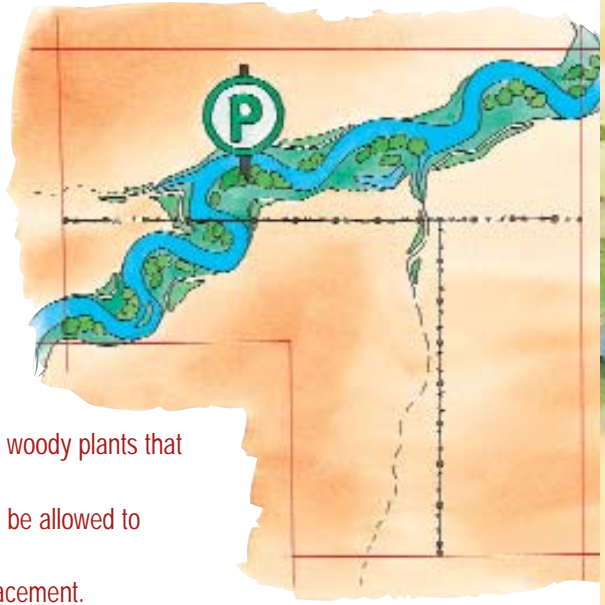


Holding Pastures

Holding pastures are those fields where livestock are held or “parked” for prolonged periods such as for winter feeding or calving, and where supplemental feeding is normally provided.

These fields may provide shelter through topography and/or wooded cover. Holding pastures may also describe fields where animals are gathered and held at high stocking densities for a relatively short period.



Problems Posed by Holding Pastures

- ◆ Holding pastures in riparian areas can experience very serious livestock impacts due to trampling of banks and intensive use of herbaceous and woody plants. Repeated, heavy use will threaten the woody plants that are so vital for livestock shelter and bank stability.
- ◆ Cattle browsing may damage woody seedlings and saplings that must be allowed to “release” and replace older trees or shrubs that age and die.
- ◆ In short, sustainable livestock shelter depends on tree and shrub replacement.



When can holding pastures work?

Holding pastures are hard to manage. The first step in successful management of these pastures is recognizing that livestock shelter and stable banks are the first priorities. Don't rely on the forage produced in these pastures.

In order for riparian areas to be maintained within holding pastures:

- ◆ Don't regard the vegetation in a holding pasture as forage. Provide adequate supplemental feed although sometimes livestock will still prefer native vegetation over supplemental feeds.
- ◆ Provide ease of access for livestock to water, or provide off-site watering locations.
- ◆ Direct herd pressure to the most resistant areas of the field through placement of supplements.
- ◆ Monitor livestock use of woody regrowth and forage. Provide more rest if tree replacement is suppressed, or provide alternative shelter.



McPherson Ranch

The McPherson Ranch maintains an example of a successful holding pasture on Pekisko Creek, west of High River. The 120 acre field is used as a feeding site for 130 heifer calves from November to February, followed by 50 to 70 two year old heifers from March to mid-May. The field may also shelter a few horses and sick cows year round. McPhersons maintain light grazing pressure on the riparian vegetation by providing adequate supplemental feed, by moving grazing pressure away from the cottonwood forest, and by providing off-stream water, in all seasons. Although livestock are present during vulnerable periods, this management combination has allowed regeneration of the woody plant community.



Careful grazing management on the McPherson Ranch allows regeneration of tree and shrub species.



The McPherson Ranch maintains a holding pasture in a riparian area dominated by cottonwood trees.