

Feeding the Cow Herd during the Cool Season in Florida on Deer Run Ranch

T.J. Cannon
Deer Run Ranch
Okeechobee, Florida

I have been practicing managed intensive grazing on the ranch for the last 12 years. No hay or supplement has been fed during the 12 years. The cattle have clean water in troughs. They also get Vita-Ferm minerals, supplied by Bio-Zyme Enterprises in St. Joseph, Missouri. The forage base is stargrass with some Pangola (digitgrass), and bahiagrass with a little white clover.

Pastures are fertilized in the fall with 250 lb ammonium nitrate, in January with 250 lb 20-8-16 complete fertilizer, and in late February or early March with 250 lb ammonium sulfate. Also in February or early March, 500 lb dolomitic lime is applied. (All of the above rates are per-acre.)

I raise purebred Brafordts. There are 3 herds, with unrelated bulls for each herd; this provides a means of keeping replacement heifers. These replacement heifers are moved to the next herd. If a bull calf is retained for breeding, he stays in the same herd. Heifers and bulls are also kept for sale at private treaty.

Each cow herd consists of 45 to 55 cows, kept on a 44-acre pasture that is divided into 22 small paddocks of 2 acres each. The herd is moved daily in the spring, summer, and fall. This gives the cows a fresh paddock of grass with only 3 weeks of regrowth. In winter, the cows are moved every 2 days in order to allow more time for the grass to recover (6 weeks of regrowth is needed in winter). The cows are in body condition score 5.5 to 7 all year long.

Legumes are added to the grass sward as often as possible because they are very important in any grazing program. This year I will try some puna chicory, red clover with ladino clover, and a brome grass from New Zealand. A "salad bowl" concept is very good for cattle pastures.

This system has worked very well for me during the last 12 years. I must say that it is very popular throughout the world, in cold as well as warm climates.

NOTES: