

Lost Rivers Grazing Academy: MiG for Sustainable Livestock Production

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U.S. pastures are generally grazed season-long. Pastures grazed longer than 30 days have a harvesting efficiency of 40% or less. High stocking rates and low stock densities commonly lead to overgrazing which limits re-growth and overall yield. Pasture operators lack motivation to improve management because:

- 1) conventional systems are viewed as adequate;
- 2) pasturage operations are often seen as having little to contribute either ecologically or economically to the operation;
- 3) pastures appear to be more resilient to abuse;
- 4) often pasture land is perceived as marginal and of limited financial value.

To improve livestock operator understanding and implementation of the principles of Management-intensive Grazing (MiG), programs featuring hands-on 4 day workshops for operators have been held across southern Idaho. Topics covered in the 45 hours of hands-on training include the five principles of grazing, economics, cost control, and marketing tools for managing grazing, anatomy and physiology of forage plants, grazing cell design, low stress livestock handling techniques, and livestock health considerations so lifestyle and enterprise are sustainable. Participants in these workshops have implemented what they learned on their places with both environmental and financial success. This growing network of operators is using economically efficient and environmentally acceptable methods for forages plus allowing them to remain in their communities as a positive contributor to the local economy.

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