

Grazing plan

The grazing plan is a document to help manage grass resources. The aim of monitoring forage areas throughout the season is to track animal behaviour and manage surface areas. The objective is to balance forage resources and animal needs to achieve nutritional autonomy.

by **Pauline DOLIGEZ** | 10.04.2017 |

Translated from french by : Alison Drummond

Technical level   



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What is the purpose of the grazing/forage plan?

The forage planning system allows you to record and have an overview of the movements of animals on various grazing and mown areas.

The calendar contains information on all the events concerning the parcel (or sub-parcel in the case of rotational grazing) in one line: presence of animals, date of mowing, etc.

At the bottom of the table, the number of animals (in number of heads or in UGB equivalents) are recorded each week for each parcel. Forage supplements may also be indicated.

Displaying the grazing plan in a place you regularly walk past makes it easier to record daily events. The projected occupancy of the parcels can also be noted with a pencil.

Parcel names		Surface area (Ha)	March	April	May
Champ au Coq sub-parcel 1		0,4 ha	example		
Champ au Coq sub-parcel 2		0,4 ha			
Champ au Coq sub-parcel 3		0,4 ha			
Champ au Coq sub-parcel 4		0,4 ha			
Champ au Coq sub-parcel 5		0,4 ha			
Hay supplement (kg DM) or wrapped					
Number of horses in the herd					
Number of UGB in the herd					

Load calculation per herd	Nb
Blood type	
Single adult	
Mare with a foal at foot	
Foal between 7-12 months	
Foal between 13-24 months	
Foal between 25-36 months	
Foal > 36 months	

Automatic calculation of the equine UGB equivalents to be reported at the bottom of the table

Nb of UGB per herd : **0,00 UGB**

What is the point of keeping a grazing schedule up to date?

Keeping track of grazing practices each year makes it easier to manage forage areas, i.e.:

- To compare the length of time the animals have been in each parcel
- To estimate the return time on a parcel to predict the future entry date
- To count the number of cycles or passages of the animal herd on the same parcel (processing the parcel). To reserve the necessary mowing areas
- To anticipate the need for forage supplementation
- To anticipate the needs in surface area if the number of horses changes during the season. To anticipate the grazing schedule for the following year.

Why calculate the load in UGBs?

The conversion of the number of horses into UGBs (Unité Gros Bovin) equivalents is necessary to take into account the different ingestion capacities according to the categories of horses maintained on grass.

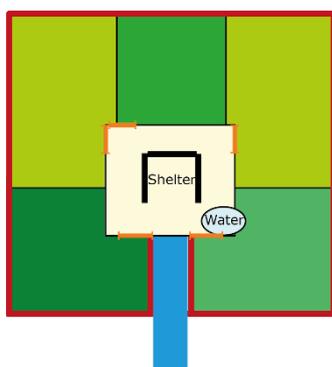
A brood mare (1st month of lactation, 550kg) has an unrestricted grass ingestion capacity of approximately 16.5 kg of Dry Matter per day (equivalent 1.2 UGB), while the equivalent is 8.5 kg DM/d for a 6-12 month old foal (equivalent 0.56 UGB).

Equine UGB values (INRA 2012) are established with reference to bovine UGB values (1 UGB = 4 500 kg DM/year, equivalent to one lactating cow).

Equine UGB values (INRA 2012)

Type of animal	Draft breeds (750 Kg)	Saddle breeds (550 Kg)	Ponies (300 kg)
Single mare (gestation < 5 months or non-lactating)	0.87	0.71	0.38
Lactating mare with a foal up to 6 months old	1.62	1.2	0.64
Foal 7 months	0.75	0.49	0.26
<i>Foal between 7- 12 months</i>	<i>0.78</i>	<i>0.56</i>	<i>0.27</i>
Foal between 13- 24 months	1	0.89	0.49
Foal between 25- 36 months	1.04	0.94	0.56
Foal over the age of 36 months	0.98	0.78	0.41

A few load notes to allow for the surface area needed for a herd of horses



On a rotating pasture

In wet regions and without nitrogen fertilisation, a base load area can be adopted:

- 0.4 to 0.5 ha/UGB every 1st and 2nd cycles
 - 0.7 to 0.8 ha/UGB in the following cycles
- Surplus areas in the spring are then reserved for mowing.

Basic area divided into five sub-parcels

Continuous grazing

The load will be adapted by adjusting the number of animals or by enlarging the area in summer.

- Allow 0.5 to 0.6 ha/UGB in the spring
- 0.8 to 1 ha per UGB in summer

Example: rotational grazing for four brood mares with a foal at foot

Spring



- Step 1: define the base area = total area set aside for the four brood mares for the spring
 - For a planned load of 0.45 ha/UGB, 1 brood mare with a foal at foot = 1.2 UGB
 - 4 brood mares with a foal at foot = $0.45 \times 1.2 \times 4$ UGB => 2.16 ha = base area
- Step 2: Divide the base area into sub-parcels to rotate the herd every 5 to 7 days with at least 21 days of rest per sub-parcel
 - Either $2.16/5 = 0.43$ ha/sub parcel, or ~ 65 m x 65 m.

Summer

Extend the base area to 1 ha/UGB, i.e. $1 \times 1.2 \times 4$ brood mares = 4.8 ha in total (2.16 ha in spring + 2.64 ha in addition).

About our writers

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Bibliography

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