

IMPACT

 University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Management Intensive Grazing Works Well In North Central Idaho

The Situation

The Camas Prairie of North Central Idaho is ideally suited for growing grass. Rainfall in excess of 20 inches annually along with moderate spring and summer temperatures create an ideal climate for the growing of cool season grasses.

Pasture and rangelands are productive but producers need to look at managing their grazing lands more intensely to improve grass stands and forage yield. There is an opportunity to increase the stocking rates, increase the pounds produced per acre and increase the return per acre on pasture ground by intensively grazing it with owned cattle or by leasing the grass to other producers.

Our Response

To address this situation, a management intensive grazing demonstration was conducted during the 2001 growing season. The goal was to demonstrate how this system works and what can be expected in terms of production per acre.

Jim Church, University of Idaho Extension Educator, cooperated with Grangeville area cattle producer Jeff Wilkins to conduct a management intensive grazing demonstration. Twenty-eight acres of a timothy hayfield was divided into 7 paddocks each approximately 4 acres in size. The field was divided using a two-strand electric fence.

The plan called for 64 head of calves to be grazed on the pasture from May 1 to August 1. The seven paddocks were grazed one at a time for three days. Then the cattle were moved to the next paddock for three days. Each paddock was grazed on a 21-day rotation.

The calves were weighed when they were first turned out on the pasture and then weighed again when they were removed. Gain for the period was recorded and a pasture rent charge of \$0.25 cents per pound gained was assessed. An analysis was made of pounds of beef produced per acre and economic return per acre.

Program Outcomes

The 64 calves were placed on the pasture on May 2, 2001, with an average weight of 488 pounds. They were removed on July 20th, 2001 with an average weight of 639. The total weight gain was 9,740 pounds or 165 pounds per calf. The pounds of calf produced per acre was 348 pounds. Dollars generated were \$2,435, or \$81 per acre.

The average daily gain per calf was 2.36 pounds, with a stocking rate of 1.9 head per acre.

First-year results indicated that management intensive grazing generated four times more income per acre than a six-month continuous grazing system. Continuous grazing with a stocking rate of

0.25 head per acre results in an economic return in pasture rent of \$20 per acre.

Table 1. Intensive Grazing System Specifications

Acres Grazed	# Of Paddocks	Days Grazed	# Of Calves	Stocking Rate/Acre
28	7	70	64	1.9

Table 2. Calf Performance on Intensive Grazing Demonstration

Avg. In Wt.	Avg. Out Wt.	Total Wt. Gain	Wt. Gain Per Acre	Avg/Calf Wt. Gain	Avg/Calf ADG	Gross Return/Acre
488	639	9740	348	165	2.36	\$87

For More Information

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