

The 'Take Half — Leave Half' Adage

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I recently read an article on pasture utilization rate at the Website of the Forage Systems Research Center (FSRC) of the University of Missouri. This Website is an excellent source of research-based information on grazing management. For those of you who are connected to the Internet you can get there by

going to <http://aes.missouri.edu/fsrc>.
In the article, Jim Gerrish, research assistant professor, says that one of the grazing management principles that he "holds near and dear" is the "take half-leave half" adage. Many of you have heard Jim do presentations at grazing conferences in Pennsylvania. If you have heard him you probably would

agree that he injects a great deal of pragmatism into his presentations about research. Gerrish suggests aiming for a 50 percent utilization rate in each single grazing period. Utilization rate is the harvest efficiency, in this case, in a single grazing period. At this point you may be asking why remove only half the forage mass? Or, how do I know how much is half?

There are animal and plant management reasons for the "take half-leave half" adage. The plant basis for the "take half-leave half" adage is the relationship between leaf residual and rate of regrowth. Leaving adequate leaf area allows regrowth to take place more quickly. Most of you have probably observed this in your pastures. As I've told many people that I have helped with pasture management

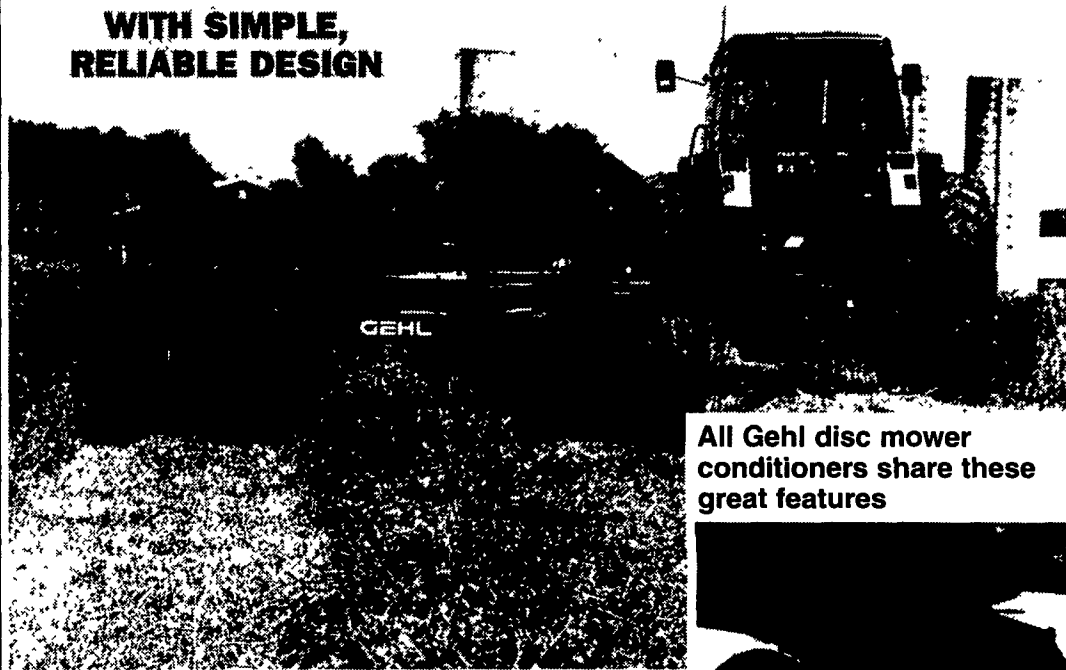
"sunlight energy striking the ground doesn't do us much good, it needs to strike a leaf to benefit us." Plants that are overgrazed are forced to rely on stored carbohydrates to regrow. This is energy that could have been saved for later. Plants that are overgrazed will have negatively impacted root growth and are less drought resistant. Leaving half the forage mass is better for the plants than

(Turn to Page 11)

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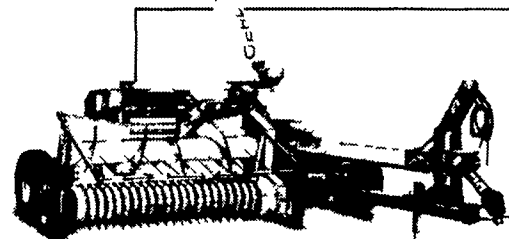
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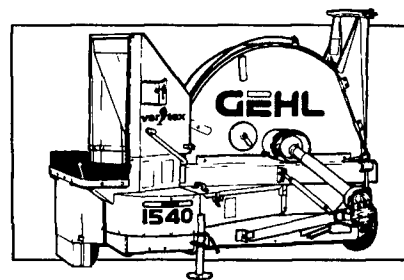
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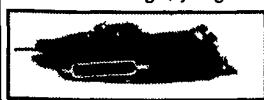
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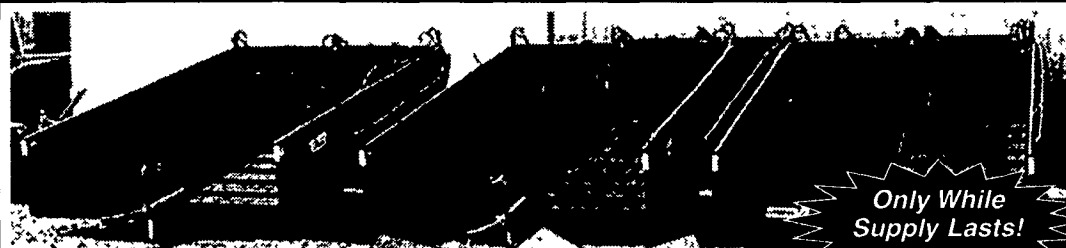
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