

Tools and Techniques for Outsmarting a Cow

If left to themselves, livestock will graze where and when they choose. Successful riparian management requires modifying animal behaviour to control grazing patterns, timing and intensity.



1. Alter livestock distribution

- ◆ salt and mineral location,
- ◆ stock water development,
- ◆ drift or temporary fencing,
- ◆ animal placement/herding,
- ◆ alter species or class of livestock,
- ◆ alternative shade or shelter.

2. Control access to water

- ◆ provide off-stream, or off-site watering areas.
- ◆ provide ease of access through gravelled or hardened access points, that livestock will prefer to use.

3. Alter the timing of grazing when riparian areas are vulnerable

- ◆ avoid soft streambanks and shorelines or times that may be stressful to key plants such as tree seedlings and shrubs in autumn or winter.

4. Add more rest to the grazing cycle

- ◆ this enhances plant vigour, allows for bank building and allows tree seedlings to grow and reach a more grazing resistant stage.

5. Control grazing intensity

- ◆ intensity is a function of number of animals times duration of grazing.
- ◆ lower intensity results in better plant vigour and species composition.
- ◆ grazing intensity may also be regulated by providing supplemental feed.

6. Riparian pastures

- ◆ fence the riparian area into a separate pasture, with separate management objectives and strategies.
- ◆ riparian pastures increase your control over the grazing process (animal numbers, season grazed, length of grazing and rest periods).

7. Grazing systems

- ◆ a grazing system defines recurring periods and patterns of grazing and rest for two or more pastures. Grazing systems put range management principles and practices into effect.
- ◆ these grazing systems are a management tool to enhance livestock production and maintain or improve the plant community.

- ◆ when properly designed, a grazing system provides adequate rest and deferment periods to offset the impact of grazing and trampling during the grazing period.
- ◆ examples include deferred rotation, rest rotation and time controlled systems. Case studies of grazing systems are presented in the following section.

8. Corridor or exclusion fencing

- ◆ although not a favoured option for all situations, exclusion of livestock grazing may be the only option to deal with riparian grazing problems in high risk or chronic problem areas.

