Iowa Beef Center

Grazing Management – Different Strategies

Dr Jim Russell and

Joe Sellers

Iowa State University

Iowa Beef Center

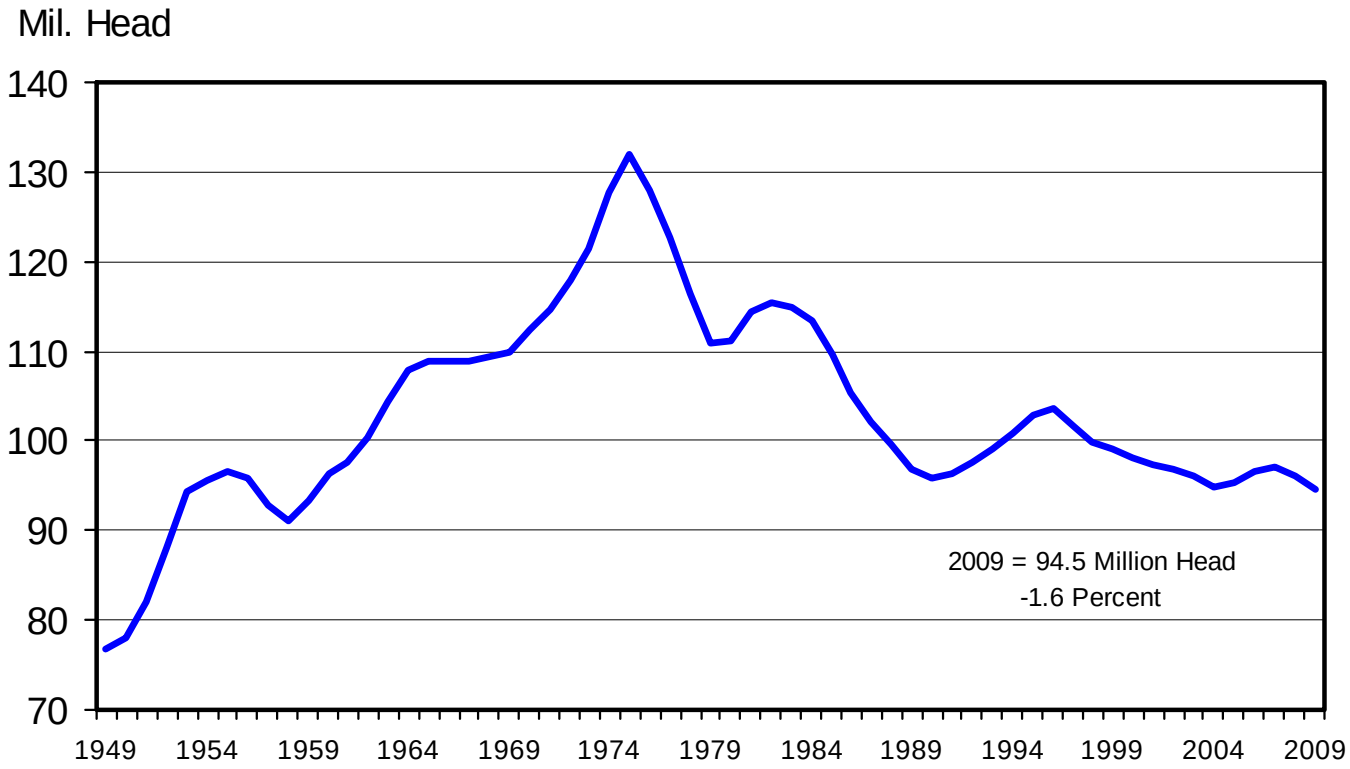
Cattle are important

- Keeping land in grasses reduces erosion and improves water quality
- Productive, well managed uses of grasslands can be economical
- Cattle costs and grazing costs are increasing
- Cow numbers are decreasing

Iowa Beef Center

JANUARY 1 TOTAL CATTLE INVENTORY

U.S., Annual



Livestock Marketing Information Center

Data Source: USDA/NASS

C-N-01
01/30/09

Iowa Beef Center

Southern Iowa Counties

- Cow herd has decreased from 1.98 million (1970's) to under 900 thousand in Iowa (current)
- Most SC Iowa counties decreased from 30,000 to under 20,000 beef cows
- Trend continues

SPA summary

Dependent Variable	R^2
Feed Cost	.567
Depreciation Cost	.086
Operating Cost	.049
Calf weight	.046
Capital charge	.024
Calf price	.027
Weaning percentage	.017
Herd size	.007
Total	.823

-There are 8 financial measures capable of explaining over 82% of farm-to-farm variation in Return to Labor & Management.

