brought to the paddocks where animals are grazing because walking long distances to water sources may negatively reflect on their productivity.

Economic considerations:

Several studies comparing continuous grazing and confinement vs. MIG, found the latter to be more profitable per animal, per cwt, per acre and per farm while decreasing costs. Studies mostly show that farms that use this approach have lower feed, installation and veterinary costs and, better use of the pasture resource. More pasture subdivisions enhance ecological benefits improving production but can suggest higher costs and labor.

Environmental considerations:

MIG enable farms to reduce costly fertilizer applications as animals in high stock density are able to provide most of the nutrients through manure and urine, improving soil structure and quality by directly placing great amounts of manure and urine on the land. Each adult cow can deposit over 200 lbs of nitrogen and over 100 lbs of phosphorus, potassium and calcium per year, ensuring enough fertility for plants to re-grow. Well covered soils and no overgrazing means less erosion, which also helps improve water quality.

SUCCESSFUL MIG PRINCIPLES

REST

Recovery periods between grazing's must be long enough to restore optimum pasture height..

OCCUPATION

Animal occupation in each pasture must be short enough so that the re-growth forage is not re-grazed.

REGULAR REQUIREMENTS

Animals with higher nutritional requirements (e.g.: milking cows) need the greatest amount of high quality forage.

REGULAR YIELDS

Animals that produce regular yields must not stay longer than three days on the same pasture.

LEARN MORE

www.livestockforlandscapes.com
www.uvm.edu/pasture

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Pasture Program's activities, contact Juan Alvez, Program Coordinator, at (802) 656-6116 or jalvez@uvm.edu.



University of Vermont
19 Roosevelt Highway, Suite
305
Colchester, VT 05446

