



Stocking Rates for Operators of Small Livestock Farms

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MANAGE WASTES

Too many animals living in too small an area produce more manure and urine



than soil and plants can process. Excess nitrogen from wastes can drain through the soil, and contaminate the groundwater that fills local wells and reservoirs. Nutrients and bacteria from animal wastes can also flow over the soil surface with rainfall or snowmelt, contaminating streams and wetlands.

To minimize problems:

- Locate barnyards, pens and pastures so that wetlands, ponds and streams are protected from livestock wastes.
- Construct fences, diversions, and green grass filters to limit runoff to water resources.
- Use stock tanks or buckets for watering animals, not streams or ponds.
- Cover stored manure with a roof or plastic tarp.
- Clean farmyard and spread or remove manure regularly.
- Monitor surface waters and wells for contamination.

Manage your pasture “stocking rates”

To maintain green and growing pastures, your stocking rate must fit your land’s carrying capacity. Too many or too few animals can degrade and devalue your pasture with weeds, parasites, and wastes.

Managing the number of livestock and the amount of time livestock spend on any area is necessary for a pasture to:

1. Provide nutritious feed
2. Process wastes
3. Regrow

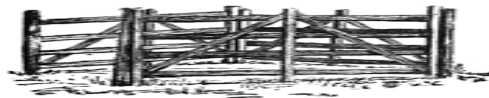
In general, one well-managed acre is recommended for each “1000 lbs of livestock”. But, more than two acres of pasture for each “1000 lbs of livestock” often results in under-grazed, overgrown, and unproductive pastures.

*The USDA defines 1000 lbs of livestock as “one animal unit”.
What weighs 1000 lbs?*

One small cow or 4-6 sheep/goats or 250 chickens or an average horse

To maintain proper stocking rates

- Change the total fenced area
- Change livestock numbers
- Use intensive rotational grazing
- Lease additional pasture
- Restrict pasture access for part of the day



A SMALL FARM PLAN STARTS WITH THE LAND

GRAZING IS GOOD

- Pasturing is natural and healthy.
- Pasturing allows for natural distribution and recycling of the nutrients in manure and urine.
- Pasture-produced meat, milk, and eggs have a different quality, flavor, and fat.
- Pasture-based farms can be more profitable. Good grazing can reduce feed costs.
- Pastures keep fields and the landscape open.



Too many animals?

Consider moving some animals to another property for part of the year to reduce overall amount of manure deposited per acre annually.

If you don’t own enough land

- Talk with other landowners or your local Land Trust about leasing and conserving grazing land in your town.
- Ask about open fields in your area, and offer grazing to keep the fields open.

What is your farm's carrying capacity?



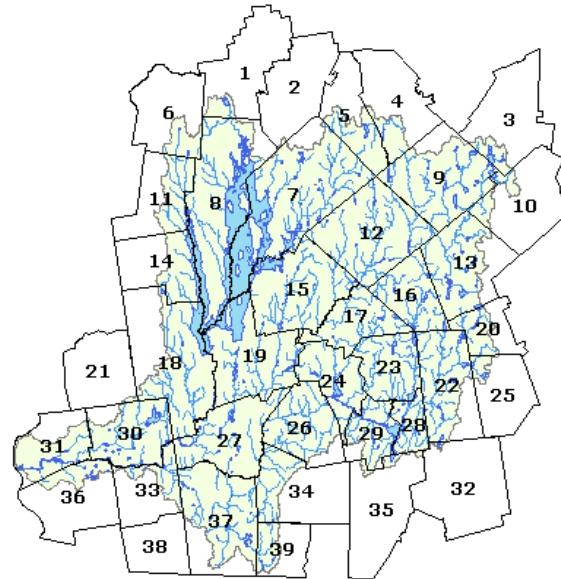
How many livestock can your land support?

To understand your property's carrying capacity, assess your farm's terrain, soils, water and plants each season.

Overgrazed pastures, under-designed farmyards, mismanaged animal wastes or too many animals can endanger your farm's productivity, your community's water supplies, and the natural environment.

PROTECT WATER QUALITY in the CHICOPEE BASIN

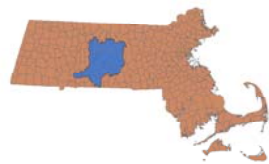
Your farm management can affect natural water sources and their safe use for drinking, swimming, and household use. Our basin is laced with streams and wetlands, including the Swift, Ware and Quaboag Rivers, and the Quabbin Reservoir.



Chicopee Basin Towns

Athol	2	Palmer	27
Barre	12	Paxton	20
Belchertown	18	Pelham	14
Brimfield	34	Petersham	7
Brookfield	29	Phillipston	5
Charlton	32	Princeton	10
Chicopee	31	Rutland	13
East Brookfield	28	Shutesbury	11
Granby	21	Spencer	22
Hampden	38	Springfield	36
Hardwick	15	Sturbridge	35
Hubbardston	9	Templeton	4
Leicester	25	Wales	39
Ludlow	30	Ware	19
Monson	37	Warren	26
New Braintree	17	Wendell	6
New Salem	8	West Brookfield	24
North Brookfield	23	Westminster	3
Oakham	16	Wilbraham	33
Orange	1		

The Conservation Partnership for Grazing in the Chicopee Basin is a group of professionals, organizations, and enterprises working with farmers to assure good grazing, livestock husbandry, and land management. For more information contact the Conservation Partnership for Grazing c/o the New England Small Farm Institute 413-323-4531 or www.smallfarm.org. Ask for a listing of partners, services and materials to improve pastures and grazing.



See our Resource Notebook at your local library for more information on managing grazing and your land.

Pasture overgrown? Pasture overgrazed?

Try Intensive Grazing

Subdivide your pasture into 6 or more small areas (paddocks).

Move your animals from area to area frequently; limit the access to each small area based on grass growth.

Graze each paddock for short periods: between 1 - 7 days.

Start grazing when grass is 6-9 inches tall.

Stop grazing when grass is 2-3 inches tall.

Rest each paddock after grazing so plants and soil have time to recover and regrow. Try alternating 1 week grazing with 2 weeks rest.

Mow weeds before they set seed.

Adapt your grazing management as the seasons and grass growth change.