-Feed Cost was the most influential cost item determining profit or loss.

Feed Costs

Summer Grazing = $75 per cow
183 days => $0.41 per day

Winter stored feed = $132 per cow
122 days => $1.09 per day

Feed costs = 60% of cow herd costs

Source 2000-2004 SPA Summary

Feed Costs - Now

Summer Grazing = $145 per cow
183 days => $0.80 per day

Winter stored feed = $183 per cow
122 days => $1.50 per day

Forecasts Feed costs = 70-80% of total costs

Losing grazing acres

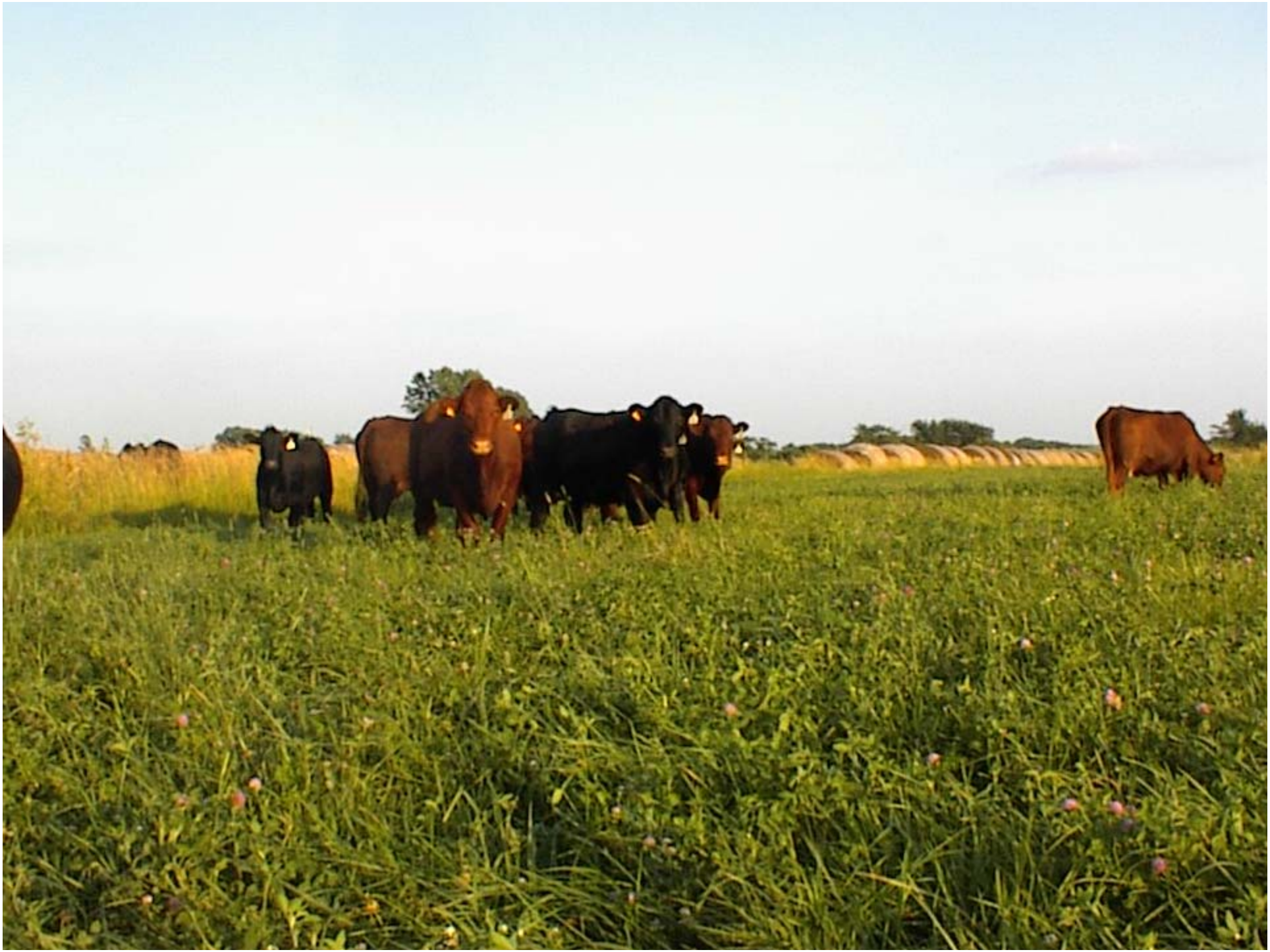
- To row crop
- To recreation
- To investors
- Costs increase as grazing management decreases

What are the goals for grazing?

