

Wintering cattle damage small pastures

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Feeding cattle all winter on small pastures is damaging to the pastures and increases nutrient losses in runoff, says Lloyd B. Owens, Agricultural Research Service soil scientist.

While the total nitrogen lost per year, about 13 pounds per acre, is not large, the results of the research suggest that rotating cattle on small pastures during the winter months would reduce nitrogen losses. Rotation would also reduce damage to grass

caused by the concentration of animals.

Most of the nitrogen loss came during the winter period,

November through April, Owens pointed out. Pastures used only during the grazing season, May through October lost an average of

less than half a pound of nitrogen per acre each year.

Owens also mentioned that the annual nitrogen losses were less than nature's contribution of 16 to 19 pounds of nitrogen delivered annually on each acre by an average year's rainfall.

He compared runoff from four

orchardgrass pastures for 5 years at ARS' North Appalachian Experimental Watershed, Coshocton, Ohio.

Cattle were rotated on all four pastures during the grazing season. They were confined to one pasture and fed hay during the November to April period.

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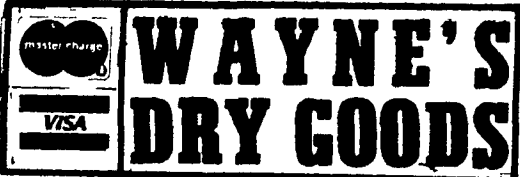
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WIDTH	AAA	AA	A	B	C
SIZE	10-18	9-15	8-15	7 1/2-18	6 1/2-14
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SIZE	5-16	6-14	6-14	5-13	

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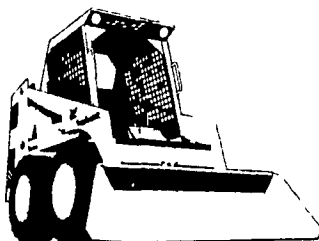
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