

What Does the "Intensive" in Intensive Grazing Mean

Intensive grazing systems have been promoted for quite a few years, but do you know what the word intensive means when it is used with grazing? What do you think of when you hear the phrase "Intensive grazing"? Many small pastures with lots of fencing? Moving animals to new pastures almost daily? Lots of animals completely grazing small areas before moving to fresh pasture?

Most folks don't fully understand what the word "intensive" is meant to refer to. It's not intensive fencing. It's not intensive labor or animal movement. And it's especially not intensive defoliation. Intensive is all about management.

Begin by deciding your goals and what you want to accomplish with your grazing. If you want maximum production and are willing to make the needed investment in labor and materials, then dividing your grazing land into many smaller pieces is likely to be one of your needs. But most important is how you manage the grazing of each individual small pasture as well as combine all the small pastures into one management unit.

The biggest mistake I see people make is to think that intensive grazing means you should graze each small pasture real short before moving to the next pasture. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sometimes severe or short grazing may be appropriate, but more often than not we want to leave more grass behind after a move so it will regrow faster and be ready for another grazing sooner. Thus, it's the intensity of your management that enables you to meet your grazing goals.

Intensive grazing is a great tool when used correctly. Remember - it is management, not the defoliation, that is intensive.

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