

Controlled Grazing

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Controlled grazing or rotational grazing is an excellent way to improve the utilization of grass of a beef operation.

Research and observations reveal that cattle tend to graze in a particular area, leave it for a period of time and then come back and graze again. They do not uniformly graze over an entire pasture.

Every producer needs to make an effort to force animals to utilize as much of the available grass as possible. The cost of the grass not utilized is the same as that used by animals. The bottom line is that it is not economical to under utilize most of the grass.

The best utilization of grass is accomplished by placing a large number of animals in a small area until the grass is utilized and then move them to another area. It is not necessary to make the stocking rate extremely heavy so animals must be moved every day. It is best to move the cows in seven days or less depending on the grass available. Animals need to be moved before they come back and graze the short grass without allowing time to recover.

To implement a rotational grazing program, additional fencing will probably be required. Temporary fencing is usually the first choice. This way the fencing can be easily moved if necessary and the initial cost is less than a permanent fence.

As animals are moved from one pasture to another, don't forget to provide a way for animals to obtain water. This may be a water source in each field or an alley that will allow animals to walk to water.

Controlled grazing can increase the amount of grass being used. This is extremely important when the weather is dry or the number of animals to be grazed is large. For additional information on controlled grazing, contact the local Extension office.