

Graze 300

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Abstract:

More than 50% of grazing livestock production costs are found in winter feeding expenses in Virginia Extension budgets. To improve profitability while also improving water quality, livestock producers can reduce their reliance upon hay feeding by adding additional days of grazing during the winter dormant season. Graze 300 VA is an educational initiative designed to address this issue and its significant potential for economic impact. Presently, a small group of producers in Virginia's Northern Piedmont and Northern Shenandoah Valley, regularly approach or achieve a 300-day grazing season. They extend their grazing season through adjustments in stocking rate and adjustments in pasture management. Having accomplished these needed changes, participants realize a 50% reduction in feed costs for each day of grazing added and a corresponding improvement in net revenue. With cattle, the potential for additional net can be as high as \$200 per calf sold when winter grazing is fully maximized. With over 96,000 beef cows in the Northern Shenandoah Valley and Northern Piedmont of Virginia, if 20% of the farmers (19,000 cows) improve economics by \$100 per head per year, the benefit would be \$1.9 million. Extending the grazing season will benefit water quality through improved water infiltration, improved nutrient use efficiency, fewer barren areas in fields from winter feeding sites, and improved soil organic matter. The Chesapeake Bay TMDL gives nutrient and sediment credit for every acre of pasture converted into a grazing management system and every foot of stream bank where livestock are excluded.

 Winter feeding expenses can account for more than 50% of total cost for grazing livestock. Beef producers seek savings now with slim margins.

 There are over 96,000 beef cows in the Northern Shenandoah Valley and Northern Piedmont of Virginia

 If 20% cut winter feed cost by \$100 per head, net revenue is \$1.9 million. Current action by beef producers includes reducing stock rate to minimize hay feeding & strip grazing to increase stockpile utilization.

 Water quality will benefit through improved infiltration, improved nutrient use efficiency, fewer barren winter feeding sites & improved soil organic matter

Goals:
 1) To improve farm profitability & water quality by converting cow/calf producers to winter feeding management reliant upon grazing
2) To increase the number of cow/calf producers who graze 300 days or more per year

Graze 300 VA Mission Statement:

To enable Virginia farmers to achieve 300 days of livestock grazing by facilitating better pasture management and environmental stewardship.

