

Grazing Assistance Available by the NWNY Team

Valuable for cost sharing programs and increasing net returns

Grass, when grazed, holds promise for reducing cost and increasing net returns. Six years of study through Cornell's Dairy Farm Business Summaries indicates dairy farms utilizing management intensive grazing (MIG) have consistently experienced the potential to return more income to management and labor.

MIG is not to be confused with the rotational grazing of 50 years ago. Using the modern technology of low impedance energizers, polywire, and convenient tread in posts; the managed grazing of today allows livestock producers to harvest higher yields of higher quality forage at lower cost. Not only is the cost of harvesting significantly reduced but also, forage storage and manure handling costs during grazing are eliminated.

Thanks to an agreement with the Finger Lakes RC&D Council, The NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team is now in a position to offer prescribed grazing plans in Monroe, Wayne, Ontario, and Yates Counties. These plans will meet USDA/NRCS specifications allowing cooperating landowners or operators additional consideration for certain cost sharing programs. The Prescribed Grazing Plans are designed to meet the objectives of the land operator and must meet with the operator's acceptance for use before they are considered complete.

Wide Range of Application

Prescribed Grazing plans are typically created for use with MIG. However, Prescribed Grazing plans can also be produced for continuous grazing or something in between that might be needed to meet the producer's objectives.

Dairy, beef, sheep, goat, and equine plans have been implemented. As in dairy, increased productivity and/or cost savings, not to mention healthier pastures, can be experienced with just about any kind of foraging animal.

What is involved?

The process begins with an on-farm interview to ascertain the needs and objectives of the producer. The pastures are walked in order to make pertinent observations of soil conditions, topography, and other considerations.

Utilizing aerial photos, soils maps, soil descriptions and the information from the interview a plan is formulated that assists the land operator to obtain that balance of grass production and animal carrying capacity that optimizes overall productivity.

Topography, air flow, soil drainage, animal movement and handling, water availability, machinery accessibility, and the operator's objectives are just some of the considerations included in the plan.

Benefits

Higher yields of higher quality forage are the most notable benefits at the outset. Lower equipment costs are often reported. Grazing is often cited as being more environmentally friendly. It is also more family friendly – opening a gate is safer than dealing with a PTO shaft. Another common observation is that the neighbors like it, too.

More Information

If you would like to learn more about this valuable service simply contact any NWNY Team - Cornell Cooperative Extension member, your Soil and Water Conservation District, or your USDA/NRCS District Conservationist.