

Deferred Grazing Management

Overcoming the shortage of paddock feed once opening rains arrive is high on all graziers agenda's. With a low amount of supplementary feed left on hand on many properties, you should have your deferred grazing strategy well and truly planned for this time.

As tempting as it may be to allow animals to chase the "green pick" once the rain has arrived, this will be detrimental to pasture growth and animal production. Cattle require 3-4cm pasture growth (~900kg/ha DM) and sheep need 1.5-2cm (~400kg/ha DM) to maintain weight so grazing before this point is worthless.

Deferred grazing is the principle of removing animals to a confined area or sacrifice paddock and supplementary feeding until pastures are well established, prior to commencement of grazing. Deferred grazing will result in a greater amount of pasture growth leading into winter months.

The following paragraphs from the publication, Beef Pastures for Profit by Agriculture WA and MLA highlights some basic principles.

"Delaying grazing allows pasture seedlings to establish a root system. Newly germinated seedling grows on energy stored in the seed. New leaves grow and start replacing energy that has been used. If young leaves are grazed before they can replace the energy used to grow them, the plant's energy reserve is depleted and this reduces the seedlings ability to grow replacement leaves. Very heavy grazing of young seedlings can kill them."

Implementing Deferred Grazing:

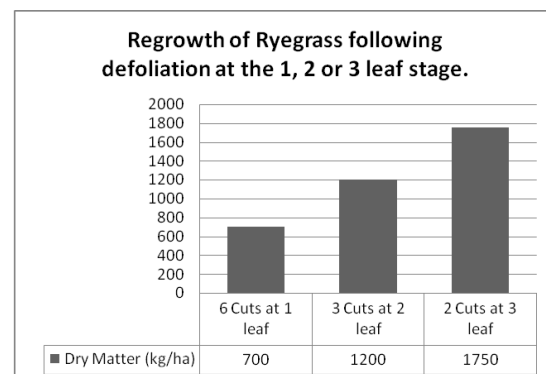
- Choose a suitable deferral paddock. For example, one that is weedy and to be reseeded.
- Stock the deferral paddock at about 10 cows / hectare. Ensure adequate water available.
- Feed hay or silage to meet demand in deferral. Know daily requirements of animals.

- *Defer the start of grazing until ryegrass reaches the 2 leaf stage.*
- *Complete the first grazing cycle when the last paddock to be grazed reaches 5 leaves (3 leaf grazing interval).*
- *Grazing interval of 3 leaves allows the feed wedge to build up.*
- *After the first rotation, graze when ryegrass reaches the 3 leaf stage.*

Source: Beef Pastures for Profit, AgWA & MLA.
(I can email a copy if anyone wants one - Sam)

Allowing a greater period of rest between grazing' event's grows the most dry matter, therefore it is better to graze a larger number of paddocks less frequently than a smaller number of paddocks more frequently, across the same area of land. This may involve the use of temporary hot wires / back fencing to prevent re-grazing.

Research has shown that by grazing less frequently, DM production can be at least doubled, as plants recover from grazing more quickly if allowed to "recharge" their carbohydrate root reserve prior to the next grazing event. If continually grazed at the 1 leaf stage, the energy reserve is not fully replenished and recovery is slowed.



Source: Beef Pastures for Profit, AgWA & MLA.

Once the rotation has commenced, stock paddocks with enough animals so that no more than 3 days grazing occurs in one area. This will ensure that no new leaves are grazed, which slows pasture regrowth rates. This principle will increase DM production by 20% over a grazing period of 7 days.

More information: MLA More Beef from Pastures <https://mbfp.mla.com.au/>, or email me (sam@agvivo.com.au)