

# ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Grazing cattle on pasture is a way to improve pasture management, sequester carbon in the soil and optimize grazing for soil health purposes. Building healthier soils can promote more carbon capture and biodiversity. Rotational grazing can also spread out the concentration of natural fertilizer, or manure, across a wider area. The benefits of grazing on fresh pasture extend across the entire dairy herd, including lactating cows.

## Implementation Tips

- Establish an appropriate ratio of cattle to pasture acres to manage nutritional requirements.
- Provide access to water and shade for grazing animals.
- Develop a schedule for cattle to rotate through pastures to ensure pastures, plant and soil health is maintained.
- Space grazing at least 30 days apart to allow for sufficient regrowth.
- Consult a dairy nutrition advisor to manage your herd's nutritional needs, like adding mineral supplements to a forage grazing diet.

## Resources

- **Webpage:** Dairy Cows on Pasture: Myths versus Facts, Lactanet ([dfc-plc.info/ROTG1](https://dfc-plc.info/ROTG1))
- **Website:** Advanced Grazing Systems, Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association ([dfc-plc.info/ROTG2](https://dfc-plc.info/ROTG2))
- **Manual:** Forage BMP Manual, Canadian Forage and Grasslands Association ([dfc-plc.info/ROTG3](https://dfc-plc.info/ROTG3))
- **Research study:** Dutreuil, M., Wattiaux, M., Hardie, C.A., Cabrera, V.E., 2014. Feeding strategies and manure management for cost-effective mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions from dairy farms in Wisconsin. Journal of Dairy Science 97, 5904–5917. ([dfc-plc.info/ROTG4](https://dfc-plc.info/ROTG4))

## Benefits



Carbon sequestration



Increased resiliency to the effects of climate change



Improved soil health



Enhanced biodiversity



**Estimated return on investment**  
Medium



**On-farm emission mitigation potential** +++

“We’ve been doing rotational grazing for 35 years. We have one and one-third acre paddocks, moving cows to new grass twice a day. The milking cows go first, and the dry cows follow. We try to make sure half the grass is left in the field when they’re done. The best height for the grass is about 8-10 inches, roughly up to the cows’ knees. Give it about five weeks to grow back before grazing again.”

— Marte, a dairy farmer in Ontario

