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flow of the RHD can help us determine what our exact case is and provide numbers to help us make a more objective decision.

During the 1997 summer in southern Oklahoma, we had a more than usual summer-fall drought. We had stocked at 2.4 steers per acre. During active spring forage growth the RHD was over 20. The usual trend was that it would build to 40-60 by the spring forage peak about June 15-30. But, instead it began to decline. We knew very early that our forage availability and flow was in trouble by having lower than usual RHD, plus a declining RHD. We make RHD readings weekly when we are in an aggressive grazing mode like spring grazing. In this case, we took readings daily as we neared the end. We projected ahead weeks to our approximate sell-out date. When RHD got to 5-7 days, we chose our sale date, sold the steers on that date, and had one RHD of steer forage left. The technique worked perfectly!

When we are operating a very close forage volume and livestock need situation, we read RHD's at least then we can harvest only 1/4 of the weekly and more often the closer the crisis gets. In plentiful forage situations, monthly, bi-weekly, or weekly tallies are sufficient.

What if our need is to have an increasing RHD or a reading of more than 28? Perhaps we want to cut some extra forage for hay or graze through a drought. If 28 has been a steady or de-

clining figure, then we must adjust stocking rate or feed supply to cause an increase. If 28 has been increasing steadily from a lower number, then maybe we are on target. But, what if we need 60 RHD to project to get through a forage production slump with extra stockpiled forage? In general, we are going to have to feed or de-stock (sell heavy steers, etc.) to get some stock on a 60 RHD basis and in tune with the forage supply.

To make an adjustment such as this, determine the amount (percent) of weight need to be deducted. For example: $60 - 28/60 = 53$ percent "overstocked." So, to get a herd back to a 60 RHD, we need to deduct 53 percent of the herd weight.

Generally we stockpile pasture two times of the year. The first is in the spring and early summer. The purpose is to have forage to get through usual June 15 to September 1 dry and slow growth times. The second is during summer to fall to store "hay" on the grounds for winter grazing. We then use RHD to determine if the stockpile is sufficient to go all summer or winter or only a part thereof. If it is not sufficient, then we can calculate hay needs or de-stocking needs to make it through the summer or winter.

For example, we can determine in October how far our winter stockpile will go for a herd of cattle by determining the RHD for the herd. From October 15 to April 15 we will need about 180 RHD. If we find we have only 130 (or some other lower number), then we are 50 days short on forage and can manage accordingly. Perhaps we choose to de-stock, feed some

Date: May 10, 1997

Paddock No.	Acres	Pounds Forage Available	
		Per Acre	Per Paddock
1	20	400	8,000
2	20	1035	20,700
3	20	120	2,400
4	15	Trace	0
5	25	1660	41,500
6	10	1215	12,150
7	40	690	27,600
8	10	5560	55,600
Totals/Averages	160	875	167,950

Table 3

cows hay and the rest 180 days of stockpile. In this case, we are about 30 percent overstocked and we can de-stock that much cattle weight to meet our objectives.

A major use of RHD is in stocking fall phase, stockpiled, winter annual grass stocker cattle pastures. The technique works super here. The greatest percent of the fall phase production for those forages is done by November 15 in our area. Let's say we want a 120-day season to reach March 15 and rapid spring growth. How many steers or heifers will it take? If we already have steers bought and on hand, we use any of the three methods to determine if we can graze them all the 120 days or a part thereof. Then we adjust grazing and stocking management accordingly.

What if we do not yet have the cattle and we want to buy (or rent) stockers to fit the 120-day time. We simply use method 2 or 3, discussed above, determine forage available, divide that by the approximate forage needs of our stocker calf and acquire that amount of cattle. In this case, I sometimes factor in expected future forage

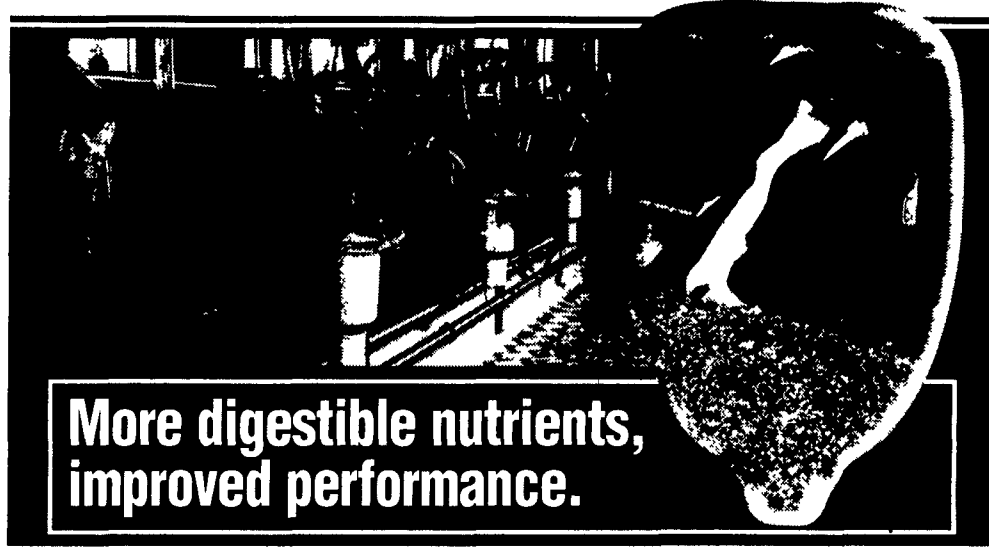
growth, but it doesn't change RHD very much. This stocking rate system works great!

I have employed these RHD techniques on my personal rotational pasture units, in consultation, and in demonstration and research units. I find the techniques to be incredibly helpful. I'm lazy. Bret, my partner, is good at making these readings. He provides me the numbers and I can "see" from the office exactly how our forage supply is and if it is increasing or declining. The technique fits well for an "absentee" owner/manager. You are encouraged to learn it and use it, too.

In summary, RHD, with any of the three methods, considers forage residue, forage height, forage density, acre yield, livestock intake needs, stock performance goals, etc. without a lot of mess and fuss. It is a good technique to "boil the cabbage down" and cheat the management system to get the job done a bit better and easier. We have discussed several applications of RHD use and we invent others as we go along.

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