



Reducing Swath Grazing Costs, Part 2 FRG.02.10

Project Title: Reducing the cost of swath grazing cows by increasing the swathed-crop yield (Phase 2)

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Background: Swath grazing research indicates that swath grazing can reduce total daily feeding cost per cow by 41 to 48%. This is due more to the 78% reduction in yardage costs than the 25% reduction in feed costs. However, daily feed costs ranged from \$0.61 to \$1.80 per cow, largely due to the low and variable swath crop yields. To maximize forage yield, small grains must be harvested between late milk and hard dough stages. Barley is often planted in July so that it can be harvested at the soft dough stage in mid-September.

In the initial "Reducing Swath Grazing Costs" study, these researchers are studying corn and triticale for winter swath grazing compared to a drylot control. Corn and triticale use more of the growing season than barley, can be seeded sooner, have higher yields than barley, and maintain higher nutrient value than oats. Part 2 of the study is similar, but will include a traditional barley swath grazing control in the experimental design.

Objective: Compare daily feeding costs per cow, carrying capacity, utilization and cow performance in swath grazed corn, spring triticale and barley compared a dry lot control.

Swath-grazed triticale, corn and barley will be evaluated in a winter grazing trial comparing corn, triticale and a drylot control over three years. Cow weight change, body condition, carrying capacity, waste and nutritive value will be determined, winter weathering losses will be measured, and economic efficiency of the alternative crops and feeding systems will be evaluated.

Implications: This research will provide new agronomic recommendations that will help lower the daily costs of swath grazing.

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