- Optimize productivity?
- Manage plant diversity and habitat?
- Mix of both management plans across the landscape

Grazing Recommendations – optimizing production

- Use rotational grazing
  - Less acres per cow
  - More pounds per acre
  - More diverse pastures
  - More ground cover, maintain forage heights
  - Less erosion, better water



Extended grazing

- More grazing days
- Less expensive winter feeding
- Cattle less concentrated
- Improved water quality

Grazing riparian areas

- Can flash graze
- Graze stream paddocks for short duration
- Erosion and water quality not impacted in well designed grazing plans

Grazing Management

- Improves cattle feed availability, reduces costs

- Protects soil and water
- Positive for some wildlife species
- Does not meet the needs of some habitat management goals

Wildlife and grazing – plant diversity, habitat

- Manage underutilized acres
- Increase available grazing acres
- Provide disturbance and increase plant diversity
- Build cooperation and set goals

Livestock owners

- Benefit from accessing more forage at reasonable cost
- Will not graze for full utilization
- Animals are a tool to manage the land, need to plan how much grazing
- Can help home pastures recover

Landowners

- Get a local producer to watch things and help manage
- Use cattle to help get the disturbance and plant diversity
- Build relationship with reputable producer and communicate
- May be some added income

CRP and Grazing

-Managed Grazing on CRP

- Split Option
  - Graze early April 1 – May 14
  - Graze late on same land August 2 – September 30
  - 25% payment reduction
  - Only 1/3 of the acres each year or all of the acres every 3 years

Early Spring Graze Down the Old Grass


Can Get Messy if it's Rainy

Grazed in early Spring

CRP Managed Grazing

- Less likely with higher contract rates
- Fence and water are usually a concern
- Could be part of an on-going management plan

Grazing for plant diversity

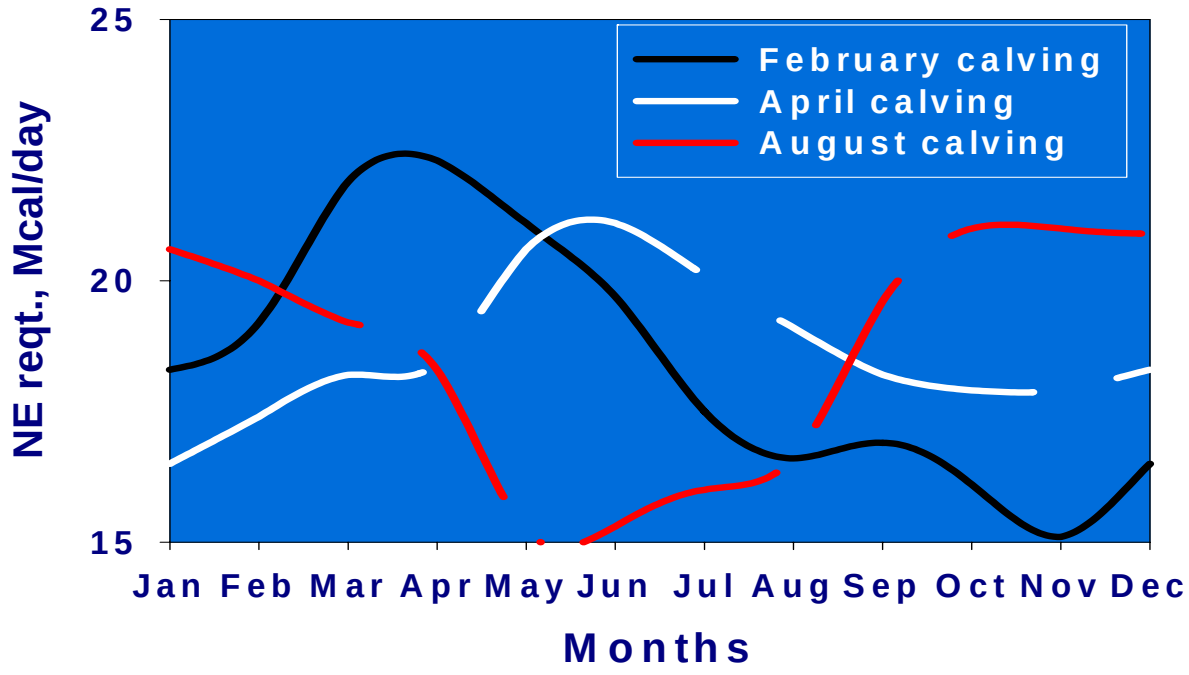
Forage quality concerns – may not work for all classes of cattle

