

PASTURE MANAGEMENT



One acre of productive pasture can provide two tons of feed over a growing season!!

Why Manage Pastures?

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



Take Half, Leave Half—Managing Grass Height

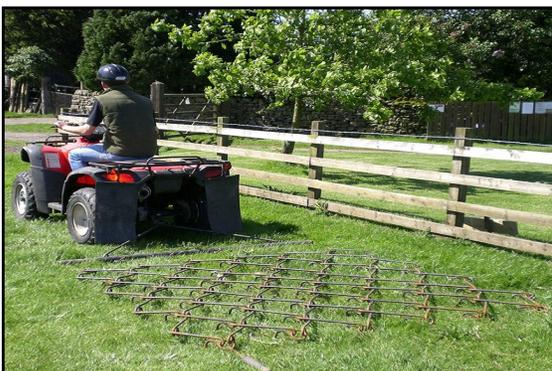
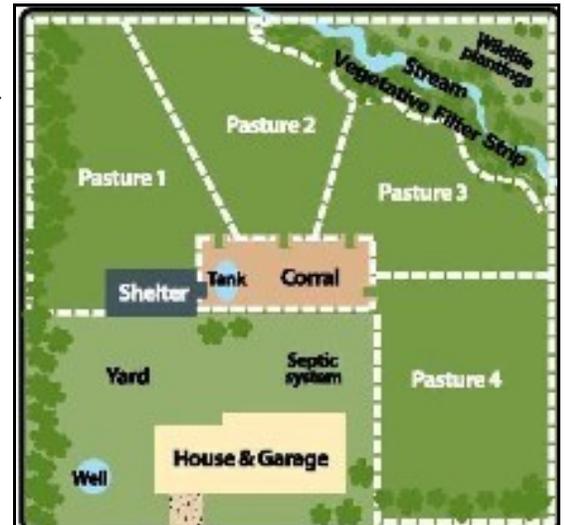
Grasses store the energy they need to grow in the lower three inches of the plant. Allowing livestock to graze below three inches will severely stunt grass growth. Think of the bottom three inches of the plant as an 'energy bank', which should be left for plant use, not animal feed.

-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

Rotational Grazing

Rotational grazing is when you take a larger pasture, break it up into smaller sections with cross fencing and rotate animals.

1. Start animals in the first pasture when grass has reached **6-8 in.**
2. Move them to the next pasture when they have grazed it down to **3 in.**
3. Once the animals have been rotated through all the available pastures, place them in a confinement area until the first pasture has reached **6-8 inches again.** (Please see our Heavy Use Areas for Livestock for more information on confinement areas)



Mowing and Dragging

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

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*



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 for a soil test.*

Weed Control

The best way to control weeds is to use the management practices above to produce healthy, productive pastures. Weeds thrive in pasture's bare spots or when 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> Do not turn livestock out until ground is firm and grass is 6-8" tall. <input type="checkbox"/> Rotate livestock between pastures, do not graze below 3". <input type="checkbox"/> Apply compost 1/2-1". <input type="checkbox"/> Mow and drag pastures once grass has been grazed to 3". <input type="checkbox"/> Check for and control weeds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Mow and drag pastures at the end of each grazing cycle. <input type="checkbox"/> Check for and control weeds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Test soil. <input type="checkbox"/> Apply compost 1/2-1". This is the time of year to apply lime. <input type="checkbox"/> 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use confinement area, do not allow livestock to have access to pastures during the winter. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan next year's grazing strategy |