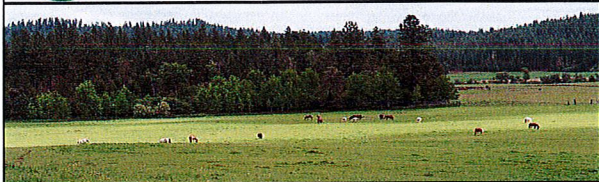




SKAGIT
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SOIL • WATER • WOODLAND



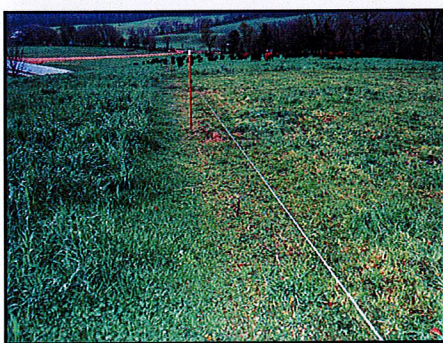
- Growing more grass for your livestock will lower your annual feed bills.
- One acre of productive pasture can provide two tons of feed over a growing season!!

PASTURE MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Why Manage Pastures?

- When livestock are allowed to continuously graze pastures, grass plants don't have a chance to adequately rest and recover.
- As a result, the quality and amount of forage you gain from your pastures will decline over time.
- If grazing goes unmanaged, livestock will overgraze the preferred grasses until only the less desirable grasses and weeds remain.

Tips

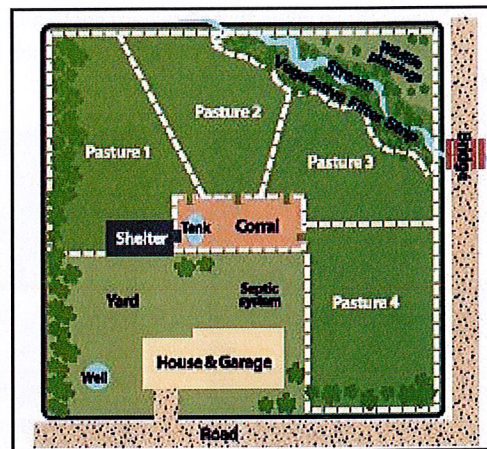


Take Half, Leave Half—Managing Grass Height

- Grasses store the energy they need to grow in the lower three inches of the plant.
- Allowing livestock to graze below three inches will severely stunt grass growth.
- Use the "Take Half, Leave Half" rule of thumb.
- Livestock should be turned out on pasture when the grass height is **six to eight inches** and removed from the pasture when grass has been grazed down to **three to four inches**.
- Think of the bottom three inches of the plant as an 'energy bank', which should be left for plant use, not animal feed.

Rotational Grazing

- Rotational grazing is when you take a larger pasture, break it up into smaller sections with cross fencing and rotate animals.
- Start animals in the first pasture when grass has reached **six to eight inches**.
- Move them to the next pasture when they have grazed it down to **three inches**.
- Once the animals have been rotated through all the available pastures, place them in a confinement area until the first pasture has reached **six to eight inches again**. (Read more about confinement areas on the back.)



Mowing and Dragging

- After a section of pasture has been grazed, mow the remaining grass to a uniform height of three inches.
- This will help stimulate equal growth of all plants and minimize weeds.
- After mowing, drag the manure piles to equally distribute nutrients.

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Create a Confinement Area

- A confinement area is a gravel or hogfuel area that is used to contain animals and keep them off pasture.
- This will allow you to protect your pastures from soil compaction, mud, overgrazing and weeds. Animals should be placed in a confinement area:
- Late fall through early spring (October-March), when grasses are dormant and soil is damp and easily compacted.
- During the times in the growing season when all of your pastures have been grazed down to three inches.



Applying Compost or Fertilizer

- In order to grow, grass takes nutrients from the soil.
- If these nutrients are not replaced, growth will slow and weeds will thrive.
- Nutrients can be added back to the system by applying compost or fertilizer.
- Compost can be applied April through October when the grass is actively growing.
- If compost is applied at other times of the year, the nutrients will wash away before the plants have an opportunity to use them.



Apply a half inch of compost at a time. Do not apply more than 2 to 3 inches per year

Soil Testing

- How much compost, fertilizer and lime you apply and the time of year you apply, should be based on the results of a soil test.
- Contact the Skagit Conservation District, and we can connect you with a local soil testing consultant.

Weed Control

- The best way to control weeds is to use the management practices above to produce healthy, productive pastures.
- Weeds thrive when there are bare spots and grasses aren't healthy enough to compete.
- It is important to be able to identify common pasture weeds and remove them when they first appear.



Buttercup



Tansy Ragwort



Bull Thistle



Scotch Broom

Seasonal Management Calendar

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not turn livestock out until ground is firm and grass is 6-8" tall. • Rotate livestock between pastures, do not graze below 3". • Apply compost 1/2-1". • Mow and drag pastures once grass has been grazed to 3". • Check for and control weeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue rotational grazing system, (maintain 3" grass height). You may need to remove livestock from pastures and feed hay if dry weather causes pastures to go dormant. • Mow and drag pastures at the end of each grazing cycle. • Check for and control weeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test soil. • Apply compost 1/2-1". This is the time of year to apply lime. • Animals should be removed from the pasture when all grass is grazed down to 3", when soils become wet, or by November 1 to allow plants to produce leaf growth for winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use confinement area, do not allow livestock to have access to pastures during the winter. • Plan next year's grazing strategy