

Now May Be A Good Time To 'Brush Up' On Pasture Terminology

Dr. Marvin H. Hall
Extension Forage Specialist
Penn State

Learning the "language of pasture" is a prerequisite to learning about and improving pasture management skills.

Pasture forage is described as herbage or the above-ground plant material of grasses, legumes, weeds, and shrubs. Herbage mass is the total amount of herbage per unit area measured to ground level.

Herbage mass is expressed in terms of pounds of dry matter per acre (lb DM/a). A pasture sward is comprised of all the plants in the pasture. Livestock are unable to consume all of the herbage present because the jaw, teeth and tongue actions during grazing physically restrict how closely the animal can graze to ground level.

In addition, the animal is able to selectively graze within the sward, and less palatable plants or parts of plants may be avoided. Selectivity is dependent on grazing pressure which defines the rate of disappearance of herbage material. Under lax grazing pressure there is a slow decline in herbage mass and animals are able to exercise a high degree of selectivity. If high grazing pressure is applied, selectivity is reduced.

Both grazing pressure and the residual amount of herbage that remains after grazing (post-grazing herbage mass, or residual herbage mass (lb DM/a)), can be controlled by the farmer. In general, as residual herbage mass (often termed residual dry matter on RDM) is lowered per animal, intake of herbage is reduced and, in the absence of supplements, animal per-

formance is lower.

Many grazing management guidelines describe the relationship between minimum RDM and livestock productivity. Sward surface height (SSH), which is an alternative method for defining grazing management, is the average height of green leaves in the sward canopy. As SSH decreases, animal intake decreases.

Successful pasture managers are familiar with these relationships and use this information when making decisions to shift animals between paddocks. The herbage available (lb DM/head/day) for grazing refers to the difference between the total amount of herbage present (i.e. herbage mass) and the amount of herbage left after grazing (i.e. the RDM). Herbage available should not be confused with the term herbage allowance, which defines the amount of herbage per animal to ground level on a daily basis (i.e. lb DM/hd/d).

Herbage allowance values include the post-grazing residual herbage and are always greater than the herbage available to livestock. Multiplying the herbage available by the area to be grazed yields the total amount of herbage available per paddock; dividing the herbage available by the number of animals provides the amount of herbage available per animal (normally this is in terms of lb DM/hd/d).

There are numerous terms used to describe grazing management or the manner in which a farmer controls the grazing of livestock to achieve specific production goals. Controlled grazing occurs when grazing is regulated to achieve a desired result.

Intensive grazing attempts to max-

imize the productivity of animals and pastures through increased capital inputs (fencing, fertilizer, water, seed) and management. This contrasts with extensive grazing where a low level of inputs and usually a large area of land per animal. The animals graze the designated area throughout the time period when grazing is allowed. The pastures receive no rest (leaving an area ungrazed or unharvested for a length of time) from grazing.

Under intermittent grazing, pastures are grazed for indefinite periods at specified or irregular intervals. Rotational, strip, sequence, mob, short duration, and creep grazing are all forms of intermittent grazing.

Set stocking, or the practice of allowing a fixed number of animals on an area of land for the entire grazing period, is a form of continuous grazing management. The number of animals on a grazing area for a specified period of time is the stocking rate.

There are a lot more terms related to pastures and their uses, but we have discussed most of the ones that you will encounter. The main purpose of becoming familiar with terminology is that it helps communication.

Scientific papers, conference presentations, news articles, workshop courses, and advice from consultants can be interpreted and applied much more readily if you understand the "language."

You May Be Able To Double Benefits By Mowing

Geraldine Kessel
Extension Specialist
West Virginia University
Extension Service

You can double your benefits by mowing weedy pastures.

One benefit is that mowing prevents or slows down seed production of weeds. The second benefit is that mowing removes seed heads so the pastures can produce new, tender regrowth.

Weeds rob water and nutrients needed by pasture plants. They also shade the other plants and slow their growth. Some weeds, such as thistles, prevent cattle from grazing large areas because of their spiny leaves.

If possible, graze a pasture heavily

just before mowing to use all the feed available. This is especially true with beef cattle. In many cases the animals will eat some of the weeds and tall grasses that would be wasted.

