



# Cow-Calf Management Guide

## IV. Grazing Season—Range

**Management Objective**—Manage cattle and feed resources to provide adequate nutrition for the cattle and assure yield of forage for future use.

**Species**—A classification of plants that are the same.

**Energy stored**—The carbohydrates that are stored in the roots of the plant from the previous year's growth.

### Points to Remember

- Planning the grazing season and evaluating the past grazing season are important parts of the total ranch management plan. **CL108, 304, 500, 502, 545, 599, 1110**
- There is no substitute for knowing the identification of the important plant *species* on your range. **CL304, 505, 550**
- Understanding the plants on the range is as important as understanding the cattle that graze them. **CL505, 542**
- Green plants are the foundation of all life. Understanding how they grow and how grazing management affects growth is basic to range management. **CL596**
- The amount of new spring growth depends on the amount of *energy stored* the previous season. **CL545**
- Energy or food reserves of perennial plants will be at their seasonal low soon after early spring growth starts. **CL594**
- The plants must get the opportunity to grow past the early spring growth stage and start to restore or put back energy that is used. **CL596**

**Inherent**—Natural patterns and tastes of different livestock.

**Species composition**—The various percentages of the different kinds of plants that make up the plant cover.

**Range improvement**—Those additions that are not natural to the range.

- By knowing your major grasses and how they grow, you will be able to set the most advantageous time to graze each area. You will also be able to predict the level of use the plant will tolerate and still produce well. **CL505**
- When you know *inherent* grazing preferences and adjust season of use and numbers of stock, you can manage grazing to increase some plant species and decrease others. **CL520, 535, 1100**
- Matching the nutrient demands of livestock and the nutrients supplied by range forage comprises a real balancing act for a considerable portion of the year. **CL300, 545, 628, 629**
- *Species composition* on the range has a great bearing on the forage value obtained from it. **CL505, 542, 545**
- After the optimum combination of nutrients occurs in the forage, the manager has the options of moving stock to areas of less mature plants, supplementing that forage, or modifying the demands (e.g., weaning the calves or taking off yearlings). **CL317, 318, 327, 545**
- Drought in the period after calving and remaining through several months can delay a cow's breeding for 3 months or longer. The manager should plan to provide cows a good feed source to keep them on schedule. **CL1120, 1130, 1140, 1170, 1175**
- If you have made *range improvements* on your allotments in the past, keep good records of the impact they have had, both on the resource itself and on animal production. **CL520, 536, 540, 541**

## Good Management Practices

### Spring

1. Record when each species starts to grow. This will help you project when ranges will be safe to begin spring grazing that year. Build an initiation-of-growth record over several years. You will find it helpful in long-range planning. **CL500, 505, 612, 626**
2. Monitor relative development rates for forage plants. This should help you assess whether adjustments in grazing plans will be necessary. **CL520, 1110**
3. Use rough country with yearlings rather than cows and calves if that option is available. Yearlings will cover country better and make more efficient use of forage. Weigh yearlings before turning out so you can determine their performance from range forage. **CL502, 535**

4. Assess effects, if any, of excessive winter big game use on spring forage supply. Quantifying the impacts will be necessary if justifiable cases are to be made for reducing the impacts. **CL500, 520**

### **Summer**

1. On federally leased forage, coordinate activities with appropriate range conservationist. Make sure that communication channels are clear and no misunderstandings occur. **CL500, 520, 522**
2. Record degree of grazing use by date. Are your grazing objectives being met? Degree of grazing use on a particular date will vary. In a good forage year, amount of use will be much less, for example, unless stocking rate is increased to make up the difference. Total use and where it occurs should reflect a true situation. **CL500, 502, 535**

### **Fall**

1. Make an overall utilization map for all grazed pastures. Use the information that has been developed previously during the season. Use the map in planning for the next year. **CL108, 500, 520, 535, 1255**
2. Assess the degree of seedling establishment for new range seedlings. Are they well rooted? When can grazing be safely scheduled? **CL505**



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