

Agriculture Newsletter
Spring 2022



**Save the Date:
Grazing Field Day**



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Grazing Field Day**

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Save the date! A Grazing Field Day is planned for **Wednesday, June 29th, 2022** from 10am - 2pm at Sandy Lick Farms, a beef operation owned and operated by Delroy & Sue Moore in Summerville, PA. Topics of discussion will include soil health, fence & watering tips, forage species, financial assistance programs available, as well as a tour of the farm that highlights best management practices that improve soil health and protect water quality. Guest speakers will include Sjoerd Duiker, a soil science professor from Penn State, and Russ Wilson of Wilson Land & Cattle Company. Lunch will be provided.

A brochure for the event will be sent out with the summer newsletter. For questions or to register early, contact the District by phone at (814) 849-7463 or email [megan@jeffersonconservation.com](mailto:megan@jeffersonconservation.com).

*Financial and other support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency.*





## Comparing Grazing Systems

Listed are the pros and cons of continuous grazing, simple rotational grazing, and intensive rotational grazing (derived from the NRCS Grazing Management document at [nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)). Adding more paddocks to the pasture and increasing the frequency in which animals are moved through the grazing system increases pasture productivity as the grasses are given a chance to rest and regrow.

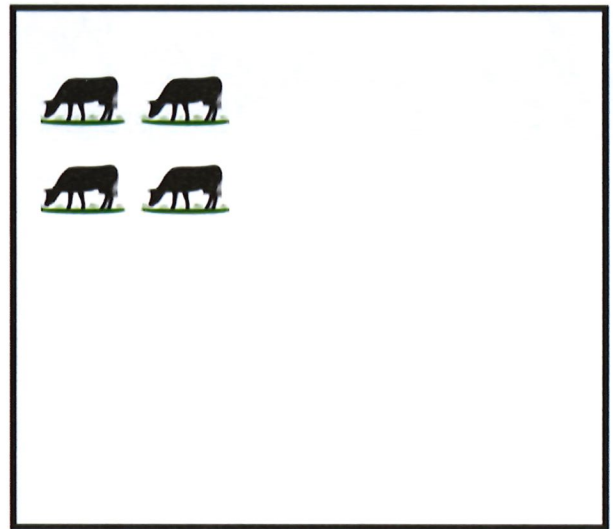
### Continuous Grazing

#### Pros

- Lower start up costs
- Less management

#### Cons

- Lower forage quality & yields
- Uneven pasture use
- Bare soil areas
- Uneven manure distribution
- Weed problems
- Requires alt. feed
- Long term costs higher
- Soil & water quality decline overtime



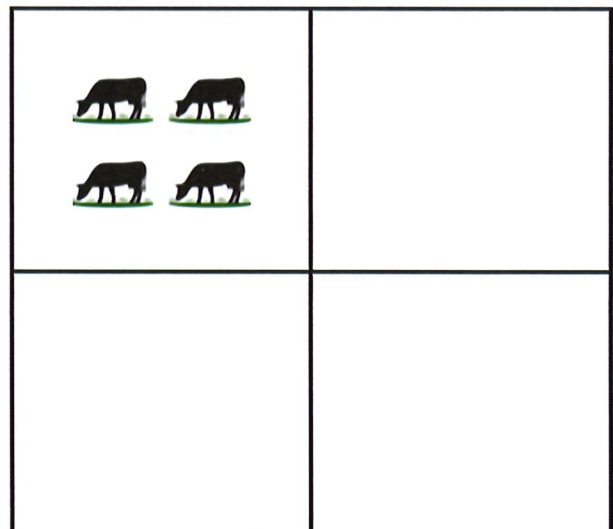
### Simple Rotational Grazing

#### Pros

- Higher forage quality & yields
- Gives pastures time to regrow
- Can lengthen growing season
- Better distribution of manure

#### Cons

- Forage production not as high as an intensive system
- May require alternative feed
- Higher fence & water costs
- Soil & water quality decline over time, but not as quickly as in a continuous system



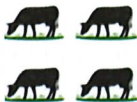
## Intensive Rotational Grazing

### Pros

- **Maximum forage production**
- **High stocking rates**
- **Most even distribution of manure**
- **Weed & brush control**
- **Requires little additional feed**
- **Soil & water quality increase over time**

### Cons

- **Requires careful forage supply monitoring**
- **Initial costs higher**
- **Requires more intensive mgmt.**

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In summary, while the investment may be initially higher to implement an intensive rotational grazing system, the long term benefits are worth it. In addition, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) through NRCS and the Resource Enhancement And Protection Program (REAP) through SCC can help offset the cost of installing a rotational grazing system. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) through FSA can also provide financial assistance for pasture improvements. Contact the District or the respective agency that administers these programs for more information.