Balancing nesting season and livestock grazing

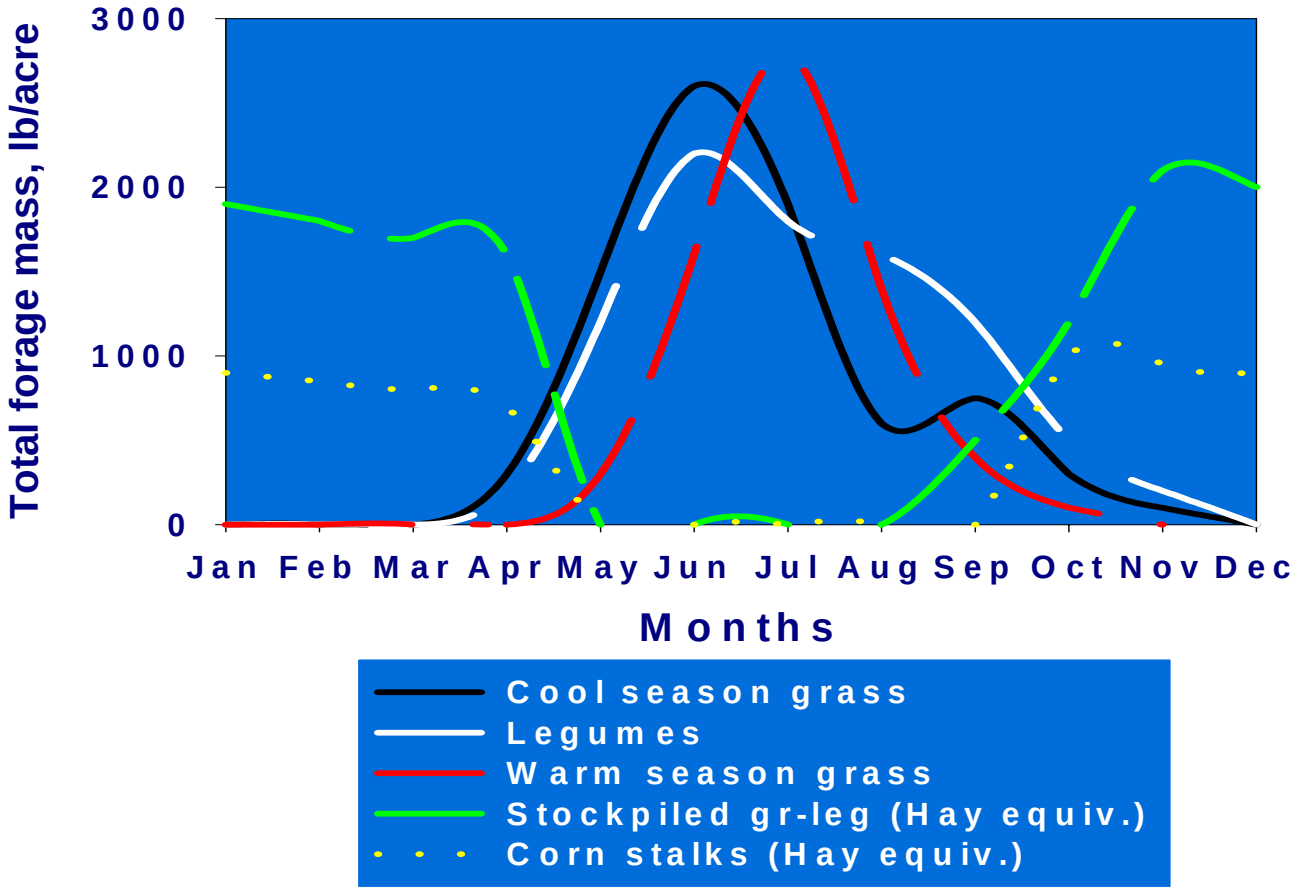
Fence and water

What is a fair grazing fee?

