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Y. Zheng

Gansu Agriculture University, China

David R. Kemp

Charles Sturt University, Australia

Z. Xu

Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science, China

R. Jones

Department of Primary Industries, Australia

T. Takahashi

Charles Sturt University, Australia

See next page for additional authors

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Presenter Information

Y. Zheng, David R. Kemp, Z. Xu, R. Jones, T. Takahashi, Q. Tian, and T. XiLin

Grassland sustainability and livestock production in Taipusi Banner , Inner Mongolia

Y . Zheng^{1 3} , D . Kemp² , Z . Xu³ , R . Jones⁴ , T . Takahashi² , Q . Tian³ , and T . XiLin^{1 3}

¹ College of Grassland Science , Gansu Agriculture University , Lanzhou 730070 , China ; ² Charles Sturt University , Leeds Parade , Orange , NSW 2800 , Australia ; ³ The Grassland Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science , Huhhot , Inner Mongolia 010010 , China ; ⁴ NSW Department of Primary Industries , Orange , NSW 2800 , Australia .E-mail : yxuzhu@yahoo .com

Key words : grassland , degradation , grazing , stocking rate , livestock production

Introduction Livestock numbers on north China grasslands have increased dramatically as households seek to improve incomes . However in Taipusi Banner , Inner Mongolia , this has resulted in severe over-grazing and degradation to 70% of the 130 ,000 ha of typical steppe grassland . Current stocking rates are in excess of those recommended (Houston *et al .* , 2004) . Sustainable grassland and livestock production requires a systems analysis of current farm practices and options .

Materials and methods The study region is Taipusi Banner of Inner Mongolia (114°51'-115°49' E , 41°35'-42°10' N , average annual precipitation ~400 mm , elevation 1325-1828 m , chestnut soil) . The grassland is typical steppe and dominant species are *Stipa krylovii* , *Aneurolepidium chinense* , *Artemisia frigida* . Farm system models were used to analyse the current feed supply and demand and options for reducing stocking rates (using linear programming) . Six farms in a village of 30 were surveyed in detail to construct a typical (synthetic) farm system model (Kemp , Jones and Takahashi , unpublished) .

Results and discussion Grassland growth can only meet livestock maintenance demand from July to October (Figure 1) once the grass is frosted animal requirements is not satisfied . Analysis over a range of stocking rates shows that meat and wool production reaches a maximum at ~1 ewes/ha (Figure 2) , half that of the current stocking rate of 2.3 ewes/ha . The economic optimum would be between 0.5 and 1 ewes/ha as supplementary feed costs start to increase significantly from that range .

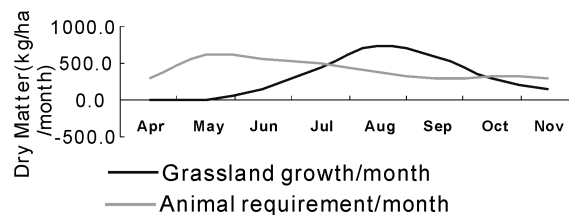


Figure 1 Feed balance (Dry Matter) .

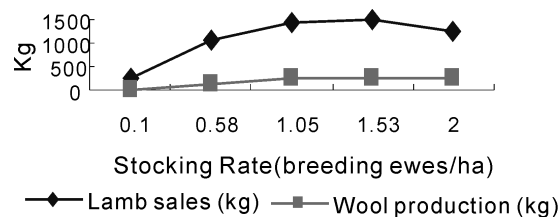


Figure 2 Lamb and wool production per farm .

Conclusions Grassland production and livestock demand is out of balance . From the 60 years of stocking rate collected it was found that the stocking rate in Taipusi Banner is now about 2.3 ewes/ha up to 3 ewes/ha . At that level household incomes are less than at 1 ewe/ha . The economic justification to reduce stocking rates supports ecological data .

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Reference

Houston , W . , Thorpe , J . , Han G . D . , Zhao M . , Li Q . F . , and Wang Q . G . (2004) . Framework for a range condition and stocking rate guide : Grassland areas of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region . *Canada-China Sustainable Agricultural Development Project Report* .