



That is a good thing. The basis of a good grazing system is understanding grass plants, thus understanding grazing systems that allow grass management that is compatible with the evolved grass plant.

And grasses differ. Cool-season grasses and summer warm-season grasses are distinctly different and both are required to have an effective grazing program. The same would be true as a producer travels north and south; northern grazing systems are going to be different than southern grazing systems.

However, Lee Manske, Dickinson Research Extension Center range scientist, notes the exact same start and stop dates and the same rotation dates for pastures from Lake Michigan to the Pacific Ocean and from the northern-most east-west highway in Canada south to pastures that do not have frozen soil during the winter. This uniformity of a large land mass speaks of the centuries of natural selection engrained in plants to withstand grazing.

More important is to manage grazing systems according to the localized grass species; however, the fundamental principles will not change. The bottom line is effective grazing strategies utilize cattle because cattle do a good job of keeping the grasslands healthy.

The golden rule among producer grazing plans is perhaps simply to have a plan. The plan should reflect known biological principles that enhance perennial grass production and be manageable by the producer.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, the grazing season starts in late April to early May. The cows and calves will be turned out on crested wheat (cool-season) pastures in early May to calve and remain there until the end of May to early June.

The center sets dates within its plan and adjusts for limited yearly managerial effects. The four weeks of grazing cool-season grass provide a good start for the summer grazing season.

As the summer grazing season is planned, effective rotation systems can help harvest a very heavy calf and keep the grasslands in peak condition for centuries to come. Dates and proper stocking rates are key to the location.

For years, the center has started cow-calf pairs grazing on native range at the start of June. Pairs are sent to their second rotational pasture by mid-June and to their third pasture at the end of June. This is called rotational grazing: three pastures with a complete quick rotation by mid-July. This stimulation of the grass plants increases pasture productivity.

Following the first round of short rotations through the three pastures, the three pastures are grazed again for approximately 30 days each to complete the grazing season in mid-October. The principle is simple: Stimulate the grass growth, and follow that by utilization later in the grazing season.

Consult with a local range scientist and develop a good, solid plan. Long-term grazing systems work, improving the grass for generations to come. Don't wait; start the discussion, and build a fence or two and a few gates.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact your local NDSU Extension agent (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/directory>) or Ringwall at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; 701-456-1103; or [kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu).


## NDSU Agriculture Communication - May 10, 2018

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### Attachments



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