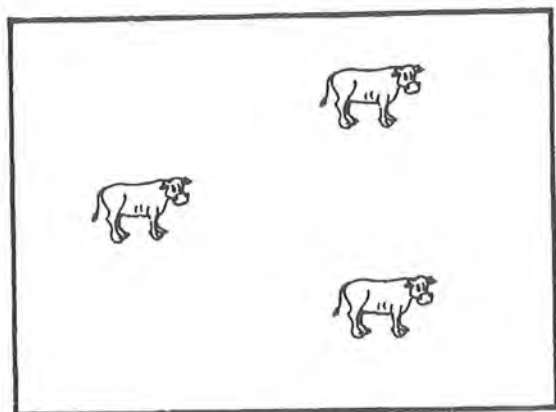
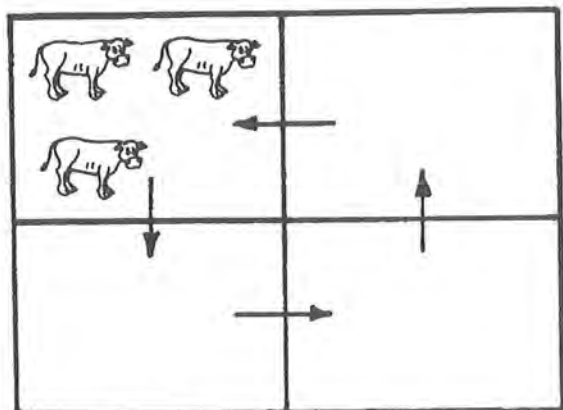




The total number of animals is more important than how they are moved around



Continuous grazing



Rotational grazing

Moving stock

Stock can be moved off the paddock for agistment, sale or into a feed-lot, so altering the stocking rate, or they can be moved between paddocks under various grazing systems.

Most graziers leave animals in one paddock all year round, others could move stock around a series of paddocks regularly. Much interest in rotational grazing has been created recently by proponents of cell (short duration) grazing.

The total number of animals on the pasture is much more important than how they are moved around.

What is the best way to graze speargrass?

The DPI recommends continuous grazing, with the number of stock adjusted to the feed available, but with opportunistic spelling.

Is continuous grazing the same as set-stocking?

No! In set-stocking, the same number of stock remain in a paddock every year, regardless of the amount of rain and grass; the stocking rate remains constant but the grazing pressure varies. Unless the stocking rate is very low, set-stocking will lead to over-grazing in years with below-average rainfall.

In continuous stocking, there are always animals in the paddock, but their number is adjusted to the feed available—the grazing pressure remains constant but the stocking rate varies.

Why not rotational grazing?

Because the extra costs of management and subdivision fencing bring little or no benefit in terms of animal production or pasture condition when systems are compared at the same stocking rate—especially with extensive grazing. You may get quieter stock as they are handled more frequently.

Rotational grazing may be the most efficient system for high utilisation of high-quality temperate pastures for milk production on the Atherton Tableland, but it shows no advantage to stock or the pasture under the more marginal productivity of your variable-quality native pastures.

Native grasses cannot stand heavy grazing (high utilisation). Numerous trials have compared rotational and continuous grazing of native pastures in Queensland and the rest of the world; usually they showed that animals gained more weight when able to select their diet over the whole area under continuous grazing than when forced to eat more of the mature leaves

before being moved to the next sub-division in rotational grazing.

Surely time control grazing overcomes this?

Once again, it's a case of costs against benefits. The claimed benefits of TCG are increased carrying capacity, better animal performance, reduced soil capping, better pasture and reduced regrowth of woody weeds.

Unfortunately TCG has never shown these benefits in objective trials on native pastures anywhere in the world. Actually the picture was generally the opposite whenever the stocking rates were increased as proponents have recommended. The pastures deteriorated, hoof action compacted the soil surface, and the stock gained less weight—the system often crashed in severely dry times.

The benefits from TCG have been said to come from:

- higher stocking rates, but this means lower production from each animal, and damage to the pasture
- timing the rotations to allow grasses to rest until new herbage has grown, but timing cannot be fixed because of our highly variable rainfall and lack of growth in the dry months.

The main case against Short Duration Grazing (as TCG used to be called) lies in the claim of increased stocking rates.

Many of our native pastures in Queensland are already being stocked pretty close to capacity now; most stocking rates should be lowered rather than raised.

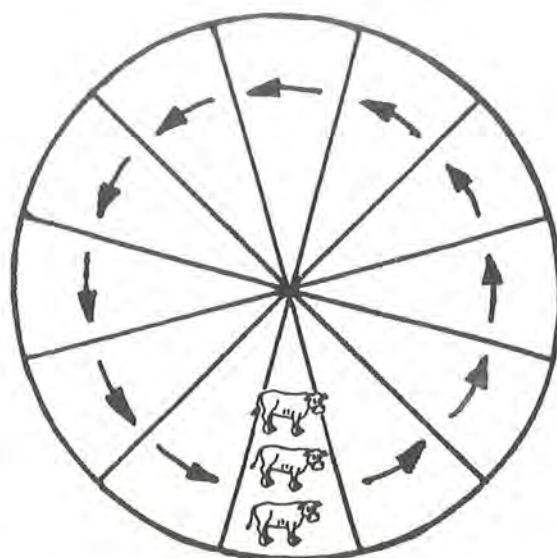
We suggest that extra fencing for better distribution of cattle and more even grazing, better water distribution, improving pasture with legumes, fencing separate land management types, and controlling woody regrowth offer more productive returns and better long-term care of your land than fencing for short duration grazing.

