

## Grazing Cattle? Keep Management Flexible

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Grazing management over the year must be flexible to obtain the optimum level of pasture utilization.

Dr. Edward B. Rayburn, extension forage agronomist at West Virginia University, notes that the rate of forage growth varies over the year. It is fast in

the spring and slow during dry or cold periods.

On average, 50 percent of perennial cool-season forage growth occurs from April to June, 33 percent in July and August, and just 16 percent from September to November.

"To account for this, you'll need more acres for grazing an animal in the summer and fall than in the spring," said Rayburn. "You can do this by making more hay on some fields in the

spring and allowing more acres to be grazed later by reducing the number of animals in the herd or by wasting feed and clipping weeds and seed weeds."

When using rotational grazing in the spring, move grazing cattle to the next paddock when the growth is tall enough. Don't try to get the very last bit of forage in the field.

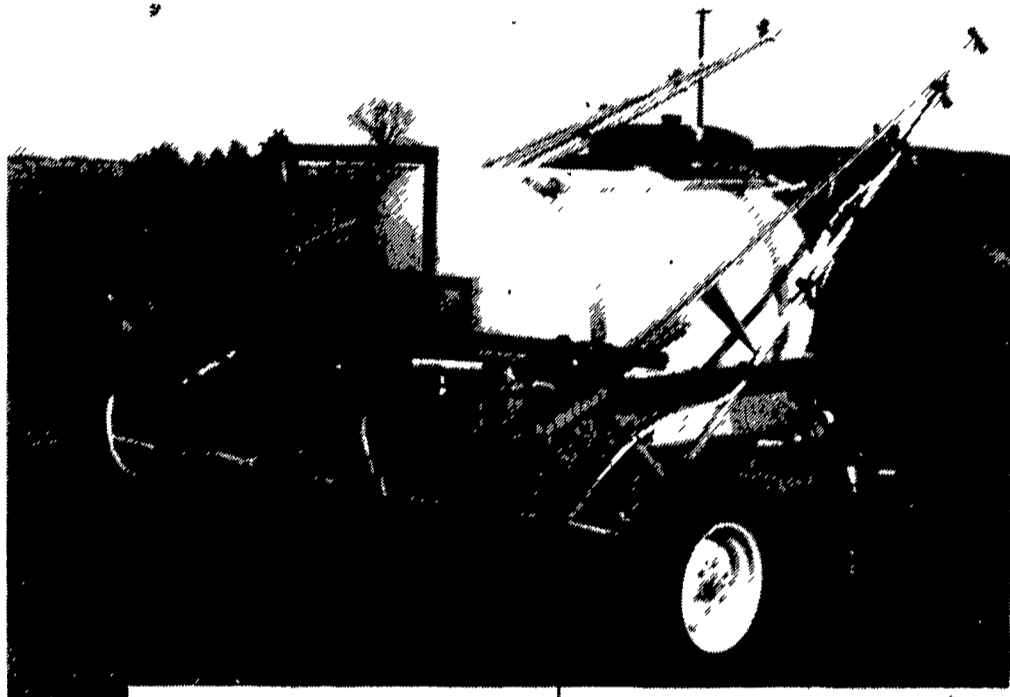
Rayburn said there is merit in using continuous grazing in the spring to help hold back the spring flush. As pas-

ture growth slows, use a more intense rotation.

"Graze cattle to optimize forage utilization," he said. "In the fall, make sure you move cattle off paddocks when the paddocks reach the desired stubble height — and keep the animals out. This will reduce cattle weight loss in the fall, reduce soil erosion and loss of expensive fertilizer and lime, and ensure good pasture growth the next year."



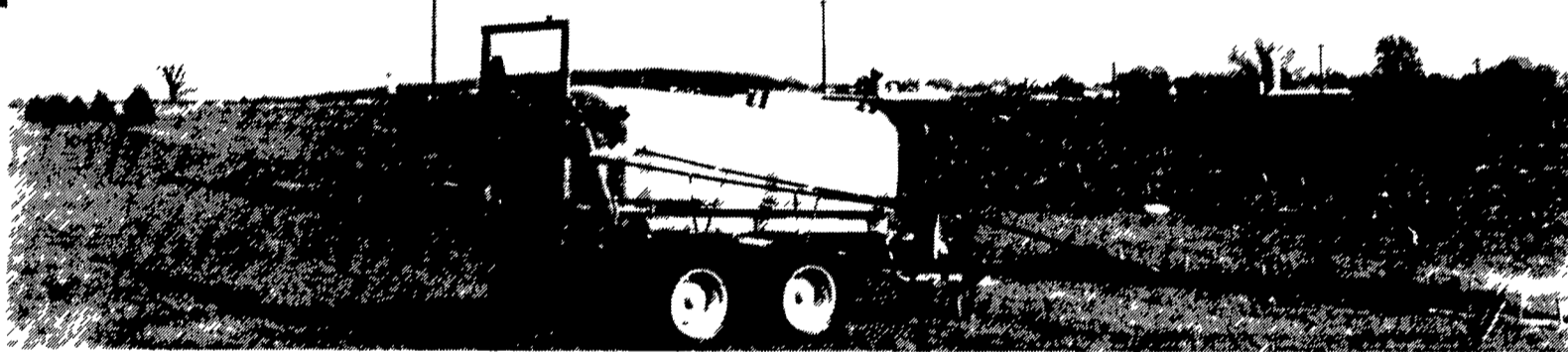
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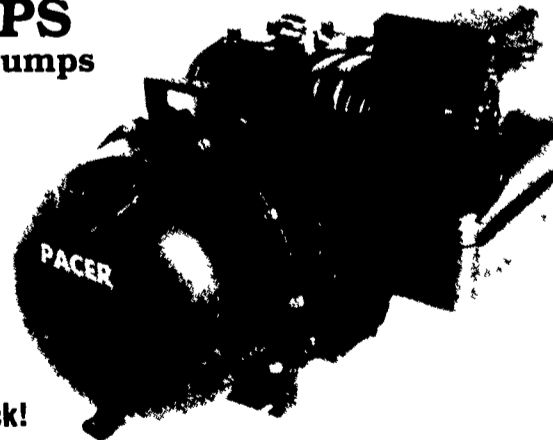
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