Energy Requirements of Beef Cows Calving in Different Months

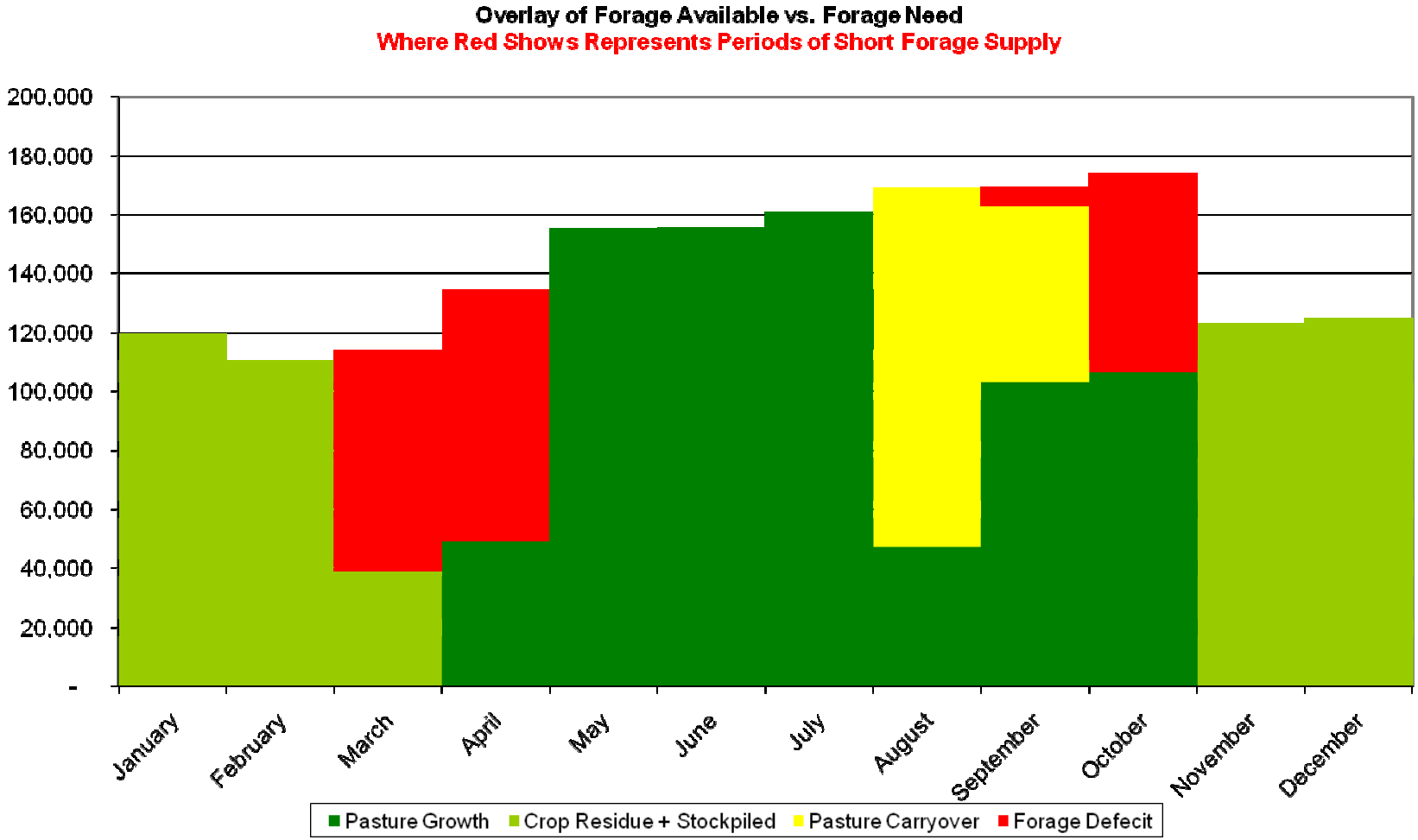


Forage Production or Availability in Different Months



Grazing partnerships

- Work with neighbors to us cattle on un-grazed sites
  - Targeted grazing to provide disturbance and structure
  - Fill gaps in year-round forage supply
- Continue to graze home pastures
  - More rest
  - More ground cover



Cattle:

