

WILL IMPROVED GRAZING PAY FOR EXTRA FENCING AND WATER COST?

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Expectation is founded on faith, and in faith lays opportunities. I suppose as we look at most farming operations most changes occur from force not by choice. What I propose today and hope to convince most of you; is that here is an opportunity to make more profit, if you're willing to change and have faith that it will work.

Most of us have heard of, if not practiced rotation grazing for a long time. The question many ask, is it worthwhile. Does better grazing management make me any more money? I hope to at least provide some insight as to answers to that question.

Rather than trying to prove how much various systems improve profits, I am going to narrow down the cost associated with a few options and let you decide if it will pay in your system or one you may be considering.

As we start this process we must define our parameters. Let's use a 40 acre field with 25 cow/calf pairs as a base to start. I'm order to give you a conservative answer, I want to use high material cost, knowing you may be able to do better.

4-5 inch wood corner post	5.00 each
High Tensile wire	1 to 2 cents per foot (55 to 75 dollars per roll)
Polywire	2 to 3 cents per foot (23 to 40 dollars per roll)
Step-in posts	89 cents to 3.00 each
Water system expansion	
Pipe on top of the ground	25 to 30 cents per foot
Pipe buried	75 cents to one dollar per foot
Portable waterers	60 to 100 dollars each
Permanent waters	400 dollars plus

I am not going to use a labor expense at this point, however we will add a labor cost in a few minutes.

Our field is 1325 ft square containing a little over 40 acres.

Options 1. Suppose we divide this field twice, once each direction, giving us 4, 10 acre paddocks with one water point in the center.

Using polywire	2650 ft @ 3 cents per foot cost	79.50
Step-in posts	88 @ 3.00	264.00
Portable water tank		100.00
665 ft pipe on top of the ground		<u>199.50</u>
	Total	\$643.00

The important question to ask with each option is; what would it take to pay for this?

25 cows, 23 calves -- $643.00/23 = 27.90$ pr calf @ .75 lb 37 lbs per calf or

21 lbs per acre

This would cover all costs in one year, use the materials for 5 years and the cost would be 4 lbs per acre

Option 2. Same as one but using High Tensile wire and a few wood corner posts

Water cost		299.50
Step-in post	80 @ 3.00	240.00
Wood Post	8 @ 5.00	40.00
Wire	2650 ft @ .02 per ft	<u>53.00</u>
	Total	632.50

Same math; still only about **21 lbs per acre**, more labor but about the same out-of-pocket cost.

Option 3. Same wire approach as option two but using a permanent water source.

Wire and posts		333.00
Waterer		400.00
Pipe	665 @ 1.00 ft	<u>665.00</u>
	Total	1398.00

Over double the cost, at **35 lbs per acre**, but if you use the water system for 10 years, you are still taking about only about 2.5 lbs per acre per year for water development.

21 pounds per acre, 35 pounds per acre, so what! What does this mean in terms of farm profit?

Research at the University of Kentucky and many other places show that by dividing a continuous grazed field into 2 to 4 paddocks will increase the gain per acre from 150 to over 300 pounds per acres. If it costs 21 pounds to install the system and you get even 150 pound gain, you do the math.

You can use about any material cost and any calf price, charge 20 dollars an hour for your time, and the way I look at it: water and fence development Pays..... BIG TIME!