

Grazing Plan Considerations

Consider the following when developing a prescribed grazing plan:

- Landowner's Objectives – For any prescribed grazing plan to work, the producer's primary objective must be identified and adequately addressed.
- Livestock Producer's Time – Consider available time when developing a grazing system. If producers are only able to check on livestock every few days or weekly, then the plan must be developed according to the producer's time availability.
- Livestock Producer's Management Ability – Consider the time and management abilities of the landowner/operator when developing a grazing system - a prescribed grazing plan requires committed management skills. It is not just moving animals every so many days; producers need to be able and willing to monitor the forage base and move livestock accordingly.
- Animal Species – Determine the species of animal that are grazing. Are there more than one age class i.e. mature cows and young heifers. Is there only one herd or are there multiple herds? What differentiates the herds? Are there multiple species i.e. cows and goats, so that extra considerations of forage species or grazing heights are accounted for?
- Soils – Where possible, avoid placing fields/paddocks across different soil types to reduce differential grazing. For some soils, this won't make much difference, but may make a big difference for other soils; for example, transitions from deeper to thin soils may have different forages and growth patterns that will lead to differential grazing.
- Forage Base – In Indiana, the predominant forages need to be cool season grasses. Clovers should be present and may need enhanced. Types of clovers will depend on animal species and soil drainage. Warm season grasses can be a component of the system but should not be more than 15% of the total acreage. Annuals can be used as a supplement and should be planned to match the season of use. i.e. warm season annuals for summer growth or cool season for fall use.
- Topography – Strive for topographical uniformity in field/paddock layout to promote uniform grazing. Consider aspect when planning early spring grazing.
- Special Features – Consider roads, streams, ponds, and wooded areas. Wooded areas with greater than 30% canopy grow very little usable forage and are subject to issues such as erosion and poisonous plants. Alternative uses such as forest products management and/or wildlife habitat should be evaluated.
- Source and Location of Water – Strive to reduce the distance animals travel to water. Locate water to reduce negative impacts such as trailing. Desired walking distances to water should be 800 feet or less for most grazing livestock and not over 1200 feet.
- Location of Supplemental Feeding Areas – Consider effects on resource base and grazing distribution when locating feeding areas. Also consider storage requirements,

labor, access and use of heavy use area protection. There are usually easier ways to do things – think outside the box.

- Fencing – Consider the location, condition, and type of existing fences. Set paddocks are easier to manage; linear type paddocks or systems with the use of temporary fence provide much more flexibility or variability when paired up with some permanent interior fences.
- Working Facilities – Consider location of working facilities, such as corrals, when laying out a prescribed grazing system.
- Weather Conditions – Consider the use of shade when designing a grazing system. Shelter may be needed for livestock in inclement weather. A wind break is usually more important than cover in winter.
- Wildlife – evaluate the impact to wildlife that may utilize the grazing areas. Varying heights of forages left behind benefit more species of wildlife. Animal impact is a wildlife management tool.