

Pasture Management

Pasture management will result in high forage yields year after year, less weeds, less mud, better water holding capacity of the soil, & will protect ground and surface water. These practices include:

- Correcting nutrient deficiencies that limit plant growth
- Resting and rotating pastures
- Removing livestock from pastures during months of heavy rainfall
- Picking up manure in concentrated areas, storing it in a covered pile, and spreading it at the right rate & the right time of year
- Putting down a footing material in concentrated areas to address mud and water issues

Applying Manure and Fertilizer

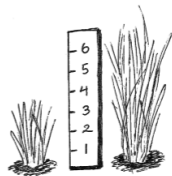
The best time to apply manure or fertilizer is during cool, overcast weather when soil is moist and when grass is actively growing (March - September). It is recommended to avoid application during heavy rainfall months (October - February) when the grass cannot uptake nutrients and the majority of manure or fertilizer you apply will go into your groundwater or runoff into nearby wetlands and streams.

Rule of Thumb: Take Half, Leave Half

Livestock should be turned out on pasture when the grass is at least 6 - 8 inches tall and removed when the grass is 3 - 4 inches tall. Grasses store most of their energy in the first 3 - 4 inches of above ground growth, so preventing overgrazing ensures that the grass will have enough energy reserves left after grazing to have rapid regrowth. Grazing lower than 3 inches can delay regrowth by up to 6 weeks & preferred grasses that need those energy reserves will disappear from the pasture over time.

Rotational Grazing System

Rotational grazing involves dividing a larger pasture into several, separately fenced paddocks, and then rotating livestock through each paddock one after another. Temporary fencing is often used. Rotational grazing forces livestock to graze more uniformly instead of selectively overgrazing only



the grasses they prefer the most. By removing the livestock when the grass is 3-4 inches tall and allowing each paddock the right amount of resting time, regrowth will be faster and more vigorous. Rest and rotation will also increase tillering of sod-forming grasses to minimize any bare spots in the pasture.

Month	Rest Time
April and May	14-21 days rapid growth
June	21-30 days fast growth
July and August	45-60 days delayed growth
September	30-45 days slow growth

How do you determine how many paddocks you need or what key grass species to manage for? We can help.

Footing Areas

Footing areas are when you put down a footing material, like gravel, sand, hog fuel, or concrete in areas where livestock are confined, fed, or watered. In Western Washington when the soil is saturated with water during the months with heavy rainfall, grasses go dormant and focus on critical root growth for next season. Continuous hoof pressure and trampling remove soil pores where air and water are stored, causing compaction, ponding, and soil erosion. In these conditions, you will see less grass growth year after year, more bare soil, and more weed pressure. Pastures need to rest during this critical growth period in order to be productive the following season. A confined area with footing attached to the barn will provide a continuous area for livestock to stay dry during the months where we want to keep livestock off the pasture. This area should be located on higher, well-draining ground and should have grass acting as a filter strip around the perimeter.

Mowing and Harrowing

After a paddock has been grazed, it is recommended to mow the remaining grass at a high setting and drag the pasture with a harrow. Mowing will reduce weed pressure, promote tillering, and prevent grass from going to seed. Dragging the pastures will evenly distribute the nutrients from the manure and encourage more uniform grazing.





Pasture Management Schedule

OCTOBER - FEBRUARY

- ☐ Restrict livestock to exercise area to rest pastures during rainy months.
- ☐ Install/maintain gutters and downspouts to divert water away from livestock areas.
- ☐ Gather outside manure often.
Manure=Mud
- ☐ Store and cover manure pile at least 100 feet from well head, stream, or wetland. Have a grass buffer around the perimeter to catch any runoff from the pile.
- ☐ This is the best time to get a **Soil or Manure Test** to know how much to apply and when.

MARCH-APRIL

- ☐ This is the time to apply manure or fertilizer at recommended rates. Apply a third of your total composted manure.
- ☐ Reserve an **Equipment Rental** to apply nutrients.
- ☐ Set up temporary fencing or make fencing repairs before beginning your grazing for the year.
- ☐ If the soil is no longer saturated and the grass has reached a height of 6 to 8 inches, you can begin grazing. Remove livestock when the grass is 3 to 4 inches tall.

MAY

- ☐ This is the time to apply manure, or fertilizer at recommended rates. Apply a third of your total composted manure.
- ☐ Rotate livestock between paddocks. Remember: Start grazing at 6-10 inches and stop at 3-4 inches. Rest period 14-21 days.
- ☐ Mow pasture after grazing to clip weeds and to prevent grass from going to seed.
- ☐ Harrow pastures to evenly distribute manure.
- ☐ Schedule a fall site visit for assistance with your pasture.

JUNE

- ☐ Pull or clip invasive weeds.
- ☐ Continue to rotate livestock between paddocks. Rest Period 21-30 days.
- ☐ Continue to mow paddocks after grazing to clip weeds and to prevent grass from going to seed.
- ☐ Continue to harrow pastures to evenly distribute manure.
- ☐ As pasture production increases, avoid under grazing by mowing or cutting hay.
- ☐ Schedule a site visit for assistance in planning confinement areas and winter manure storage.

JULY-AUGUST

- ☐ This is the best time to get a **Soil or Manure Test** to know how much to apply and to start planning for fall pasture applications.
- ☐ As pasture production slows down, avoid overgrazing and use exercise area. Rest period: 30-45 days.
- ☐ Prepare confinement area.
- ☐ Prepare manure storage area.
- ☐ Order seed, lime, and fertilizer based on recommended rates for fall pasture applications.

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ This is the time to apply manure or fertilizer at recommended rates. Apply a third of your total composted manure.
- ☐ Reserve an **Equipment Rental** to apply nutrients.
- ☐ Broadcast or drill seed pastures with recommended rates and recommended seed mixes.
- ☐ Continue to graze, mow, and drag pastures. As the grass goes dormant and the soil becomes saturated, restrict livestock to exercise area and rest pastures.