Mow pastures closely. Cutting to a height of 2 to 3 inches will remove the mature growth. This cutting management helps keep clover in pastures and promotes fast growth. If you're concerned that dry weather will prevent regrowth, mow only a third to a half of your pastures every 10 days to two weeks.

Where possible, save excess spring and summer growth for hay. Some farmers get enough hay from pasture mowing to feed their cows all winter. By doing this, you can use all the forage you produce for grazing or hay.



NEW LEADER L3020^{GT}
Heavy Duty Lime Spreader

NEW!



The new L3020^{GT} with over 25 improvements includes:

- 30" wide conveyor that virtually eliminates bridging.
- Easy-to-use GPS-ready control system.
- Extra large 40 gallon-per-minute hydraulic valve.
- Apply higher rates of lime and lower rates of fertilizer.

Mounts On Vehicles With Highway, Semi or Flotation Tires

We provide Parts and Service on new Leader Spreaders

FOR SALE

SPREADER TRUCK

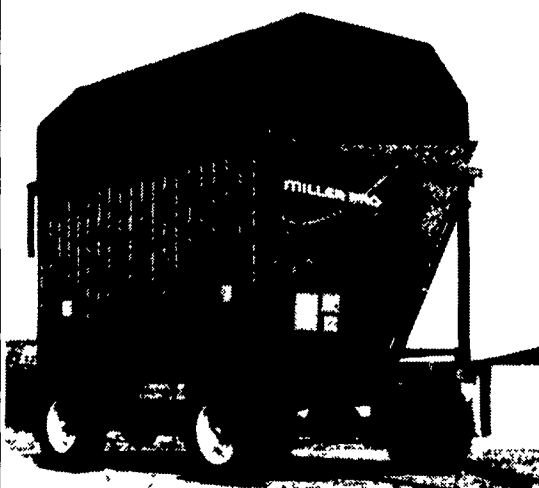
| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Chassis: 1979 International 2500 (Glider Kit) Detroit Diesel 6-71N, Fuller RT-910 Trans., Rockwell 23,000 Lb. Single Reduction Rear, 12,000 lb. Front Axle.</p> | <p>Spreader '97 L-3020 gt. 11' New Leader Spreader MKIV/GPS Ready Controls w/Dickey John Radar Head, #3 Pintle Bed Chain, Swinging Rear Endgate; 304 SS Hillside Divider; 304 SS Lime Divider, 304 SS Fertilizer</p> |
|---|---|

ANNVILLE BODY CO.
470 Palmyra-Bellgrove Road, Anville, PA 17003
717-867-4631 1-800-233-0520
We provide parts & service for new leader spreaders.
Building the best since 1939.

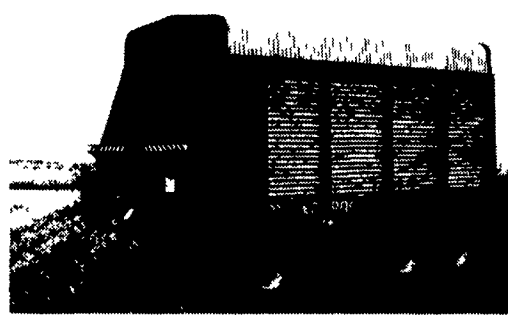
Quality Equipment for Farming in the 90's

MILLER PRO

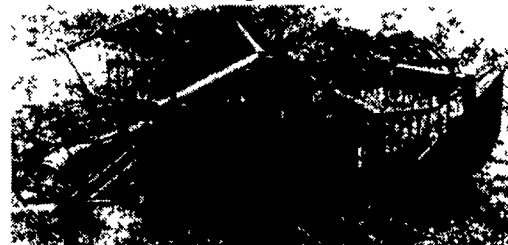
Hydraulic Dump Boxes



Forage Boxes
Front • Rear • Front/Rear



Rotary Rakes



For the Best Forage Boxes, Dump Boxes, Rakes and Platform Feeders See...

ZIMMERMAN'S FARM SERVICE

1/2 mile west off Rt. 501 on School Road
Bethel, Pa
717-933-4114