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CONSERVATION PRACTICES USED WITH CATTLE MANAGEMENT

Why Does it matter?

To insure quality research at the Conservation Center, a uniform group of healthy beef cattle are needed. Research animals are provided by maintaining a cow-calf herd managed as part of a Whole Farm Management System. Management practices are intended to meet specific needs of research, while recognizing the need for long-term resource conservation and sustainability. We strive to protect soil, water and air quality while producing sufficient quality and quantity of grazing forage. We manage the grazing animal with resource conservation as a priority, while being mindful of the economic realities of producers in the Southeast.

What was done?

Conservation practices used were Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) suggested Best Management Practices (BMP). Animals excluded from streams and ponds using alternative water sources. Heavy use areas constructed around watering and feeding locations. Rotational grazing and stockpiling grasses for year-round grazing. Winter feeder retrofitted from a hay barn. Grass water ways smoothed, planted and fenced.

What was found?

Exclusion of animals from streams and ponds led to less streambank erosion and lower levels of fecal indicator bacteria in streams. Construction of heavy use areas minimized soil degradation and surface run off. Rotational grazing with appropriate stocking rates reduced eroded areas, increased forage production and reduced labor requirements. Winter feeder reduced hay and pasture loss and labor requirements while increasing animal health and providing shade. Animals are calmer and easier to work. The waste is dryer and easier to handle.

What is the impact?

In a Southern Piedmont commercial cow-calf herd, practices can be implemented that will conserve soil and water quality while providing year-round grazing and quality forage. Careful planning with regards to rotational grazing, heavy use areas, winter feeders, alternative water sources and reduction of stocking rate provided quick turn around for improvements such as herd health, labor requirements and conservation of natural resources.

Research Team and Contact information

Cooperating Personnel:

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