

Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada

Grazing Management Opportunities for Animal Health

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My Grazing Background



The value of grazing management

- Lengthens grazing season
- Increase efficiency of grass use
- Increase soil organic matter?
- Manage forage quality
- Increase animal growth rate?
- More dollars in pocket??

Need healthy animals

How can grazing management help us with animal health???

- Practical considerations
- Managing rumen health

Common health concerns related to pasture management

- Gastro-intestinal parasites
- Pink eye
- Foot rot
- Shipping related sickness
- Routine vaccinations

Practical benefits of grazing management

• When we design our pasture system, we can choose to make it easy to move animals to a handling facility for any health treatments



Holdanca Farms Wallace, NS 500 acres – half pasture, half woodland

Practical benefits of grazing management

- Food is a great motivator
- Animals moved regularly to fresh grass become very eager to move, more calm, and the sick ones generally are the last ones through the gate
- It only takes 3 or 4 moves for most animals to learn how to move, regardless of species
- Some animal welfare programs suggest all animals must be seen every X number of days - solved



Practical benefits of grazing management

- Manage pastures so that animals have optimal body condition going into winter
- During inclement weather we can choose to graze in places that provide shelter required for out particular class of animal
 - Brush or trees for cattle in winter
 - Portable windbreaks
 - Spring lambing/calving in sheltered, south facing slopes



January 2013, AAFC Nappan



January 2013, AAFC Nappan Note hair coat, body condition

Managing the RUMEN

- Optimal ruminant health and production is only achieved with a healthy rumen
- Although rumen ecosystem is remarkably resilient, it works best with a relatively stable feed supply
 - Especially important for high production animals like dairy, finishing beef/sheep
- Can we affect this on pasture, for good or bad???

DM consumption [kg DM cow-d⁻¹] **and Nutritive value** [g kg⁻¹ DM] over 4 days of swath grazing (Baron et al. 2016)



Frequency of movement





Number of Cattle Grazing by Time of Day



Number of Cattle Grazing by Time of Day



- High density animals consumed similar proportion of grass, legume, and stems as mid density
- High density animals showed significantly greater dry matter disappearance in sward

100



Grazing high legume pastures

- Research clearly shows increased animal production with pasture containing legumes over grass alone
- If given a choice animals will select 70 to 80% legume
- Sometimes our legume levels exceed expectations
 Dry weather, grass not growing, etc.
- We worry about bloat!!

Managing bloat risk on pasture

- Introduce high legume pastures to animals that have a full rumen
- Avoid grazing practices that allow rumen to empty too much
- Avoid grazing in a way that encourages eating leaves first, then stems for an extended time
- Avoid moving in early morning after frost

-red clover with tall fescue, seeding year was dry (photo)
-finishing beef at AAFC Nappan, 65 % red clover
-growing lambs AAFC Nappan, 80% red clover
-annual ryegrass with red clover, dry year, 80% red clover



PEI Sheep farmer:

-ewe lambs at 320 grams per day, native grass
-ram lambs at 480 grams per day, red clover pasture
-ewes outside year round, pasture until snow too deep

30 Second Summary

- Practical health benefits to grazing management
 - Animals moved regularly are more calm, sick ones stand out
 - Design fence and lane systems to make handling animals easy: treat sick, deworm, vaccinate, etc.
 - Plan grazing so animals protected from inclement weather
- Managing the rumen for optimal health and performance
 - Frequent moves to high quality forage keeps rumen working at peak, minimize change in quality
 - Allows use of high legume/high quality pasture

