



1. How much forage (aka dry matter, DM) will your cattle eat each day?

3% of body weight (in dry matter) is average

2+% for dry cows

3% for steers

4% for high milk / thin cows

Example:

Herd of 30 cows, each weigh 1000 lbs

Each cow eats on average 3% of body weight [$1000 \times .03$] = 30 lbs DM eaten per day

30 cows x 30 lbs = 900 lbs DM consumed per day

But most cows weigh more.

If 30 cows each weigh 1200 pounds:

$1200 \times .03$ is 36 lb DM

30 cows x 36 pounds is 1080 pounds

or almost 200 more pounds of DM required per day for the herd.

2. How much forage is available to be eaten?

Measure forage in 5-6 different spots in inches, using a forage stick if available and then average

Multiply average inches by pounds/acre-inch

Total is amount of dry matter (DM) in one acre.

Example:

6 measurements: 6, 6, 5, 7, 5, 7 = $36 \div 6 = 6$

6 average inches x 300 lbs acre/ inch

Total: 1800 lbs per acre available forage

3. How do you figure out how often to move your cattle?

If pasture has 1800 lbs of forage (6 inches) per acre & you wish to leave around 2 inches (600 lbs) of residue, that leaves 1200 lbs to eat.

30 head may eat 1080 lbs of forage which is roughly an acre a day.

But, that is not the whole story.

A good rule of thumb is: cattle eat at least 50% of forage available, if moved frequently.

But if left in an area for more than 3 days, they waste some of the forage

So, for a weekly move, cannot simply multiply by 7.

Multiply by 7 then add in 1/2 again--

$1 \times 7 = 7 + 3 \frac{1}{2} = 10 \frac{1}{2}$ acres for a week's worth of grazing

4. Is there another way to estimate forage/acres needed?

Take half, leave half method. (It's not usually the best method)

Example: herd of 30 cows, each weigh 1000 lbs

Each cow eats 3% of body weight [$1000 \times .03$] = 30 lbs DM eaten per day

30 cows \times 30 lbs = 900 lbs DM consumed per day

If 50% eaten, double the total amount of DM to have available per day

$900 \text{ lbs} \times 2 = 1800 \text{ lbs}$ of DM for the 30 cows.

If paddock should supply 1800 lbs of forage, (6 inches @ 300#/ac-in= 1800), need one acre.

Stock density is 30,000 lbs/acre (30 cows@ 1,000 lbs).

But, if paddock has 2700 lbs of forage, need 2/3 acre.

Stock density is 45,000 lbs/acre.



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