

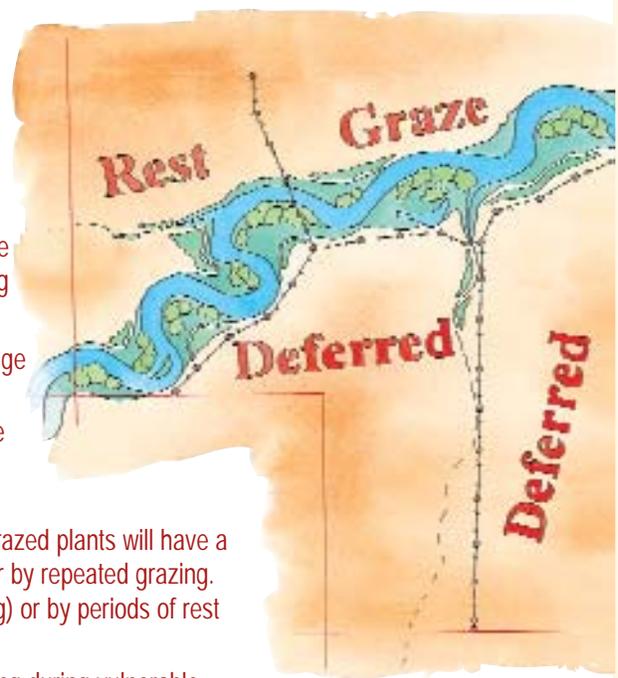
# Rotational Grazing

Rotational grazing involves a planned sequence of grazing and rest periods.

Rotational grazing normally requires subdividing the range into smaller pasture units. It is possible to implement a rotational grazing program with existing pasture units or even through herding practices.

A grazing rotation enables the manager to better apply the key principles of range management.

- ◆ Animal distribution will improve because animals will be forced to use the overall range landscape more evenly. Livestock grazing will be less selective, especially in riparian areas.
- ◆ More effective rest will be achieved by shortening the grazing period. Grazed plants will have a better chance to rest and regain vigour rather than being stressed further by repeated grazing. Rest may be provided either by periods of deferral (delayed early grazing) or by periods of rest after grazing.
- ◆ Season of use can be controlled to avoid or reduce the stresses of grazing during vulnerable periods such as during spring runoff when banks are fragile and easily trampled and fall when browsing can be excessive.
- ◆ Better overall carryover of litter is achieved. More uniform grazing will reduce grazing intensity in riparian areas and make more efficient use of upland forage.



## Deferred Rotational Grazing at Beaverhill Lake



The Stauffer family (Milo, Bonnie, Scott, Darren and Julie) have a livestock operation that borders on Beaverhill Lake, near Tofield. Since 1983 they have developed an eight pasture rotation on about 980 acres of deeded and lease land. Four of the pastures are lakeshore ones; the remainder are upland ones. The rotation begins in late May on upland pastures, which defers use of riparian ones until July 15 in most years. Adjustments to drought conditions has meant supplemental feeding to allow deferral and to allow regrowth of riparian pastures. Grazing use in a typical season would be with 137 cow/calf pairs. Following use of each pasture, six weeks to two months of rest are provided, to allow regrowth, and then the grazing sequence is repeated. Since most of the pastures contain tame forages this sequence keeps the plants in a productive, vegetative state. Livestock are removed by September 30 and go onto stubble and hayland. Milo has reference areas in each of the eight pastures where he gauges utilization to meet a goal of 50% (take half-leave half). This provides good carryover of forage, to conserve moisture and to maximize regrowth. The sequence of pasture use changes from year to year based on pasture readiness.



*Rotational grazing allows better control of livestock distribution and provides growing session rest for lakeshore pastures.*



*Dugouts are fenced, with water pumped to troughs, to conserve water and reduce maintenance costs.*

Water developments facilitate this rotational system. Three fenced dugouts, with water pumped to troughs, are located so each supplies water to more than one pasture. This has increased water quality for livestock and has almost eliminated foot rot which was a chronic issue when livestock watered from the lake. Prior to 1983 and the development of cross-fencing, this was mostly one large pasture. It was very difficult to control livestock distribution and utilization; water supply was limited in the uplands and cattle parked on lakeshore areas. Investing in this grazing system has provided the Stauffer family with higher beef production, more control of livestock, drought proofing and a healthy lakeshore.