

# Multi-Species Management Considerations

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## Multi-species Choices!?!

- Cattle
- Sheep
- Goats
- Llamas
- Horses
- ???

## Advantages: Why you should have a multi-species management program!

- Increase marketing opportunities
  - Seasonality of sales is broadened
  - Market several times a year
- Increase products to be sold
- Select from broader array of forages
- Distribute grazing use in different ways
- Get greater return from fixed resource
- Spread work load
- Some animals are easier to handle

## Disadvantages: Why you should never try this!

- Animals with very different needs
- Tractability can be an issue
- Too many things to keep track of
- Many different parturition times
- Studs and many herds are an issue
- You can't be an expert at many things
- The stocking rates gets out of hand
- Animals compete with one another

## Multi-species Management in the Balance

- More than one enterprise can be interesting and improve product offerings
  - Hint... Keep it simple
  - E.G. Sheep and goats, or cows and sheep
- Select species that you like and can handle
- Decide if this is a lifestyle decision or a profit driven enterprise.... Don't confuse them
- Match forage resources in kind, quality and quantity to animal choices

## Things you should know

- Irrigated land may produce enough forage for 1.5 AU/acres for the growing season
- Dryland may require 3-5 acres per AUM!
- Rotational management in either case is required to maintain the forage resource
- Know the capacity and the limitations of your land
- Animals that must be fed for long periods of time take inordinate time and care and are seldom profitable

## Bliss with your animals

- Diverse forages create environments where multi-species of animals do well
- Abundance of forage resources, year-long simplifies life greatly
- You may not have to own them all the time
- Multi-species of animals may help your neighbors... or not!
- Good fences create easy an life for you and your neighbors

## Diverse forages for diverse animals... How do you get there?

- Rotational grazing program with 40 or more days of to recover
- Moist lands where water is accumulated
- Appropriate fertilization
- Weed management
- Supplementation/feeding when necessary... Heavy grazing use is the surest method to eliminate diversity and encourage weeds
- Clip pastures when required

## Grazing Approaches

- Rotation!!
- Choose a stocking rate that works
- Have enough pastures
- Follow-through system
- Managing for recovery
- Increasing and decreasing selectivity
- Effective use of the forage that you have

## Choosing a Stocking Rate

- **The appropriate stocking rate:**
  - Is one where you plan your rotation and you don't have to move ahead of time
  - Where the rotation length is create regrowth and recovery
  - Forage use is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the leaf area in the pasture
  - You have residue at the end of the grazing season
  - Mantian good ground cover

## Pasture species for Animal Species

- Pick plants that your animals or combination of animals will use
  - Orchardgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, some brome grasses
  - Leafy is best!
- For small animals avoid coarse grasses
  - Tall fescue, smooth brome, tall wheatgrass and most warm season tall grasses
- Sheep and goats need forbs
- Larger animals may be used to “clean-up” coarser plants

## Pasture mixes

- Choose simple mixtures
- No more than two grasses on one forb
- Choose plants that are compatible.. Don't mix bunchgrass with rhizomatous grasses
- Pick leafy grasses that mix with other leafy grasses

## Informed Animal Choices

- Mix animals that have different preferences for forages
  - Sheep use forbs and grasses mixed with goats that use some forbs but use grasses preferentially
  - Horses can be mixed with cows or sheep because they can use coarse forages and still do well
  - Llamas can use low quality forages and prosper
  - Aggressive animals can disrupt the grazing program
  - Take care when mixing animals with young offspring with “dry” animals

## Care and Training of Animals

- Recent research clearly indicates that animals can be taught to eat a broader array of plants
- This happens in two ways
  - Early conditioning
  - Induced behavior
- When animals are taught to choose a broader array of plants they will use your forage resource more effectively
- However, don't starve animals to force them to use the last Straw!

## Conclusions

- Mixes of grazing animals can be great!
  - They use forages more efficiently
  - You get more product and more diverse products
- Too many animals or too many kinds can be a wreck
- Good pasture management is required
- Good fences will make your life Easier
- Rocking on your back porch watching your animals graze is a pleasure