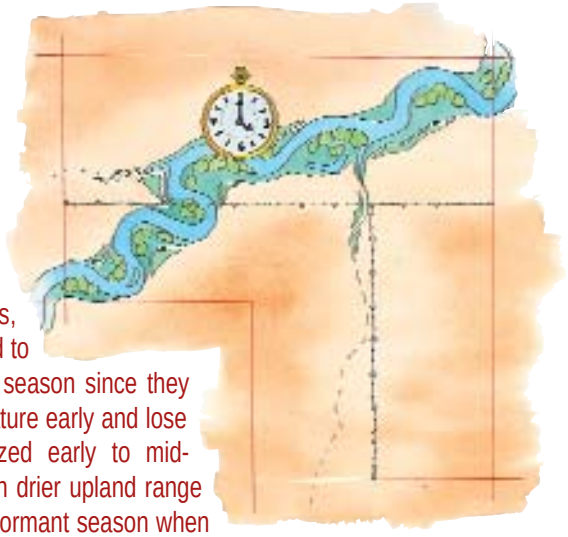
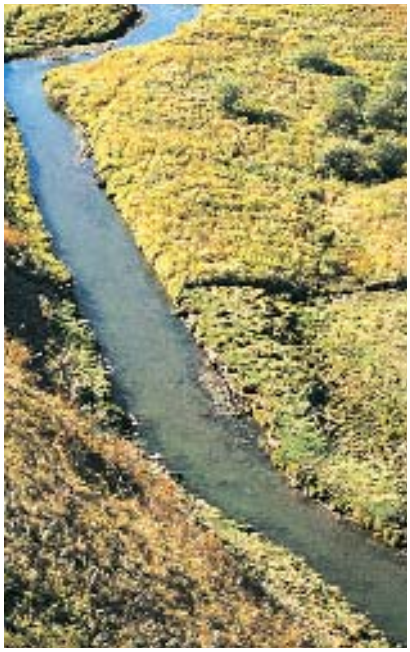
Time-Controlled Grazing



A general trend in grazing management on many Alberta ranches is to shorten the grazing time, particularly during the phase of most active plant growth.

On many foothill ranches, riparian or lowland fields tend to be used during the growing season since they tend to have species that mature early and lose nutritional value if not grazed early to mid-season. Forage supplies on drier upland range tend to be "banked" for the dormant season when native bunch grasses can be used to best advantage. This practice may be very beneficial to riparian areas. Time-controlled systems minimize grazing of the regrowth that plants require for rebuilding roots and energy supplies. The actual sequence of use may not change much from year to year.



Fenceline contrasts show differences in livestock management and how streambanks respond. The healthy riparian area is a result of time-controlled grazing on the Bluebird Valley Ranch.

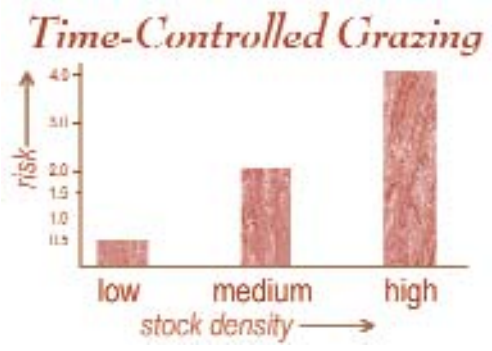
Bar S Ranch

The Bar S Ranch, owned and managed by Clay Chattaway and sons Scott, Christian and Morgan, sits at the head of the Mosquito Creek watershed. A 260 acre pasture that straddles Mosquito Creek was used as a holding field prior to 1925. The field was next to the ranch headquarters and, in earlier times, had become a "sacrifice" area. In later times the field was used for breeding, early in the grazing season. Management changes by the Chattaways in the 1980s have led to progressively shorter grazing periods. Now, the field is consistently used in the late-June to late-July period. It is rarely grazed for more than three weeks during this period, providing growing season rest both early and late. Another late season grazing may follow, but the bulk of the grazing use occurs in summer.

Adequate growing season rest, with time-controlled grazing, has allowed woody vegetation to establish and produce a healthy riparian area.

Risks of Time-Control

Time-control can be applied at light, moderate or heavy rates of stocking. There are places where heavy stocking for short periods can help you reach a resource management goal. However, there is increased risk with high livestock densities or stocking rates. Livestock become less selective in their grazing habits. If your goal is to restore woody plants, non-selective grazing may be very stressful to these species. Monitoring is the key. Be prepared to move animals if grazing impacts your riparian recovery goals.



Careful monitoring will help you reduce the risk to your riparian areas.