



Figure 13. Trees planted in wide row spacing (4'x8'x40') allowing continual forage production. (Photo by C.E. Lewis)

Maintaining the proper number of animals in relation to the amount of forage produced on the property is critical, regardless of a landowner's primary management objective. It is better for the forest environment to undergraze than to overgraze. Recommendations for grazing should emphasize protection of other resources. Managing competing vegetation will insure ample forage production for cattle. However, if timber production is the primary objective for the stand, periodic roller chopping among pine stands will not be an option. In this case, prescribed fire should be sufficient in maintaining understory shrubs in a manageable state and stimulating herbaceous forage production in more open areas.

Moderate levels of forage use will not be detrimental to timber production or populations of native wildlife species. Overgrazing, however, adversely affects all natural resources (soil, water, aesthetics, timber, wildlife, etc.) and therefore must be avoided by landowners wishing to qualify as forest stewards.

Elements of a grazing program

Planned grazing system

The resource inventory is used to develop grazing system alternatives. Deferment periods should range from 30 to 120 days depending on the rate of

regrowth following grazing. As a minimum, planned deferments should be scheduled during late spring or summer at least once every three years to allow plants the opportunity to set seed in the absence of grazing.

Proper use

Stocking density is adjusted so that half of the current year's growth on all grazing plants is left at the end of each grazing season. Supplemental feed troughs and water facilities are located away from areas recently (less than 3 years) planted to pines. Grazing is deferred for one growing season on pine plantations following their establishment. Thinnings are scheduled to maintain an open canopy and planting densities are modified to accommodate forage production according to objective.

Cross fences

For optimum grazing management, fences should be located so that livestock distribution is enhanced, timber management practices are not significantly hindered, and different range sites, forest stands, or pasture species are separated. If new pastures or timber stands are planned, similar carrying capacities should be maintained within associated pastures. Planned fences should be located so that costs for right-of-way clearing and water facility establishment are minimized.

Reseeding

Dates for seeding are March 1 through July 31. Reseeding is not feasible when tree canopy closure is imminent. Native grass seedlings will generally need two growing seasons of rest for establishment. Consult county Cooperative Extension Service or Soil Conservation Service personnel for site-specific recommendations.

Shrub management

Prescribed burning can help reduce competition from shrub species common to most of Florida's forested sites. Extreme care must be taken when burning under pine stands, especially young plantations. Contact Division of Forestry for site-specific recommendations. Roller chopping will reduce saw-palmetto cover for several years following treatment. However, to avoid excessive root damage, roller chopping should not be performed any closer to the base of a tree than the width of its canopy.