

Why Use Management-intense Grazing (MiG)?

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What is MiG?

Management-intense grazing is knowing the what, how, and why of pasture and livestock management to optimize your net income and meet your production goals. Rotational grazing is often part of MiG and provides the ability to control the timing and intensity of the livestock's grazing activity. This allows us to manage the animal and the plant. The emphasis in MiG is on the intensity of management not the intensity of grazing and managing the animals to do the work and not working harder ourselves. Knowledge and the use of MiG enables the producer to:

1. Increase Forage Yield
2. Establish and Maintain Legumes
3. Lengthen the Grazing Season
4. Control Weeds
5. Increase Summer Production and Reduce Drought Damage

Increased Forage Yields

MiG can increase animal production from a pasture. This is can be attributed to increasing legumes in the pasture, improving nutrient recycling, improving plant vigor which provide more forage, and improving grazing efficiency by harvesting more and wasting less of the forage. MiG can also reduce soil erosion by maintaining better plant cover on the soil. This retains the top soil and increases soil organic matter to increase water holding capacity of soil and plant nutrients.

Establish and Maintain Legumes

Rotational grazing used in MiG enables us to establish legumes and prevent livestock from overgrazing legumes so that they live longer and are more productive. Legumes fix nitrogen from the air and reduce the need for purchased fertilizer. Legumes do need adequate levels of soil or fertilizer phosphorus, potassium, and pH.

Lengthen the Grazing Season

MiG enables us to lengthen the grazing season since more forage is produced and we can control when and where the livestock are grazing during the year. Part of MiG is to control the stocking rate (animal weight/total acres/year) on the farm and stock density (animal weight/acre/day) within pastures to optimize plant and animal health and growth.

Control Weeds

MiG results in improved weed control since the pasture sod is denser and more vigorous, reducing weed seedling establishment. Also many weeds are eaten by livestock when they are immature under rotational grazing, and they provide high-quality forage.

Increase Summer Production and Reduce Drought Damage

MiG produces healthier plants with longer roots that draw moisture from deeper in the soil during dry weather. During droughts livestock can be confined to an abuse-area and fed, protecting the rest of the pasture so that when wet weather returns the grass can take off growing again.

Buffers are an Important Component to MiG

Buffers such as grazing of aftermath hay fields allow for the evening out of available pasture during the growing season, fall, and early winter. Buffers should be planned. If not, nature and the animals will determine what will be the buffer.

Rotational grazing does not have to be on all of the farm.

In MiG some land may warrant extensive long-stay grazing rather than short-stay rotational grazing. The important thing is to know when this is the most appropriate option.

When implementing rotational grazing start on the best forage stand on the best soils. These sites will give the greatest response to improved management. As time and interests allow and needs require, intensify management on more of the farm.

MiG is a low-cost management tool for increasing the efficiency of pasture based livestock production. MiG is based on understanding plant and animal growth and how they interact. Then implementing livestock management to control the timing and intensity of grazing to optimize forage and livestock production within the environmental, social, and market framework of the farm.

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