

# BY DESIGN

## Rotational grazing for better forage utilization

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While it may not feel like it, the days are getting longer, and spring is getting closer. If you haven't already, start thinking about your pasture management strategies for the year and whether incorporating a rotational-grazing plan would help improve the utilization of your pastures.

When dividing pastures into smaller units, there are several considerations to take into account that are displayed in the two diagrams in Fig. 1.

Pastures should be as square as possible to increase uniform grazing and minimize fencing costs. Fencing costs can be further reduced by

using portable fencing, such as electric fence, as interior fences to divide pastures.

As shown in Fig. 1, make sure to separate hillsides that face in opposite orientations. Forages on north- and south-facing slopes grow at different rates; therefore, they should be grazed separately.

Incorporating alleys to provide access to back pastures can be extremely useful in minimizing high-traffic areas of pastures and maintaining forage production. Try not to keep them too long, however, and make sure fencing is adequate to accommodate the frequent close proximity of the cattle. In areas

where these alleys are in low and/or wet spots, adding crushed gravel can help prevent muddying of those lanes.

Gates should be placed to allow as straight of access to the water source as possible. In the design on the left, gates are adjacent to the alleyways that lead to the centralized water source.

In the design on the right, each paddock has its own water supply via water delivery systems. This drastically reduces alley usage and trampling of forages, which may allow for grazing of the alleys in addition to paddocks. As shown in this design, consider fencing off

ponds and installing water tanks to improve water quality.

For more information regarding pasture management, visit the Iowa Beef Center website at [www.iowabeefcenter.com](http://www.iowabeefcenter.com). The diagram is courtesy of the *Pasture Management Guide for Livestock Producers* (<https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/5256>). |

Editor's note: "By Design" is a regular column of the *Angus Beef Bulletin* featuring facility and homestead design for cattlemen. Katy Lippolis is an Extension beef cow-calf specialist at Iowa State University.

Fig. 1: Rotational pasture designs