When do I adjust stocking rates?

Most graziers can afford to muster only infrequently, with the main muster for weaning in March-April. This then has to be the time to adjust stock numbers. (See previous section on setting stocking rates)

If you are able to move stock with relative ease, more management options become available. You can sell stock off earlier than normal or bring extra stock in depending on your attitude to risk.

If you are short of feed in February, sell stock early while the market is still reasonable. *Don't get caught with no feed and no market.*



'Time control' or short duration grazing

Any system of grazing that encourages you to look more carefully at your pastures can give positive results.



Improving pastures with stylos offers better returns than rotational grazing

Sell!
Sell and regret maybe,
but sell!



Don't get caught with no feed and no market

If you have to feed a lot of hay and supplement every dry season, you are carrying too many stock.

Stock numbers can be adjusted according to the rainfall expected in the coming year or season.

The probability of wetter- or drier-than-average rainfall can be checked using the Southern Oscillation Index in the AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN computer program. Although there is often a good relationship between the SOI as early as June and rainfall six months ahead (the next summer) in this region, this relationship is not apparent at mustering time in April.

How can I increase flexibility in my operation?

Flexibility can be increased by early weaning, feeding supplements at the appropriate time of the year, and by segregating classes of stock as much as possible.

Early weaning. Early weaning is now the generally recommended practice in this region. Calves can be weaned as early as three months and fed protein supplement. Calves should be weaned at least twice a year, by April and then in September.

The advantages of early weaning are

- weaned cows will gain weight and get back into calf
- cows without calves are pretty hardy and will survive under most conditions.

Supplements. Supplements should be fed for production, but they can also allow cattle to survive or maintain condition. Dry season supplements have become part of normal cattle management in most districts. But, as they allow cattle to utilise more of the dry herbage, these extra cattle can put more pressure on the grass when it is trying to recover from the drought. Normal dry season supplements include:

- urea—to increase use of dry standing feed for survival
- molasses—to provide energy for maintenance
- cotton seed, meat meal—to provide protein for production.

More complete information of drought feeding is given in the DPI publication ***Drought Notes***.

Phosphorus is a production supplement that is most beneficial to cattle during the wet season.

Segregating stock. Segregated cattle can be quickly drafted into lots when a marketing opportunity arises, and their feed can be better targeted.

Graziers selling stores have more flexibility than those wishing to finish stock for slaughter, even if sometimes they have to accept a low price.

Why should I spell my pastures?

Wet season spelling or partial destocking gives the palatable grasses chance to recover. Spelling for 4–5 months allows palatable grasses to set seed; spelling for 11–12 months allows fuel to accumulate for a fire to control woody weeds. How long you need to destock depends on the previous grazing pressure, the amount of grass present, and on growing conditions.

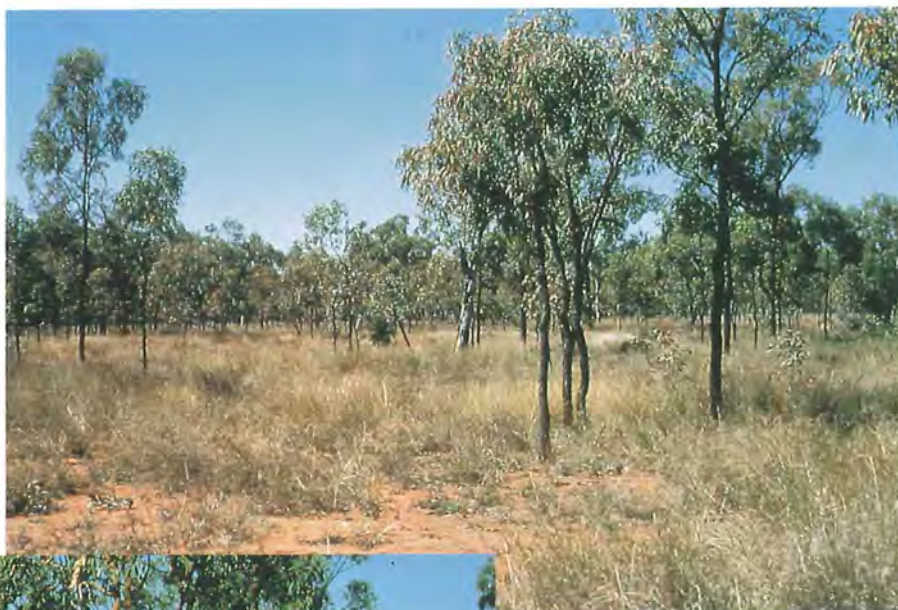
When should I spell?

It is obviously practical only to spell in a wet year when there is plenty of grass. You can get forewarning of the wet years by checking the SOI during winter; wetter-than-normal growing seasons, and early breaks to the monsoon, are nearly always associated with a strongly positive SOI during winter and spring.

Spell a paddock from the beginning of the wet season, by reducing the stocking rate by half, or by totally destocking during the wet years.

Are kangaroos a problem on spelled paddocks?

There are always kangaroos and wallabies around, but rarely in the large populations found on the downs in western Queensland. Their numbers are seldom so devastating as to cause a problem when pasture is spelled.



before spelling



Spelling allows pasture to recover

after spelling