

Guides to Bringing a Croft into Production



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

Grassland Grazing Management

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Now that you have successfully attained a grant for land improvement and applied your lime, you have hopefully got some good quality grass for your livestock.

It is important to closely manage these reseeds in the first year:

- Light grazing by sheep will encourage tillering
- Avoid hard grazing
- Graze well before winter to help reduce winter kill
- Remove stock in wet weather if possible to avoid poaching

You may also have older grassland on your croft so it is worth looking at a management regime across all your grassland. The two most common aspects are “Set Stocking” and “Rotational Grazing” which are shown below:

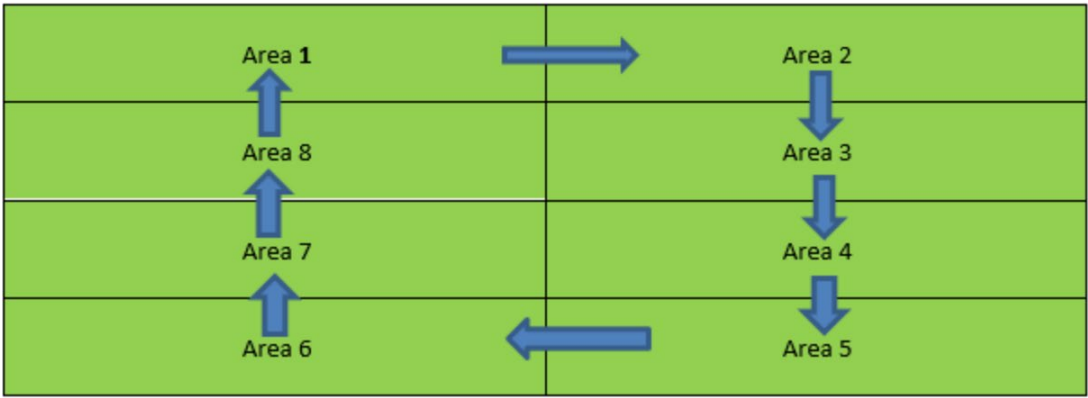
Set Stocking	Rotational Grazing
This is the more traditional method where livestock are grazed in a field for a number of weeks, normally at least 2 weeks or more.	This is where animals are grazed at a far higher stocking, in a smaller area and moved frequently, usually every 3 - 4 days with the grazed area then being rested for a period of time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple technique• Low cost• Under grazing of areas in field• Over grazing of areas in field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High utilisation of grass• Increased number of stock• Low wastage• Capital outlay to make paddocks



These cows have been grazing this field for a number of weeks

Rotational grazing example

The table below shows how you could sub divide 1 field into 8 parts, with each area being grazed for 3 days and then rested for 21 days before livestock are grazing again. This will depend on the size of fields on your croft.



The sub-division shown above could be undertaken with temporary electric fencing, but thought must also be given to availability of water for the grazing animals.

Other grazing management techniques are buffer grazing and deferred grazing:

Buffer	Deferred
<p>Buffer grazing could be described as a hybrid of set stocking. Part of a field is fenced off with an electric fence and not grazed with the rest of the field. If grass growth is slow this buffer area can be grazed whereas if grass growth is adequate the fenced off area is conserved as silage and grazed thereafter.</p>	<p>Deferred grazing is where stock is removed from a field so a wedge of grass is built up. This can then be fed in autumn and early winter by strip or block grazing to ensure good utilisation. A back fence can be used to keep the stock off the previously grazed areas to allow recovery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple technique• Fairly low cost• Mindful of water supply• Low risk way to increase flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces cost of winter fodder making• Reduces wastage of grass• Ground conditions must be good for winter grazing