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## **Rotational Grazing**

With the cattle markets as strong as they are, people are looking for ways to efficiently run a few more head on the acres they have. The ability of pastures to perform is always a topic for some good discussion. Of course, the number of head and the number of acres always plays a part in the availability of forage available to livestock, especially when we have extreme heat, lack of rain, or the combination of both.

I have done some rotational grazing in the past few years, using electric fence to split off some of the pastures into smaller acres. This has been something that I have been able to do without a huge expense. With the SOACDF fence programs over the past few years, most everyone has some old (used) steel fence post and some used barbed wire that has been replaced by the new fence. Some of the wire is most likely in good enough condition that it can be used, as well as, some of the steel post. This is what I have been using to split off some of the pastures.

A good electric fence charger will probably provide more than adequate ability to turn cows for the entire farm. One of the main things is making sure you have it properly grounded. A good ground is important especially if we see a dry period during the coming months. One wire, high enough for the calves to get under, works well. If the calves can get under the fence easily, they will not likely tear the fence down. In addition to having less repair hours to worry about, the calves benefit from “creeping” the young tender grass that their mothers can’t get to.

The fields that I had split off into smaller paddocks performed much better last year than more acres that were not split into areas that could be rotated. I am in the process of splitting fields on another farm, with plans for more. Yes, I am sold on it.

Here is some information from The University of Minnesota’s study in 2005. Make note, that the areas that were rotated did have fertilizer, and the cost of the fertilizer is not mentioned. The pastures that I have been working with were basically treated the same when it comes to fertilizer, though some of the land does differ when it comes to slope.

To respond to this educational challenge, a demonstration project was conducted in 2005 to compare animal performance in a continuous grazing system, using no inputs, to animal performance on a pasture that was fertilized and rotationally grazed.

One pasture was divided into four fenced paddocks that were fertilized according to University of Minnesota guidelines. Electric fence and a watering system were installed so that rotational grazing could be used. This pasture consisted of 41.5 acres. For comparison, a non-fertilized continuous 400-acre pasture without fertilization was used.

When results from the two grazing systems were prepared, there were several obvious differences in pasture carrying capacity and animal performance. The rotationally grazed paddocks were able to support one cow/calf pair on 2.1 acres of land for 143 days. The pasture that was continuously grazed provided support for one cow/calf pair on 5 acres for 87 days before these cattle had to be moved because of lack of available forage.

The measure of animal performance was important. During the same 87-day grazing period, cows on the rotationally grazed paddocks gained 0.38 pounds per head per day more than cows on the continuously grazed pasture. It is estimated that suckling calves gained approximately 60 pounds per head more on the rotationally grazed paddocks.

The additional weight of the cows and calves was not the only advantage. Cows on the rotationally grazed paddocks had a greater body condition score after 87 days. This increase in body condition helps to stimulate

efficiency of forage utilization and allows cows to breed earlier in the breeding season. This translates to older and heavier calves at weaning.

The results of this demonstration from the summer of 2005 show the positive value of combining fertilization with rotational grazing. There are many pastures where the use of these management practices could improve forage production, reduce feed cost and increase profits.

## **GAP for Vegetable and Fruit Producers**

A program is being set up for vegetable and fruit growers in the near future. I am working on a date and location for GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) training for fruit and vegetable producers. I hope to have this firmed up later this week, so look for more information in next week's column. You can also look at our web page <http://adams.osu.edu> (or substitute in the name of your county). I am also on the radio a few times a week. I am now on WFTM 1240 AM every Friday at 12:10 p.m.; C-103 every Tuesday and Friday at 12:30 p.m.; and on Buckeye Country 105.5 FM every Monday and Friday at 6:55 a.m.

## **Fence Building Field Night**

Take advantage of the opportunity to learn the latest in fence construction techniques from some of the industry's most experienced representatives. We will provide an interactive, hands-on demonstration of construction of high quality woven-wire fencing. Light Refreshments will be provided, no meal. This is a free program.

The program is Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Jackson Agricultural Research Station of the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center located at 019 Standpipe Rd. Jackson, OH 45640. Contact Kenny Wells at 740-286-3803 or [wells.296@osu.edu](mailto:wells.296@osu.edu).

## **Strawberry Field Night**

Strawberry Plasticulture Field Night will be held at the OSU South Centers on Thursday, May 22, 2014 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Plasticulture and matted row strawberry field research will be showcased.

Topics to be covered will include:

- winter protection techniques
- Israeli drip irrigation demonstration and management
- row cover management
- cultivar evaluations
- pest and disease control
- Spotted Wing Drosophila monitoring and trapping
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques

Cost to attend is \$15.00. Registration deadline is May 19th. To register for the workshop, please contact Charissa McGlothlin at [mcglothlin.4@osu.edu](mailto:mcglothlin.4@osu.edu) or call 740.289.2071 ext. 132.

## **Dates to Remember**

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| May 12 | Pesticide Testing at the Old Y Restaurant at noon. Register with Ohio Dept. of Ag at 800-282-1955 or go to <a href="http://pested.osu.edu">http://pested.osu.edu</a> . This is for private and commercial applicators. |
| May 22 | Strawberry Field Night at OSU South Centers at Piketon beginning at 6:00 p.m.  |
| May 22 | Fence Building Workshop in Jackson at OARDC starting at 6:00 p.m.  |