



Managing Pastures - Readers' Note

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Setting up an effective grazing management system

These next sections discuss what is needed to put the grazing management options discussed previously into practice.

Setting up your farm for controlled grazing can be as sophisticated or as inexpensive as you wish. The principle is to be able to control grazing, and that takes only a few 'hot' wires.

Establish semi-permanent blocks small enough to allow no more than 2 days' grazing in winter. Otherwise, use a back fence. These blocks can be further split into halves to give daily strips of pasture or into quarters to give a strip each milking. The fences need be only a single electric wire, which you can easily drop or roll up for cultivation, for example, or go under when shifting sprinklers.

The number of blocks depends on the optimum grazing interval, which is the time taken for ryegrass to reach $2\frac{1}{2}$ –3 leaves per tiller. For example, if it takes ryegrass 40 days to grow 3 new leaves per tiller, then you split your ryegrass area into 20 two-day blocks. Note: the area of

each block is not an issue. If each block has insufficient pasture, either your stocking rate is too high or you need to give more supplements.

To estimate the time to reach the 3-leaf stage in the coldest month of the year (usually July), either look at a few leaves or use the average temperature for your district as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \text{ leaf-appearance intervals} &= 3 \times (20 - \\ &0.55 \times (\text{max. temp.} + \text{min. temp.}) \div 2) \\ &= 3 \times (20 - 0.55 \times \text{average temperature}) \end{aligned}$$

To achieve correct timing and intensity of grazing and provide adequate feed for your cows, you need to give supplements if pasture on offer is inadequate, or close up blocks for silage (or other stock) if pasture on offer is too much.

Even if you have good irrigation potential, you should store 3t of silage (1t DM) per cow per year. In a normal year only $\frac{2}{3}$ of this will be used; the rest can be 'rolled over' to be used in a poorer year.