### No-Till Equipment Rental

As a reminder, the Clearfield County Conservation District is allowing Jefferson County farmers to rent one of their 10 ft. Great Plains no-till drills to plant crops such as soybeans, oats, wheat, hay/alfalfa, sorghum, pasture mixes, or cover crops. This drill will not be permitted to plant food plots or any other crop that isn't for agronomic use. The fees will be \$12/acre for all cash crops and \$7/acre for all cover crops. Farmers interested in using the no-till drill should contact the Jefferson County Conservation District (JCCD) at least 1 month in advance before using the drill. We will need to know the dates that you hope to use it, crops that will be planted, and the total amount of acres you are planning to plant. A rental agreement will need to be completed and on file before farmers can use the drill. This rental agreement will be available at the Jefferson County Conservation District by mail or email.



## Agri-Link Program

The Agriculture-linked low Interest Loan (AgriLink) Program, amended under Act 39 of 2019, provides 'low-interest' loans to assist farmers in implementation of best management practices (BMPs) listed in approved Act 38 nutrient management plans, Chapter 91 manure management plans, Agricultural Erosion and Sedimentation plans (Ag E&S) or conservation plans. The AgriLink Program is administered by the PA Treasury, in collaboration with the State Conservation Commission who subsidizes interest rates to provide a true low-interest loan for farmers through eligible commercial lenders and the Farm Credit Service. It is the intent of the AgriLink Program to offer a low-interest loan alternative if a conventional loan is not practical for the farmer.

BMPs that are approved by the Commission and are listed in an approved nutrient management plan, a manure management plan, an Ag E&S plan or other acceptable conservation plan are eligible for AgriLink Program loans. BMPs may be either structural or management oriented and shall be designed and constructed to conform to the standards found in the Pennsylvania Technical Guide.

### Funding Opportunities

AgriLink provides loan funding to eligible projects through participating commercial lending institutions (an eligible state depository) or an office of the Farm Credit Service such as AgChoice or MidAtlantic Farm Service.

- The loan may be structured as a construction loan.
- The amount of the loan is based on eligible costs submitted by the farmer (borrower) for an approved project.
- A single loan awarded to an eligible borrower may not exceed \$250,000.
- The term of the loan may not exceed 12 years.
- The targeted interest rate will change periodically depending on the Commission's subsidy and the current market interest rate. Please note: the final interest rate may be a fixed or variable rate based on available options from the lender.

The availability of AgriLink Program loan to an eligible farmer is, in part, at the discretion of the lender based on a financial review of a loan application. Participating lenders retain the right to evaluate all loan applications according to their usual lending standards and offer a loan program from their portfolio which best fits the needs of the farmer. The AgriLink Program is currently available in all counties in Pennsylvania.

### How to Apply

1. Applicants can apply for an AgriLink Program loan through any participating commercial lender designated as a state depository or any office of the Farm Credit Service.

A farmer must supply the participating lender with the following documentation at the time of application:

2. A copy of a completed 'Borrower Assurance of Eligibility and Verification' form verifying one or more of the appropriate plans has been developed for the operation.

A copy of a completed 'Statement of Concurrence of Project Costs' validating reasonable costs for construction of the best management practices.

3. A copy of a completed 'Borrower Affidavit and Assurance of use of Funds' assuring that the principle amount of the loan, when combined with any other funding sources obtained for the implementation of the project does not exceed the actual costs of the best management practice and, the loan funds will be exclusively used for the implementation of the best management practice.

Once the lender has approved the loan application and agreed to issue an AgriLink Program loan, the interest rate reduction will be applied and the terms of the loan agreed upon between the lender and the borrower.

For questions, contact Johan Berger, Financial Assistance Programs Manager, State Conservation Commission at 717-772-4189 or [joberger@pa.gov](mailto:joberger@pa.gov)