80 cows

20 1st and 2nd calf heifers

24 heifers

3 bulls

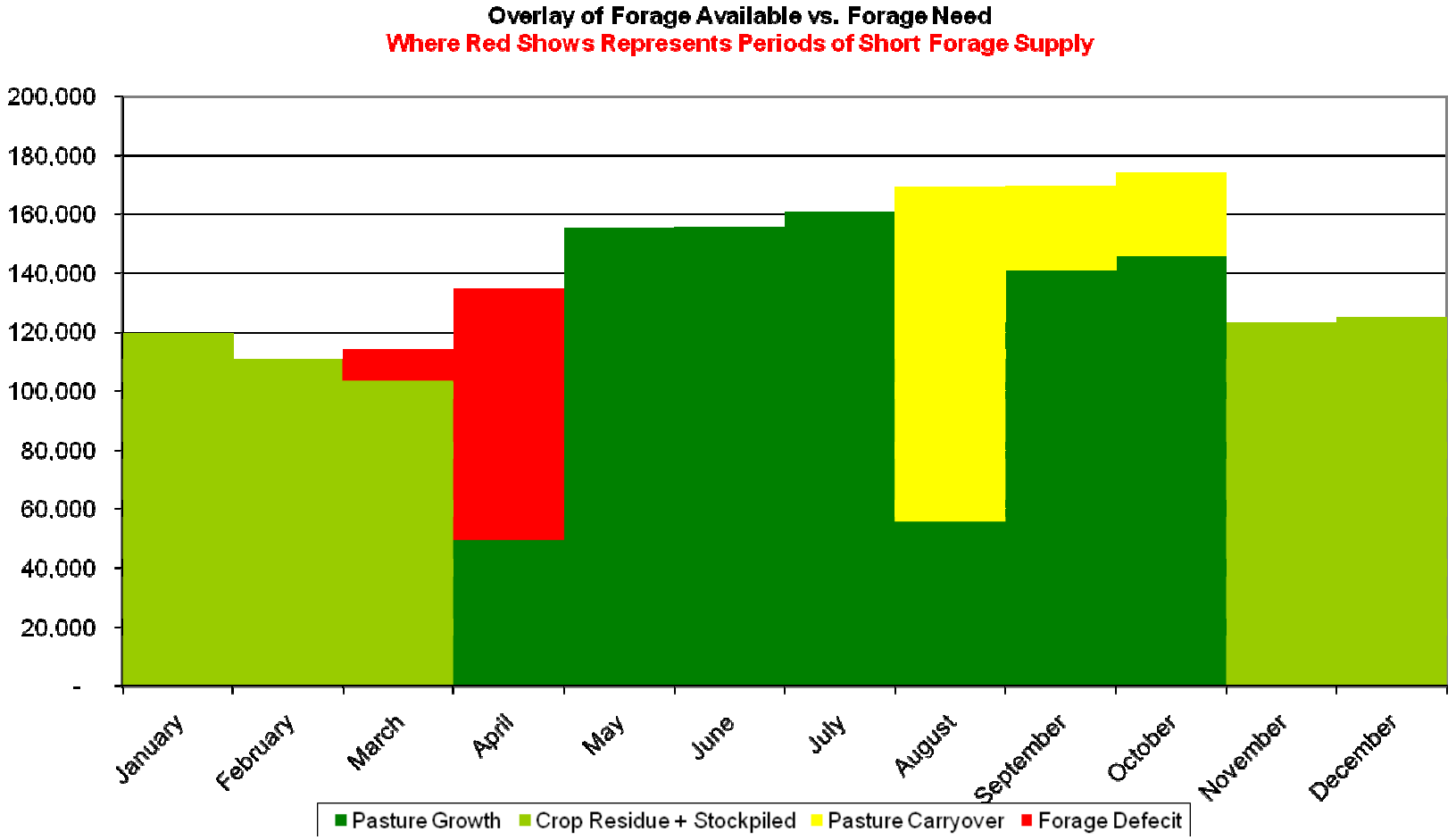
Forage: (Needs 118 tons of hay)

100 ac summer pasture

150 ac summer graze/winter stockpile

200 ac corn stalks

IBC Iowa Beef Center



- **Cattle:**
- **80 cows**
- **20 1st and 2nd calf heifers**
- **24 heifers**
- **3 bulls**

Forage: (Needs 48 tons hay)

100 ac summer pasture

150 ac summer graze/winter stockpile

200 ac corn stalks

80 acres of neighbors stockpiled in fall and spring

IBC Iowa Beef Center