

What is Going on in this Field?



Image by Gail Caddy

In the UK, cattle and sheep are often grazed in a “set stocked” system, in which they are given an entire field for an extended period of time. This period of time can be anything from several weeks, to several months.

In contrast, in this field livestock are being grazed in a system called **adaptive multi paddock grazing** (AMP). This is where animals are grazed in a smaller area and moved frequently onto new ground using electric fencing. Giving the grazed areas time to rest and recover has many benefits, including increasing productivity.

A recent study into this type of grazing versus set stocking found that after 3 years, the AMP grazed fields could support 2x as many livestock compared to the set stocked areas!

Adaptive multi paddock grazing improves soil health and plant diversity. This in turn has several benefits:

- Healthy soils allow greater volumes of water to penetrate to deeper soil levels more quickly, reducing the risk of flooding in wet weather.
- This increased ability to store water also makes the pastures more resilient to drought.
- This means livestock are more likely to have access to forage in extreme conditions.
- By moving the animals frequently they are less exposed to parasites, reducing the need for wormers which have a negative effect on insects, and the other species that rely on them for food.
- Healthy dung from livestock feeds the billions of micro organisms that live in and create healthy soils. These soils support a greater diversity of plant life, which supports a wider network of invertebrates, birds, and other wild species, while improving productivity.

Did you know: A study of cowpats in 1954 estimated that each organic cow, kept outdoors year round, could support 6000 insects each day?

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