

WILL IMPROVED GRAZING PAY FOR EXTRA FENCING AND WATER COST?

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Expectation is founded on faith, and in faith lays opportunities. I suppose as we look at most farming operations most changes occur from force not by choice. What I propose today and hope to convince most of you; is that here is an opportunity to make more profit, if you're willing to change and have faith that it will work.

Most of us have heard of, if not practiced rotation grazing for a long time. The question many ask, is it worthwhile. Does better grazing management make me any more money? I hope to at least provide some insight as to answers to that question.

Rather than trying to prove how much various systems improve profits, I am going to narrow down the cost associated with a few options and let you decide if it will pay in your system or one you may be considering.

As we start this process we must define our parameters. Let's use a 40 acre field with 25 cow/calf pairs as a base to start. I'm order to give you a conservative answer, I want to use high material cost, knowing you may be able to do better.

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|---------------------------|---|
| 4-5 inch wood corner post | 5.00 each |
| High Tensile wire | 1 to 2 cents per foot (55 to 75 dollars per roll) |
| Polywire | 2 to 3 cents per foot (23 to 40 dollars per roll) |
| Step-in posts | 89 cents to 3.00 each |
| Water system expansion | |
| Pipe on top of the ground | 25 to 30 cents per foot |
| Pipe buried | 75 cents to one dollar per foot |
| Portable waterers | 60 to 100 dollars each |
| Permanent waters | 400 dollars plus |

I am not going to use a labor expense at this point, however we will add a labor cost in a few minutes.

Our field is 1325 ft square containing a little over 40 acres.

Options 1. Suppose we divide this field twice, once each direction, giving us 4, 10 acre paddocks with one water point in the center.

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| Using polywire | 2650 ft @ 3 cents per foot cost | 79.50 |
| Step-in posts | 88 @ 3.00 | 264.00 |
| Portable water tank | | 100.00 |
| 665 ft pipe on top of the ground | | <u>199.50</u> |
| | Total | \$643.00 |

The important question to ask with each option is; what would it take to pay for this?

25 cows, 23 calves -- $643.00/23 = 27.90$ pr calf @ .75 lb 37 lbs per calf or

21 lbs per acre

This would cover all costs in one year, use the materials for 5 years and the cost would be 4 lbs per acre

Option 2. Same as one but using High Tensile wire and a few wood corner posts

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| Water cost | | 299.50 |
| Step-in post | 80 @ 3.00 | 240.00 |
| Wood Post | 8 @ 5.00 | 40.00 |
| Wire | 2650 ft @ .02 per ft | <u>53.00</u> |
| | Total | 632.50 |

Same math; still only about **21 lbs per acre**, more labor but about the same out-of-pocket cost.

Option 3. Same wire approach as option two but using a permanent water source.

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| Wire and posts | | 333.00 |
| Waterer | | 400.00 |
| Pipe | 665 @ 1.00 ft | <u>665.00</u> |
| | Total | 1398.00 |

Over double the cost, at **35 lbs per acre**, but if you use the water system for 10 years, you are still taking about only about 2.5 lbs per acre per year for water development.

21 pounds per acre, 35 pounds per acre, so what! What does this mean in terms of farm profit?

Research at the University of Kentucky and many other places show that by dividing a continuous grazed field into 2 to 4 paddocks will increase the gain per acre from 150 to over 300 pounds per acres. If it costs 21 pounds to install the system and you get even 150 pound gain, you do the math.

You can use about any material cost and any calf price, charge 20 dollars an hour for your time, and the way I look at it: water and fence development Pays..... BIG TIME!