

As a rule of thumb, one acre of pasture will support:

- 1 cow for one year, raising a calf until about 3 months of age
- 1-2 horses for one year with the use of hard feed over winter
- About 6 sheep or goats for one year, raising lambs or kids until about 3 months of age.

If you have few animals and enough land you may be able to continuously graze the same paddock. While simple to do, this system will usually result in poor quality grass over time as the stock avoid certain plants, and areas where they have defecated. Weeds are likely to persist, parasite burdens will be higher, and you will find stocking rates need to be lower.

Rotational grazing

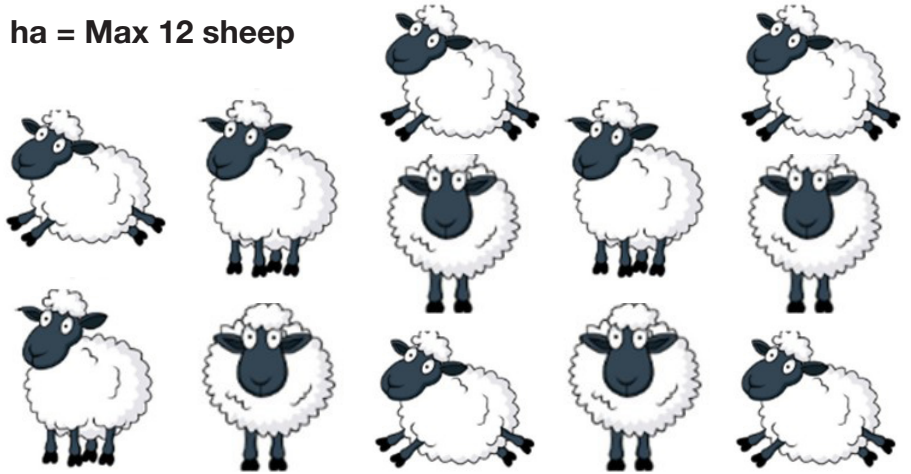
Rotational grazing is a system where multiple paddocks are used, and the animals rotated through, allowing pasture to rest and recover.

Pasture is maintained at the fastest stage of growth and parasite loads in the grass are lower, however this method requires fencing, water sources to each paddock, and more intensive management.

Mixed grazing

Mixed grazing uses different species to follow behind each other (**Fig.1**). The benefits here are that different species have different eating habits and are affected by different parasites.

1 ha = Max 12 sheep



A GUIDE TO Grazing Management

For example, a cow’s diet consists of 70% grass, a sheep eats 60% grass, but a goat eats only 20% grass with most of its feed coming from weeds and browsing plants higher off the ground.

Cattle eat long grass as they wrap their tongue around the sward and pull to take a mouthful. They should be put into a paddock when the grass is 15-25cm high and taken out when pasture is no lower than 8cm.

Sheep eat shorter grass as they nibble with their front teeth. Generally, sheep should not be grazed any lower than 2-3cm depending on the time of the year. Goats can be used to tidy up weedy patches in the pasture.

Chickens may be taken through last to fertilise the land as the pasture recovers.

Sheep and goats share the same parasites, while cattle harbour different parasite species again. Therefore, cross grazing helps to clean up the pasture and lower parasite burdens.

Remember, when assessing pasture, that patchy areas of weeds or faecal piles will not be eaten and should not be considered when judging the average pasture length.

When to call us

- Even with cross grazing, your stock will still require drenching at certain times of year. Contact us for all your drenching needs and advice.
- If your animals are in poor condition despite appropriate grazing. Other disease may be present within the groups.

Plant	Horses	Cattle	Sheep	Goats
Grass	90%	70%	60%	20%
Weeds	4%	20%	30%	20%
Browse	6%	10%	10%	60%

Fig 1: Preferred diet make-up of different grazing species

*Updated Nov 25