Summary

There are many forms, variations and names of rotational grazing concepts. Among them are controlled grazing, time-controlled grazing, cell grazing, Voisin grazing, Savory grazing, short duration grazing, high intensity-low frequency grazing, and intensive grazing. Jim Gerrish, Forage Systems Research Center, Linneus, Missouri coined the new name for this approach to grassland management: "Management Intensive Grazing" with the emphasis being that it is the management that is intensive. This puts the focus of the system on the manager and not on the components of the system. Management Intensive Grazing then is a thought process, a planning process and a management system, not just a fencing system.

To manage grasslands effectively we need to understand the plant-soil-water-animal interrelationships. We can manage this complex ecosystem for profitability and environmental sustainability only if we understand the interactions of all the variables. In other words what effect each component has on the other and the whole and what reaction each action will produce.

In today's society we have to realize that farming is not only a way of life but it is a business, big business. If we are to stay competitive in the business world we have to plan for our success. No one plans to fail, they just fail to plan. If we are to be economically and environmentally sustainable, we can't leave it to chance, we must plan for it. A simple 5 step planning process was used to develop these demonstration farms that can be used by anyone.

The Planning Process

1. STATE YOUR GOALS - economic, production, environmental, landscape and social - write them down, be realistic
2. INVENTORY YOUR RESOURCES - personnel, land, water, fencing, facilities, equipment, forages, animals - what is needed and what is best suited
3. DEVELOP A PLAN - using resources efficiently to meet goals
4. IMPLEMENT PLAN - make things happen, get started
5. MONITOR, RECORD DATA AND MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES - be observant of what is going on, write it down, use records and projections to make adjustments

Stay Flexible

As you read through the information on the individual demonstration farms you realized they were varied in size and type of operation. Some were small, some were rather large. Some were full-time farmers, others were part-time. Some were cow/calf producers, some were dairy producers, some were stocker graziers and one was even a sheep producer. It was our intent to try to get a cross section of the types and sizes of operations found in the Ozarks. All different soil types and topography were included also. From this demonstration we can ascertain that management intensive grazing is a management tool that can be used to achieve economic and environmental goals. Management intensive grazing will work on any size and type of operation. As with most tools it requires some knowledge and skill to apply.
Management intensive grazing may not work for every type of operator. As varied as they were, the demonstration farmers did have some things in common that made them successful. I have identified 5 different factors that I feel led to success:

1. Being open minded - receptive to new ideas, new ways to do things
2. Having a positive attitude - you have to believe it will work first
3. Being observant - knowing what was happening
4. Managing by a plan - you have to know where you are going and how to get there or you’ll never know if you make it
5. Staying flexible - knowing when changes are needed and making them

Success comes with experience. Experience comes by doing. Don’t let being afraid of making mistakes keep you from trying management intensive grazing. You will make mistakes. Everyone does. Turn those mistakes into learning experiences and profit from them. Get started!