

Pasture Rotation

These Virginia Stockmen Find That Giving Grass A Break Results In Higher Forage Yields

BY JULIE GOCHENOUR

Virginia Correspondent

SHENANDOAH VALLEY, Va.

Go to almost any farm meeting west of the Blue Ridge Mountains these days—be it forage, conservation, beef cattle or sheep—and you hear the same thing.

"Pasture is your greatest underutilized resource," experts tell the region's livestock producers. "Make the most of it," they advise again and again. One visiting sheep producer from the West was even more blunt when he spoke at a meeting this year. "You all waste more feed than we can raise," he said flatly.

"It all comes back to what we have to market," Craig Yohn, a Jefferson County extension agent explains. "In West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley we don't have livestock as much as we have grass to market. And whether it be through hay or through cattle or through sheep, the more grass we can grow, the more we have to market through livestock."

'By rotating, we get as much as 20 percent more forage in a year off those pastures.'

Pasture rotation is one way to grow more grass, Yohn says. In a nutshell, the system calls for dividing a large pasture into several smaller ones and moving livestock from field to field as the available grass is depleted. "By

rotating, we get as much as 20 percent more forage in a year off those pastures," he continues.

"Each pasture has to have a water source, or some way to get to water, and rotational systems usually require more fencing than conventional pasture," Yohn admits. "But the quality and amount of that forage is higher than in a continually grazed pasture situation."

Keith Turner agrees. The young Rockingham County sheep producer runs 150 ewes with their lambs on just 26 acres of pasture. Turner began working out his rotational grazing system nine years ago, buying some of the first "fast fence" that came into the United States for just that purpose. His system is simple but functional, he says. "We just developed what would work best for us with the way our land lays and the buildings sit—and we just took it from there," he adds.

The result is 26 acres divided into four smaller, permanently fenced fields and one large open field he divides with the electric ply wire (fast fence). "I think a lot of people look at the textbook examples of construction for rotational grazing and right away say that it's not feasible because it's not economical," he speculates.

"Actually half of these people already have the basis for a suitable rotational system on their farm—they're just not utilizing it," the producer maintains. "It's not

difficult at all. Basically they just need to work with what they have by using a combination of fast fence and permanent high tensile electric fencing."

'Profitability in farming comes from getting more from less instead of going strictly from a quantity standpoint.'

That may still sound expensive,

but it's not, Turner says. "Profitability in farming comes from getting more from less instead of going strictly from a volume and quantity point of view. Your costs are fixed in that land whether you have 10 or 100 head on it. So obviously the more you can get out of that pasture, the more profitable it will be.

"You can rotate using fast fence much more economically than building permanent fence, plus it

gives you flexibility," he adds. "It's extremely economical compared to woven wire at about \$1.50 a running foot when you can get that same fence for 35 to 45 cents in material costs, including the charger."

Other savings come from fewer parasite problems, the ability to make hay from the additional grass and to run more animals. "There's no way we could keep

(Turn to Page D5)




Roudabush's registered Holsteins head out to unseeded loafing lot. Note thick sod on other side of fence where cattle were held until recently.



Ron Roudabush at a corner of his rotational loafing lot. By rotating his dairy cows between four paddocks, Roudabush gives sod time to recover.




Keith Turner (left) and John Morrison examine a roll of Electric ply wire used for dividing pastures into rotation blocks.



Pork Prose

by
Kenneth B. Kephart
Penn State Extension Swine Specialist



Ivermectin For Swine

Ten years ago the best weapon we had against mange was the lindane-toxaphene combination. It wasn't totally effective, but it did a lot of good if you followed the protocol—spray at least twice at 7- to 10-day intervals; get the pigs soaked; use high pressure.

But lindane + toxaphene was far from ideal. To use lindane, pigs had to be at least 30 days old. To use toxaphene, they had to be at least 3 months old. The withdrawal period was 30 days. And you had to get the animals wet—both winter and summer.

Several years later two new products were approved for controlling mange—prolate and ectiban. Recent studies show they're at least as effective as lindane + toxaphene. Pigs of all ages can be treated except those nursing the sow. Prolate has only a one-day withdrawal. Ectiban has no withdrawal.

But even with these improved drugs we still have two obstacles:

- 1) Mites burrow and live under the skin, so they have a lot of natural protection against sprays.
- 2) Sprays have limited effect against mite eggs, so a second application is usually necessary.

This month, still another drug, ivermectin, has been approved for the control of mange (trade name:

Ivomec for Swine). Ivermectin differs from other mange control products because it's an injection, not a spray. And there's another characteristic that makes ivermectin different. It controls not only mange and lice, but most internal parasites as well.

Once injected, ivermectin is absorbed into the circulation. Parasites are slowly paralyzed as they consume the host animal's blood. Like other products, it's not effective against mite eggs. But the active ingredient remains in the blood long enough to kill mites once they do hatch out of the egg.

So what does this mean to the swine producer? It means there's no longer an excuse for having hogs with mange. We now have the means to control and eliminate mange from an infested herd. How do you go about it? Talk to your veterinarian. He knows your situation and can advise you on the best treatment protocol. Some things to keep in mind:

- Dosage level is 1 cc per 75 pounds of body weight. That's higher than the cattle dose. The drug works differently in hogs.
- Injections should be made subcutaneously, that is under the skin. The Merck company recommends injecting behind the ear. If you inject into the muscle,

you won't hurt a thing. But the drug will probably not remain in the blood long enough to get the eggs once they hatch.

• The whole herd should be done at one time (within a day or two), from baby pigs on up. This is the most effective method of it's the cheapest.

• Treatment should not be made within 18 days of slaughter.

Some questions you ought to be asking:

If I treat the whole herd with the correct dose, does that mean I'll never have to treat again? With good sanitation and management it is possible to wipe out mange from the herd with one treatment. But many producers I've talked with have found that two treatments are needed, especially with badly infested sows. Treat these first and again with the rest of the herd, two weeks later. Dr. Robert Graybill, a Lancaster veterinarian, also recommends two injections for sows in late pregnancy—one when the rest of the herd is treated and a second 10-14 days after farrowing.

Since ivermectin is approved as a wormer, should I routinely treat sows before they farrow? Worms can be controlled with a smaller dose—1 cc of ivermectin per 110 pounds of body weight. But ivermectin costs about \$.60/cc. So if the average weight of your sows is 375 pounds, ivermectin injections for worms will cost about \$2.20 per head. Worming sows with Atgard will cost about \$.40 per head; \$.60 per head with Safeguard; and \$1 per head with Tramisol. All will do a good job. So the answer to that question should be easy.

Is mange really worth eliminating, if ivermectin costs \$.60/cc? Mange can take a heavy toll on average daily gain and on feed efficiency. Mange opens up a path for skin infections and "greasy-pig" disease. Mange, I'm convinced, leads to many cases of tail and ear biting. And mange, because of the intense itching it causes, makes a hog absolutely miserable. Mange is worth eliminating even if ivermectin costs \$.60/cc.

LIVESTOCK LATEST

