Seasonal Grazing Management Strategies

Spring Green Up

Delay fertilization until late spring if needed to extend the growth curve.

Begin grazing the first paddock at 3-4" and move rapidly until you get to a paddock that has reached the desired turn in height of 6-10".

Normally, the first 3 months of the grazing season you will only need to graze about 50% of your paddocks.

Options:
- Cut hay on remaining 50% once then put back in rotation
- Graze another group of animals on the other 50%
- Use a leader/follower grazing plan letting high producing animals top graze and lower producers clean up
- Increase acreage of warm season grasses to delay green-up and lengthen productive period
- Strip-grazing stockpiled fescue in the winter on some of the paddocks will delay and slowdown spring regrowth
- Setting aside the areas that were strip-grazed in winter for hay, then grazing through summer, and setting aside for stockpiling in fall has worked pretty good most years

Don’t tighten up grazing too soon- keep paddocks larger and move through quicker allowing animals to top graze and build some reserve.

Don’t worry about grazing utilization (harvest efficiency) at this time - we can make up for that when growth slows.

Mid – Late Summer

Start intensifying grazing management.

Recovery is slower, rest periods need to be longer.

Shoot for higher utilization of grass.

Management Options:
- Stay longer in each paddock
- Move when grazed down to desired height
- Subdivide or strip graze within each paddock to achieve higher utilization and extend rest period

Need to be able to graze paddock to desired level before regrowth starts.

If paddocks are too large, may have to use a forward wire and a back wire to prevent grazing new growth - water becomes a more critical factor.
Late Summer • Drought

Make maximum use of plants such as lespedeza, bermudagrass, caucasian bluestem

Get really intensive- stripgraze each paddock taking grass to minimum grazing height

Calculate reserve herd days or cow days grazing left

Start culling - beat the rush to the sale barn!

Wean early- run weaned calves ahead of dry cows and supplement them

Let dry cows have lowest quality forage and clean up pastures

As conditions worsen, feed hay on paddocks to supplement pasture- resist the temptation to buy feed

When you are out of grass and hay sell all of your livestock

Then it will rain tomorrow!!

Fall•Winter

Apply 40-60 lbs. N to cool season grasses

Defer grazing(stockpile) 1 acre of fescue per animal unit

Rotationally graze through the rest of the cool season pastures

Surplus warm season forage may be grazed after a hard freeze if needed- will need a protein supplement

Once grass growth has quit and rotational pastures are fully utilized start strip-grazing stockpiled fescue

Calculate forage available per acre, figure daily forage required for the herd, use a 70% utilization rate if moving every 2 days, figure the size strip required for the time period

Example: 3000 lbs. forage/acre

60 cows @ 30 lbs./cow/day = 1800 lb required/day

70% utilization = 1800/.70 = 2571 lbs on offer

2571/3000=.86 acre per day required

2 day graze period= 1.72 acre
40 acre field 1320x1320
43560x1.72/1320=56.76 or 57’ per strip for 2 days

Start with the first strip closest to the water point, pull a single portable wire across the area to give the calculated area needed, after this is grazed down move the wire forward the required distance, there is no need for a backfence as there is no regrowth occurring

The Real Cost Saver
Stockpiling and Stripgrazing
Tall Fescue

1 AC Fertilized Fall Grown Tall Fescue Will Meet the Nutrient Requirements of a 1000 lb. Cow for 75 Days

60 lb N Applied To 3” Fescue Aug. 15 Produced 3000 lbs/ AC x 75% Utilization = 2250 lbs. Available/30 lb/Cow/Day = 75 @ $0.28/ lb N Cost = $0.22/Cow/Day Cost