Grazing Management – Different Strategies

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Cattle are important

- Keeping land in grasses reduces erosion and improves water quality
- Productive, well managed uses of grasslands can be economical
- Cattle costs and grazing costs are increasing
- Cow numbers are decreasing
JANUARY 1 TOTAL CATTLE INVENTORY
U.S., Annual

2009 = 94.5 Million Head
-1.6 Percent

Livestock Marketing Information Center
Data Source: USDA/NASS

C-N-01
01/30/09

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension
Southern Iowa Counties

• Cow herd has decreased from 1.98 million (1970’s) to under 900 thousand in Iowa (current)

• Most SC Iowa counties decreased from 30,000 to under 20,000 beef cows

• Trend continues
SPGA summary

-There are 8 financial measures capable of explaining over 82% of farm-to-farm variation in Return to Labor & Management.

-Feed Cost was the most influential cost item determining profit or loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feed Cost</td>
<td>.567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depreciation Cost</td>
<td>.086</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Cost</td>
<td>.049</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calf weight</td>
<td>.046</td>
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<td>Capital charge</td>
<td>.024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calf price</td>
<td>.027</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weaning percentage</td>
<td>.017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herd size</td>
<td>.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.823</td>
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</table>
Feed Costs

Summer Grazing = $75 per cow
183 days => $0.41 per day

Winter stored feed = $132 per cow
122 days => $1.09 per day

Feed costs = 60% of cow herd costs

Source 2000-2004 SPA Summary
Feed Costs - Now

Summer Grazing = $145 per cow
183 days => $0.80 per day

Winter stored feed = $183 per cow
122 days => $1.50 per day

Forecasts Feed costs = 70-80% of total costs
Losing grazing acres

- To row crop
- To recreation
- To investors
- Costs increase as grazing management decreases
What are the goals for grazing?

• Optimize productivity?

• Manage plant diversity and habitat?

• Mix of both management plans across the landscape
Grazing Recommendations – optimizing production

• Use rotational grazing
  – Less acres per cow
  – More pounds per acre
  – More diverse pastures
  – More ground cover, maintain forage heights
  – Less erosion, better water
Extended grazing

• More grazing days

• Less expensive winter feeding

• Cattle less concentrated

• Improved water quality
Grazing riparian areas

• Can flash graze

• Graze stream paddocks for short duration

• Erosion and water quality not impacted in well designed grazing plans
Grazing Management

• Improves cattle feed availability, reduces costs
• Protects soil and water
• Positive for some wildlife species
• Does not meet the needs of some habitat management goals
Wildlife and grazing – plant diversity, habitat

- Manage underutilized acres
- Increase available grazing acres
- Provide disturbance and increase plant diversity
- Build cooperation and set goals
Grazing and wildlife

• Many recreational farms are under managed
• Grazing can be an important part
• Both livestock producers and landowners would need to adapt
Livestock owners

• Benefit from accessing more forage at reasonable cost

• Will not graze for full utilization

• Animals are a tool to manage the land, need to plan how much grazing

• Can help home pastures recover
Landowners

• Get a local producer to watch things and help manage

• Use cattle to help get the disturbance and plant diversity

• Build relationship with reputable producer and communicate

• May be some added income
CRP and Grazing

- Managed Grazing on CRP
  - Split Option
    - Graze **early** April 1 – May 14
    - Graze **late on same land** August 2 – September 30
    - 25% payment reduction
    - Only 1/3 of the acres each year or all of the acres every 3 years
Early Spring Graze Down the Old Grass
Can Get Messy if it’s Rainy
Grazed in early Spring
CRP Managed Grazing

- Less likely with higher contract rates
- Fence and water are usually a concern
- Could be part of an on-going management plan
Grazing for plant diversity

Forage quality concerns – may not work for all classes of cattle

Balancing nesting season and livestock grazing

Fence and water

What is a fair grazing fee?
Energy Requirements of Beef Cows Calving in Different Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
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<th>Sep</th>
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<td>NE reqt., Mcal/day</td>
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<td>February calving</td>
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<td>August calving</td>
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Forage Production or Availability in Different Months

- Cool season grass
- Legumes
- Warm season grass
- Stockpiled gr-leg (Hay equiv.)
- Corn stalks (Hay equiv.)
Grazing partnerships

• Work with neighbors to use cattle on ungrazed sites
  – Targeted grazing to provide disturbance and structure
  – Fill gaps in year-round forage supply

• Continue to graze home pastures
  – More rest
  – More ground cover
Cattle:
80 cows
20 1st and 2nd calf heifers
24 heifers
3 bulls

Forage: (Needs 118 tons of hay)
100 ac summer pasture
150 ac summer graze/winter stockpile
200 ac corn stalks
Cattle:
- 80 cows
- 20 1st and 2nd calf heifers
- 24 heifers
- 3 bulls

Forage: (Needs 48 tons hay)
- 100 ac summer pasture
- 150 ac summer graze/winter stockpile
- 200 ac corn stalks
- 80 acres of neighbors stockpiled in fall and spring