JULY 6, 2021

POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

An eNewsletter brought to you by the Rich Mountain Conservation District

Thanks to Jeremy Huff, Arkansas NRCS Grazing Specialist, for this week's article which originally appeared in the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association magazine in June 2017. Click here to go to the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association web page.

Many times I have to provide myself personal reminders such as "a dollar saved is a dollar earned." These principles will never change but reminders are needed to keep my sight from being obscured. Can you relate? I think the same holds true for pasture-related concepts. Here are a few concepts we know but sometimes need to be reminded.

⇒ **Pastures are virtually a Solar Panel.**

Green growing leaves capture solar energy for plants to grow. Bare ground doesn't capture solar energy for plants. The "take-home message" is it's the *leaves* that do this work – take care of the plant's leaves!

One benefit rotational grazing provides is pasture rest. Rest provides plants the opportunity to grow more leaves. Plant leaves capture solar energy which is required for photosynthesis. The photosynthesis process provides the plant energy to live and grow.

Understanding when the plant is most photosynthetically efficient is important. Plants that are in their early growth stage may not be as photosynthetically efficient because the limited leaf area isn't capturing a high percentage of solar energy. Plants that are late in their growth stage with many leaves have a tendency to shade one another. Leaves are most photosynthetically efficient mid-way during their growth stage. Keeping the plants in the mid-growth stage is a complicated but rewarding goal to establish. Producers who practice intensive grazing management have more management control over their resources.

I often discuss the importance of pasture diversity. The canopy structure of grasses and legumes (clovers) can complement each other in regards to capturing efficient amounts of solar energy. Grasses typically have more vertical leaf orientation. Legumes (clovers) generally have more horizontal orientation. A classic example of this in Arkansas is a tall fescue/white clover mixture.

⇒ **What is Overgrazing?**

Everybody has their own opinion on what is overgrazing – and that's great! I will share with you my perspective on overgrazing. Overgrazing happens when the plant is bitten multiple times without regaining a positive carbohydrate balance. Overgrazing typically occurs when cattle remain on a field too long and the same plant is continuously bitten while having inadequate energy reserves. Also, overgrazing occurs when cattle return to a rested pasture before the plant has time to recover (the plant hasn't regained a positive carbohydrate balance). Overgrazing is more a function of grazing time (duration) compared to grazing pressure.

⇒ **Don't forget plant roots are as much of the plant as its leaves!**

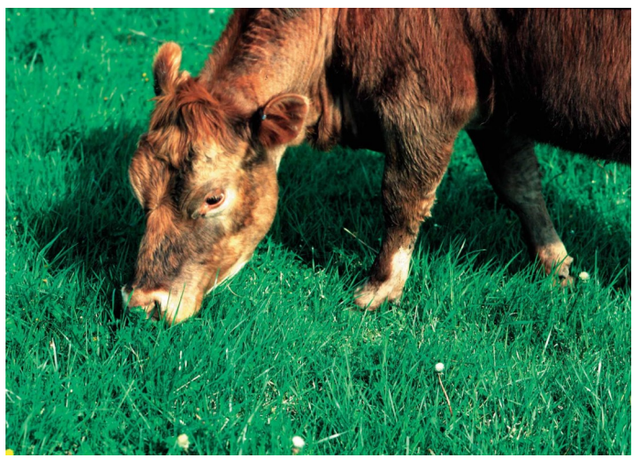
Did you know the amount of plant roots are directly related to the amount of leaf content? Manage for top growth and you will in-return manage for root growth. How often do you evaluate pastures from only the surface up? It's interesting to consider half of the plant is below the surface. A visual we don't always see! Roots are important. Should we single trait select and establish plants just for having deep roots? Not necessarily. Are there ways to manage for root growth? Yes – the same way you would manage for top growth!

Upcoming Grazing Meetings and Seminars:

⇒ **Fences and Watering Options for Small Ruminants** —You are invited to attend the weekly grazing training sessions by Jeremy Huff, the USDA/NRCS state grazing specialist. He offers these training sessions as a Zoom meeting and the instructions for logging in are included in attached flyer. If you have the Zoom app on your phone you can just scan the QR code on the flyer. If you want to see it on your computer there is a link included in the attachment. There are sessions normally every Tuesday at 1pm so see the attached flyer.

⇒ **Building Blocks for Healthy Herds and Flocks** - Join NCAT Livestock Specialists Margo Hale and Linda Coffey for a free, virtual workshop on small ruminant health on July 8, 2021. These experienced producers will share their strategies for selecting and managing healthy, profitable animals. Pre-registration is required so click here.

⇒ **2021 Arkansas Cattlemen's Association Annual Convention and Tradeshow—**July 30-31, 2021 at Hot Springs, AR. Click here for more information.



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Did you Know?

⇒ Single strand electric fencing typically is only about 1/3 of the cost to install than 4 strand barbed fencing.

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Meeting ID: 816 3853 9113
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Questions/Comments: Contact Jeremy Huff at 501.413.057 (text is preferred) or jeremy.huff@usda.gov