

Mob grazing offers 200% more forage

By **ALAN NEWPORT**

GREG Judy says growing over 200% more forage than he used to is like having twice the land — only better because it comes with added benefits.

As an example, he offers the records of a 60-acre property he manages as part of his Missouri ranch. Judy figures his grazing totals using animal days of grazing, with one animal being one 1,000-pound cow or the equivalent. Therefore, one animal day of grazing is the equivalent of one 1,000-pound cow grazing for

one day (or two 500-pound steers).

Under MIG: In years now gone by, the Judys grazed 36 of their animal units for 180 days on this 60-acre farm, thereby getting 6,480 animal days of grazing for the year from about May 1 through Nov. 1. Using this Management-intensive Grazing system, they produced no stockpile for winter grazing.

Under mob grazing: These days, the Judys use mob grazing, or high-stock-density grazing. They run 240 animal units for 30 days in the summer and 30 days in the winter, thereby getting 14,400 animal days of grazing for the year.

Input expenses nearly eliminated

GREG and Jan Judy say mob grazing has nearly zeroed their input costs.

For example, they once spent \$5,000 per year frost-seeding and reseeding clover. Now clover reseeds itself.

In fact, today the Judys spend nothing on seed, lime or fertility, yet their animal days per acre of grazing is up more than double. (See story above.) Their overall stocking rate of 2.2 acres per animal unit is comparable to or better than many Missouri operations with considerable nitrogen and phosphorus usage. In addition, they have added a breeding sheep herd of 200, plus some goats.

The Judys also say when their rotation was faster, they fought brush and weed species much harder than they do today. They've found weed and brush species generally can't compete with the dense stand of forage they're currently producing.

The Judys may get another advantage particular to their area from leaving so much forage behind. Their primary forage base is endophyte-infested fescue. It appears their cattle eat less of it, including fewer of the "hottest" plant parts — the stems and seed heads — when they are moved frequently and not made to "clean up" all the forage. That fescue then contributes organic matter and ground litter to help build the soil.



HARVESTING SUNLIGHT: Jan Judy says the sheep are a low-input and welcome addition. Plus, they harvest plants the cattle don't like.

Fencing: always something new

GREG and Jan Judy accomplish their high-stock-density grazing almost entirely with temporary electric fencing.

From year to year, fences and grazing paddocks on the Judy ranch are never the same; excepting perimeter fences, nearly everything is fenced with temporary posts and poly wire.

Greg Judy says after a few moves, he learned pretty well how to estimate paddock size for his herd for daily moves. Typically they put up all their paddocks for the week on Saturdays in about four

hours, Judy says.

They plan paddocks around water sources, using lanes back to water and sometimes allowing some back-grazing for a day or two on previously grazed areas closer to water. Judy says after visiting with people from more arid regions, he has stopped worrying about the distance cattle must travel to water.

People sometimes ask the Judys if this daily move isn't a bit too much work. Not really, they answer, considering the benefits.

However, get your stock density too high, Judy warns people, and it can ruin your quality of life. But most people look at their cattle every day, and it takes less time to move them 365 days a year than it does to put up and feed hay, he says.

ALWAYS MOVING: Greg Judy explains his temporary fencing techniques to Bill Crumley and Nick Adams of Greenville, Tenn.



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