



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

PASTURES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Pasture Utilisation

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

In order to get the most out of a pasture that has been planted, the grazier has to meet certain management objectives, some of which are pasture orientated while others are animal orientated.

PASTURE ORIENTATED OBJECTIVES INCLUDE:

- **to maximise dry matter production per unit area with minimum costs;**

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- to maximise the quality of the pasture offered to stock;
- to maximise the utilisation of the pasture (*i.e.* minimise wastage) without reducing dry matter production or affecting animal performance;
- to extend the growing season of the pasture;
- to provide for ease of management of the pasture;
- to ensure maintenance of the density and vigour of the sward.

ANIMAL ORIENTATED OBJECTIVES INCLUDE:

- **to maximise production per animal;**
- **to maximise animal production per unit area;**
- **to provide for ease of management of the animals.**

to maximise production per animal;

Clearly many of these objectives are in conflict. For example, it is not possible to maximise pasture utilisation and production per animal. In the same vein it is not possible to maximise animal production per area and production per animal. Within the pasture objectives, it is not possible to maximise dry matter production, pasture quality and pasture utilisation.

It is up to the grazier, first, to define the objectives of the animal production system, and then to identify those pasture and animal orientated objectives on which to base the pasture management programme. There is little doubt that when deciding on the main pasture and animal objectives a certain amount of compromise is necessary. For example, a certain amount of production per animal will need to be sacrificed to maximise gain per hectare and pasture utilisation.

The grazier may then see his pasture objectives as **management strategies** to:

- harvest the pasture in such a way that the growth rate of the pasture remains at an acceptable level;
- utilise the pasture at a stage of growth that will
 - provide the quantity of intake, and
 - provide the quality of herbage required by the type and class of animal grazing the pasture;
- ensure the longevity and density of the pasture.

CONCLUSIONS

The grazier must define the objectives of the animal enterprise in terms of what product of what grade is to be sold when. The manager is then in a position to identify the performance required from the stock. Having identified the performance required from the stock the manager is able to assess the intake required by the animal and the desired quality of the herbage eaten. This places the grazier in a position to identify what pasture species to plant, what pasture utilisation practices should be followed and what grazing system should be adopted.