



KOOTENAY & BOUNDARY FARM ADVISORS (KBFA)

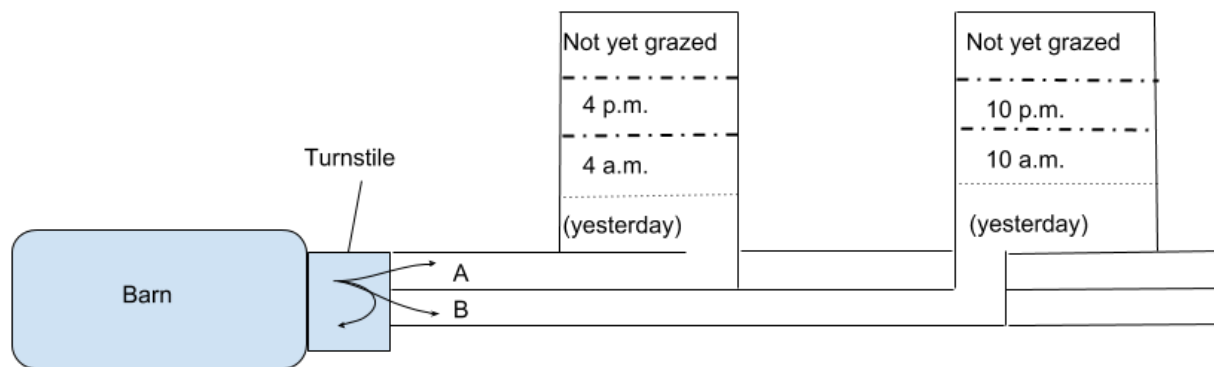
Grazing Management at Kootenay Meadows Dairy

June 28, 2018, Creston

KBFA thanks **Kootenay Meadow's Dairy** for hosting this workshop. We are joined by **Dr. Lauchlan Fraser**, a rangeland ecologist from Thompson Rivers University, and **Dr. Annette Suominen**, a ruminant nutritionist and rancher from Red Deer.

Kootenay Meadow's Grazing System

Wayne and Denise graze 70 milking cows on pasture for 6 months of the year. They move cattle quickly through small paddocks, timing moves carefully to hit grass at its peak balance of nutrition and biomass. Across the farm, pastures are at different stages of growth from just-grazed to just-about-to-be-grazed.



How It Works

- Robotic milkers in the barn record when each cow was milked and a robotic turnstile either puts cows out to pasture or sends them back into the barn to be milked.
- The turnstile sends cows down either the "A" or "B" side of the alley. Last year Wayne did an "A-B" system, A for 12 hours then B for 12 hours. This year it's "A-B-A-B" for 6 hours each.
- At 5 a.m. Wayne sets up the days' four cross fences and lets the cows into their first paddock. At 10 a.m. the turnstile changes and sends cows to their second paddock. At 4 p.m. the turnstile changes again and Wayne removes a cross fence from both the A and B paddocks. At 10 p.m. the turnstile sends cows to their fourth paddock where they spend the night.
- The cows walk over previously grazed grass to get to the new grass opened at the end. Wayne tries not to use any particular field for more than 4 or 5 days.

Did you implement a recommendation from a KBFA event or resource?

Let us know. Email coordinator@kbfa.ca. Call or text 778-771-5851

Wayne's Tips

- "Always watch the grass. Try to make every paddock look like May 20 right through the whole grazing season ... that is, really nice grass all the time."
- Grass that's too old (lower nutrition) is cut for baleage and fed to heifers over the winter.
- The intake of any cow (beef or dairy) depends on how good the grass tastes, and also by "sward density." They only take so many mouthfuls, so you want it as dense (and tasty) as possible to fill their mouths with each bite.
- Cows consume what they need in about 2 hours, then go hang out somewhere cool. If you give cows too much grass, they're reluctant to return to the barn to get milked. Between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. they just take a couple bites and sleep.

2018 has been a little different...

Pastures "exploded" in May, so Wayne cut a lot for baleage. Unfortunately, a major malfunction in irrigation meant some pastures didn't get back up in time, so he's a couple weeks behind and many pastures "look the same" right now. He prefers to see them all in different stages of growth.



Above: Cows head to pasture at Kootenay Meadows Dairy on May 7, 2018.

What about beef?

The Harris's high-tech robotic system is great for a grass-fed dairy, but much lower-tech "intensive rotational" grazing is used by many beef producers worldwide. They think it improves their pastures' growth and nutrition and gives their cattle fast gains for high quality grass-finished beef.

Upcoming Grazing Field Day - August 2018

On August 20, 21, and 22, cattle rancher Jim Gerrish will join KBFA to run field days in Cranbrook, Creston, and Grand Forks to discuss his experience across North America with "intensive grazing management", including ideas to keep costs low with portable fencing and winter grazing.

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