

Attention all beef cattle operators! It's time to tune in to the vital message of strategic stocking rates for your operations, brought to you by Lee Dudley.

Gone are the days of guessing and hoping for the best when it comes to managing your grasslands and cattle. Today, success hinges on a careful blend of science and artistry, particularly in determining the right stocking rates.

Why are stocking rates so crucial? Well, with input costs skyrocketing, it's no longer feasible to just turn out a hundred head of cattle and hope for the best. Forage production forms the very foundation of your stocking rate decisions, and grazing your cattle on forage-based pasture emerges as the most economical approach.

But how do you determine the perfect stocking rate? It's not just a guessing game; it's a systematic process. First, you need to calculate your animals' daily requirements. Then, estimate your potential forage production. Compare the two to determine the optimal stocking rate. And remember, it's not a set-it-and-forget-it deal; you need to periodically monitor your pastures for necessary adjustments.

Now, we know these calculations aren't set in stone. Weather fluctuations and variations in forage production mean you'll need to make periodic adjustments. Did you know that when forage is abundant, cattle can consume up to 2.5% of their body weight in dry matter daily? That's nearly 9,125 pounds annually for a 1,000-pound cow!

Once you've got your livestock requirements down, it's time to predict the available forage from your pastures. This can be done through various methods, from historical records to grass height measurements. And don't forget about maintaining proper stubble height; it's crucial for the recovery of your forage resources.

But wait, how do you actually determine the stocking rate? It's all about meticulous calculation based on available forage and animal requirements. Whether it's for the entire growing season or a shorter period, the key is finding that balance.

Why does all of this matter? Because maintaining that balance between forage supply and livestock demand is what ensures the sustainability of your beef cattle operation. Fail to meet this balance, especially during droughts, and you're looking at detrimental consequences.

So, let's ensure the resilience and longevity of your operation. Continuous evaluation of your range forage, strategic stocking rate practices, and monitoring of resources will keep your operation thriving amidst fluctuating environmental conditions.

Remember, your success starts with strategic evaluation of stocking rates. Tune in, take heed, and secure the future of your beef cattle operation today!"