



Burke County Center

130 Ammons Dr, Morganton, NC

[Home](#) » [Stocking Rate](#)

Stocking Rate

Find this page at:

go.ncsu.edu/readext?856038

For AHD Cases:

ASSUME:

2 acres will feed 1 animal unit (AU)/year

1 Animal Unit (AU) equivalents by livestock

1 Horse

1 Cow + Calf

1 Bull

0.7 Heifer or Stocker

0.9 Open/Dry Cow

6 Sheep or Goats

› [en Español / em Português](#)

RADIO TRANSCRIPT

Damon Pollard

March 17, 2022

This is Damon Pollard, Livestock agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension-Burke Center. Today's topic is Stocking Rate.

Stocking rates are positively related to forage health. Overstocking stresses forage stands and eventually leads to low producing pastures.

When talking about pasture stocking rates, we can lump all livestock together by converting them into the concept of an animal unit. An animal unit is based on the beef cow and her calf, which is one animal unit. The bull is also one animal unit, as is one horse. Sheep and goats, due to their small size, take 6-8 head to equal one animal unit.

It generally takes 2-3 acres to support one animal unit in hay and pasture. If hay is cut elsewhere and brought in it reduces the acres needed. Acreage needed can also be reduced through improved pasture management and improved forage varieties. A really good manager can support one animal unit on an acre and a half.

Stocking rates as high as 2 animal units per acre are present in Burke county, and not even weeds can produce in this setting. Two acres per animal unit allows producers to mitigate drought and reduce hay feeding days as more grazing days are available and forage could be stockpiled.

Pasture management is more complex than just putting the right number of head on the right number of acres, however, getting the stocking rates right is basic to any good management system.

This is Damon Pollard, Livestock agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension-Burke Center. If you'd like more information, call us at 764-9480.

WRITTEN BY



Damon Pollard

Extension Agent, Agriculture - Livestock, Field Crops and Forestry
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Burke County Center

PAGE LAST UPDATED: 3 YEARS AGO

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE

- Early Drought Management Tips for Pasture-Based Livestock Producers
- Drought Stressed Crops as Animal Feeds and Winter Hay Alternatives
- Twelve Step Plan to Amazing Grazing for Beef Cattle
- Controlling the Weed, Buckhorn Plantain, in Hay Fields and Pastures
- Drought Tips for Pasture Based Livestock
- Grazing Practices: A Review of the Literature

N.C. Cooperative Extension prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex (including pregnancy), disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and veteran status.

Information on [Accessibility](#)