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Comparing the Impact of Continuous and Virtually Fenced Rotational Grazing on Animal Behavior and Distribution

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Beef Day 2022

Comparing the impact of continuous and virtually fenced rotational grazing on animal behavior and distribution

Logan Vandermark, Jameson Brennan, Krista Ehlert, and Hector Menendez III

Objective

Determine how virtual fence technology in a rotational grazing system impacts animal behavior and pasture distribution in a rangeland setting compared to a traditional continuous grazing system.

Study Description

Six herds of yearling steers (n=127) will graze native summer pastures from May to August at the Cottonwood Field Station near Philip, South Dakota. Six pastures are divided into two groups: a continuous grazing (CG) treatment with a low, moderate, and high stocking density and a virtually fenced rotational (VFR) grazing system with the same stocking densities. Vence™ virtual fence collars were placed on all animals within the study and collected GPS data at 5-minute intervals. The CG collars are not actively managed. The VFR system is actively managed through the collars and rotated based on the amount of available forage and grazing utilization. Results from this study will analyze daily distance traveled, amount of time spent grazing, grazing distribution and impact on animal behavior between the two systems.

Take Home Points

Virtual fence technology may allow beef producers and managers to have more flexibility with how they graze and allocate pastures, and could be deployed for crop-livestock integration, managing cattle on leased land, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as riparian areas.

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