2/11/97

GRAZING STRATEGIES

The proposed strategy is to graze the Signal Butte (existing) and Juniper Ditch (proposed) pastures prior to the major growing season.

1. Timing of the major growing season varies with elevation.

2. Timing of the major growing season varies annually.

3. For this strategy to work, a safe growing season must be established, taking into account the variables, so that grazing occurs prior to the major growing season.

4. The off date is critical. It is probably 4/30 for the Juniper Ditch and Signal Butte pastures. This date can be determined more accurately with experience implementing the system.

5. Using this strategy there will be little or no grazing of regrowth.

6. Using this strategy there will be light use of the current year's growth.

   - Generally 80% of the current annual growth occurs after grazing ceases.

   - This allows for the development of vigorous plants with well-developed root systems.

7. The combination of the new and the old provides a nutritious forage.

   - The new growth is very high in protein and water, low in carbohydrates.

   - The old growth is high in dry matter, very low in protein, and has some digestible carbohydrates.

8. At this time of year, distribution is very good.

   - Water requirements are met to a degree by the:

     water in the new growth,
     moisture that occurs on the old growth.

   - Temperatures are cool.

9. The greatest problem with this strategy is the temptation to

extend the off date further into the growing season.

10. This strategy is <u>not</u> applicable to saturated clay soils.

11. This strategy is excellent for providing soil cover.

    - Standing vegetation protects the soil during periods of Winter and Spring runoff.

    - Livestock use is limited to a two week period, after which regrowth of the vegetation protects the soil.

12. This works well for both upland and riparian areas.

13. For the strategy to work, the pastures must be stocked at a rate so that uniform use of the field is achieved by the off date.

The proposed strategy is to graze Mary Hall, Juniper Hill and Yankee Jim Uplands each once out of every three years during the critical growing period, allowing two rest years for each pasture.

1. This strategy applies to primarily June use on the North Tablelands.

    - Grazing in these pastures could occur a little earlier, at the end of May.

    - Elevations of the three pastures are:
      Mary Hall and Juniper Hill 4,900-5,300',
      Yankee Jim 5,300-5,800'.

2. This strategy provides two years of rest following one of use during the critical growing season, allowing the plants to rebuild root systems and vigor.

3. For this strategy to work, the pastures should get moderate, uniform use, possibly with patches or areas of heavy use.

    - The two years of rest following grazing are to offset the heavy use.

4. During some years there will be limited regrowth on the uplands. The regrowth period will be longer on the riparian areas.

5. Bitterbrush is not a major component of the diet of cattle during this time. After July 1, bitterbrush consumption increases.

The proposed strategy is to graze medusahead/clay pastures during the critical growing season every year.

1. The pastures affected are Payne and Little Juniper.

2. Grazing would take place during the period of 1 May through 30 June.

3. During most of this season medusahead is eaten by cattle. However, by the last two weeks of June it may have lost some of its palatability due to the development of awns.

4. Because medusahead is accepted by cattle for most of the grazing season, the cattle are not forced to seek out perennial grasses until near the end of the season.

   - Poa species mature sooner than more robust perennial species, therefore this strategy allows the Poa's more time to complete their growth cycles prior to being grazed.

   - Poa's won't be as negatively affected as much as other perennials (bluebunch wheatgrass, Stipa's).

5. The level of utilization on the medusahead is not a concern because we are not trying to promote vigor in medusahead.

   - Protection of soils by leaving adequate vegetative cover on the ground is a concern.

6. Grazing capacities will be higher because utilization levels on medusahead are not a concern.

7. It is recognized that this strategy will not promote perennial species, but it is being accepted at this time as a short-term strategy in Payne and Little Juniper.

8. A long-term goal in these pastures will be to establish and manage for fire-tolerant perennial species.

   - This long term goal should be approached in a logical manner; and we should start take steps to achieve the goal.

9. A short-term benefit of the strategy is the reduction of fine fuels/fire hazard and the reduced risk of the remaining shrubs being burned.

   - Fires will be easier to control.

   - Total burned acres may be reduced.

The proposed strategy is to leave BLM as much as two weeks early and go to the Forest, then return to BLM for up to two weeks in the Fall.

1. The benefit is the postponement of two weeks of grazing from the critical growing season to the Fall, after the end of the critical growing season.

2. The Fall grazing can be accommodated.

   - A disadvantage of the strategy is that cattle utilization of bitterbrush in the Juniper Hill pasture will be greater in September than it would be in June, reducing forage availability for deer and pronghorn.

   - Another disadvantage of this strategy is that use of riparian areas would be greater in September than in June. The regrowth would be grazed off, reducing the effectiveness of the vegetation to protect soils from runoff and entrap sediment.

3. Forage values during the Fall grazing period would be adequate for dry cows only.

   - Forage values are not adequate for cows with calves.

The proposed strategy is to continue the current management of the Holding Fields.

1. The current grazing scheme of using these fields near the end of the critical growing season at the light/moderate level seems to have maintained the vigor of the perennial plants.

The proposed strategy is to improve production in the Yankee Jim Meadow by seeding, irrigation, and fencing and to graze the meadow during the period July through October until a patchy appearance is achieved.

1. The present condition of vegetation in the Yankee Jim Meadow is way below potential.

2. Irrigation is needed to fully benefit cranes, waterfowl, and livestock.

3. The irrigation system must be fixed to achieve the vegetation potential in the meadow.

   - The seeding of meadow with desirable meadow species is needed.

- If a permittee is to irrigate the meadow, there needs to be enough forage available to make it worthwhile. If not, than BLM should irrigate.

4. Fences are an integral part of the system to allow livestock grazing.

   - Yankee Jim Meadow fence.

   - Yankee Jim perimeter fence.