

Small Scale Solutions for your Farm

Rotations for Livestock Feed



Do You Have Problems with:

- Insufficient livestock feed
- Cost of buying livestock feed
- Poor feed quality
- Weed, insect, or disease problems
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A crop rotation can address these problems and provide your livestock with the types and quantities of feed needed for your livestock operation.



Confined livestock require quality feed. A rotation designed to fit your livestock operation can provide the feed with little or no off-farm feed purchase.

Purposes and Benefits of a Rotation System for Livestock Feed

- Reduce feed costs
- Improve feed quality and quantity
- Provide a better income
- Manage pests and recycle nutrients
- Enhance soil tilth and workability
- Reduce runoff and erosion
- Provide better distribution of labor during the crop season by using different crops, planting dates, and harvest periods

Crop Rotation Maintenance

- Periodic soil testing
- Crop and pest scouting
- Evaluate cropping sequence for feed needs and soil concerns
- Calibrate sprayers, planters, and fertilizer applicators to:
 - o set rate of applications
 - o establish uniform distributions
 - o set uniform seeding depths



Growing your own forage can provide high quality feed and reduce your out-of-pocket feed costs.

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Crop Rotation Planning Considerations

- Determine livestock feed requirements.
- Choose the crops/varieties to meet livestock feed needs and other producer objectives.
- Identify soil erosion, nutrient, and soil health concerns.
- Soil test (every 3–5 years) for pH, organic matter, and nutrients. Use soil test recommendations to adjust pH and nutrient levels for optimum crop yields and quality.
- If manure is used, develop a manure management plan to utilize the manure nutrients.
- Evaluate and modify the planting sequence annually based on the identified concerns.
- Attend training needed for crop and soil management and pest scouting.
- Evaluate cover crop needs.

Practice Application

1. Using a map, lay out a crop rotation by year for the length of the rotation. See Example
2. Plan rotation for the operation to establish a nearly equal acreage for each crop each year.

Four Field/Four Year/Four Crop Sample Rotation

| Crop | Year | Field/Yield |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Corn Grain, Oats, Hay, Hay | 1, 2, 3, 4 | #1 / 9.3 |
| Oats, Hay, Hay, Corn Grain | 1, 2, 3, 4 | #2 / 9.7 |
| Hay, Hay, Corn Grain, Oats | 1, 2, 3, 4 | #3 / 9.7 |
| Hay, Corn Grain, Oats, Hay | 1, 2, 3, 4 | #HQ / 7.5 |



A well-planned rotation can provide the needed grain and forage for a livestock operation as well as cash crop.



Rotations can be designed to provide the mix of grain and forages needed for the farm operation.



Planning is the key to a good rotation system. Assistance to help plan your system is available from the NRCS.

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Technical and Financial Assistance

Whether you measure your farm in terms of feet or acres, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can help you develop a Conservation Plan to conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on your land and improve the long-term health of your operation.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply contact your local office to set up an appointment. You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

For More Information

Visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service or visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local NRCS office. You can also check with your local USDA Service Center, then make an appointment to determine next steps for your conservation goals.



NRCS partner assisting small scale farmer with developing a customized conservation plan. Photo by Erica Quinlan.

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