

Managing Reclaimed Coal Mine Land:

GRAZING

Looks can be deceiving

A reclaimed strip mine will blend into the landscape and look virtually the same as undisturbed Iowa land. Don't be fooled. Just underneath the surface, the soil remains extremely fragile and susceptible to erosion. If the land is not properly managed, acid-forming materials may resurface and soils may begin to erode.

Grazing as a compatible land use

With proper care and management, reclaimed land can be grazed. However, it is important to remember that reclaimed land cannot tolerate continuous grazing (animals having unrestricted and uninterrupted access throughout the grazing season).

On reclaimed land, grazing must be limited. Grazing needs to be restricted to short-term events, and is sometimes called "flash grazing." Animals should not graze until the forages are at least 12" tall. The animals should then be moved to a different paddock once the stubble is 6" tall. This grazing needs to coincide with a dry soil surface. At least 30 days of rest are needed before re-grazing the reclaimed land.

One common form of limited grazing is called "mob-grazing," where a high density of livestock grazes a small area for a short period of time. A mob grazing system provides more uniform consumption of the forage, distribution of manure and urine, and trampling of uneaten forage into the soil where it is converted to organic matter, which protects and feeds the soil life.

As with any grazing system, it is important to maintain soil fertility to create the most productive pasture possible. Soil testing and proper nutrient management will help keep your nutrients (nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and/or potassium (K)) in balance.

Where to get help

For assistance with developing a grazing plan or other management plan for your reclaimed area, contact your local USDA Service Center.



Resources

Each county in Iowa has a **USDA Service Center** where the local **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and **Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)** offices are housed.

These offices have technical and financial assistance available for land management and conservation practices.

Davis SWCD

402 Karr Ave
Bloomfield
(641) 664-2616

Mahaska SWCD

2503 Todd Street
Oskaloosa
(641) 673-3476

Marion SWCD

1445 Lake Drive
Knoxville
(641) 842-3168

Monroe SWCD

1701 S B Street
Albia
(641) 932-7134

Van Buren SWCD

1016 Franklin Street
Keosauqua
(319) 293-3371

Wapello SWCD

2938 Oak Meadow Dr
Ottumwa
(641) 684-6515

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For more information, contact Pathfinders RC&D (641) 472 - 6177 • info@PathfindersRCD.org