



This holding field on the Mt. Sentinel Ranch is used and riparian health maintained with careful management.



Mount Sentinel Ranch

The Mt. Sentinel Ranch west of Nanton, owned and operated by Francis and Bonnie Gardner and family, maintains a holding field near the ranch headquarters. Stimson Creek flows through this field which has been operated as a holding pasture since the ranch was established in the late 1890s. The field is used periodically, throughout the year, with the primary uses being to winter bulls and to provide summer horse pasture. Riparian area health in this holding pasture has been maintained with supplemental feeding, moving grazing pressure onto the upland portions, and limiting access to the stream for livestock watering.



Supplemental feeding is key to successfully managing holding pastures.

Holding Pastures - Is One Horse Too Many?

Acreage life draws many people to the country where the desire may be to have a small livestock operation or provide pasture for a few horses. However, many acreage properties lack the forage resources and the land base to adequately sustain livestock. Too many animals grazing too small a parcel of land can lead to serious degradation of soil and vegetation, especially in riparian areas. Some properties may not have enough forage to support even one horse or cow.

How big must an acreage be to support livestock and not damage range and riparian areas? The following table provides an estimate of the forage supply or carrying capacity that land parcels of 3 to 40 acres would provide for horses or cow/calf pairs. The table values indicate the number of horses or cow/calf pairs that could be sustained for a five month grazing period, assuming that adequate supplemental feed would be provided for the balance of the year. For example, if you have a 10 acre property that consists mainly of a grassland vegetation type you may be able to graze up to 3 horses or cow/calf pairs for five months. The shaded portion of the table highlights those combinations of acreage size and pasture type where forage resources are inadequate to support livestock. For those acreages, the presence of grazing animals will lead to resource degradation, especially in riparian areas.



Calculate Your Grazing Potential by Acreage Size and Vegetation Type

Vegetation Type	Parcel Size					
	3 acre	5 acre	10 acre	20 acre	30 acre	40 acre
Grassland	0.9	1.5	3.0	6.0	9.0	12.0
Willow Forest	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.9	1.4	2.0
Poplar Forest	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.2
Coniferous Forest	0.05	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6

Inside the shaded portion there isn't enough forage to support livestock; outside is an estimate is how many could be supported for up to five months.

Many other factors are also used to estimate livestock carrying capacity such as animal size, soil type of the pasture, the current condition of the pasture and the amount of moisture normally received for the area. Additional tools listed in **Other Resources and Materials** may be needed to fine tune the number of livestock that an acreage may sustain.