

The Art and Science of Grazing: How Grass Farmers Can Create Sustainable Systems for Healthy Animals and Farm Ecosystems

By Sarah Flack

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Grazing management might seem simple: just put livestock in a pasture and let them eat their fill. However, as Sarah Flack explains in *The Art and Science of Grazing*, the pasture/livestock relationship is incredibly complex. If a farmer doesn't pay close attention to how the animals are grazing, the resulting poorly managed grazing system can be harmful to the health of the livestock, pasture plants, and soils. Well-managed pastures can instead create healthier animals, a diverse and resilient pasture ecosystem, and other benefits. Flack delves deeply below the surface of "let the cows eat grass," demonstrating that grazing management is a sophisticated science that requires mastery of plant and animal physiology, animal behavior, and ecology. She also shows readers that applying grazing management science on a working farm is an art form that calls on grass farmers to be careful observers, excellent planners and record-keepers, skillful interpreters of their observations, and creative troubleshooters.

The Art and Science of Grazing will allow farmers to gain a solid understanding of the key principles of grazing management so they can both design and manage successful grazing systems. The book's unique approach presents information first from the perspective of pasture plants, and then from the livestock perspective?helping farmers understand both plant and animal needs before setting up a grazing system.

This book is an essential guide for ruminant farmers who want to be able to create grazing systems that meet the needs of their livestock, pasture plants, soils, and the larger ecosystem. The book discusses all the practical details that are critical for sustained success: how to set up a new system or improve existing systems; acreage calculations; paddock layout; fence and drinking water access; lanes and other grazing infrastructure; managing livestock movement and flow; soil fertility; seeding and reseeding pastures; and more. The author includes descriptions of real grazing systems working well on dairy, beef, goat, and sheep farms in different regions of North America. The book covers pasture

requirements specific to organic farming, but will be of use to both organic and non-organic farms.

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The Art and Science of Grazing: How Grass Farmers Can Create Sustainable Systems for Healthy Animals and Farm Ecosystems By Sarah Flack Bibliography

- Rank: #125819 in Books
- Brand: Chelsea Green Pub Co
- Published on: 2016-06-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.90" h x .50" w x 7.90" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback

- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

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"This is a great book. After reading this work, the reviewer felt as if he could almost start his own grazing system; the title provides readers with the right questions to ask. Flack (a consultant on grazing and organic livestock) is a concise and articulate author and educator. She knows the value of telling a simple story and supporting it with relevant illustrations. She has an elegant style and knows how to use the power of repetition to show how no part of grazing management is wholly independent. She has biases with respect to the best grazing management, but is evenhanded in presenting multiple alternatives to grazing issues. Her case studies are aptly chosen to illustrate how the grazing management she advocates can be both sustainable and profitable. Each chapter plays a role and successively builds on the knowledge previously gained. As a manual for introducing good land stewardship, this book admirably succeeds. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. All readers."

"I have long been fascinated by the logic of André Voisin's system of Rational Grazing. Sarah Flack's book has persuaded me that this could be a practical option for my own micro-dairy holding."--**Simon Fairlie, author of *Meat***

"It gives me pleasure to recommend Sarah Flack's *The Art and Science of Grazing*. Sarah offers sound practical information for management of pastures in humid environments. Her years of experience and study allow her to explain the limitations of rotational grazing that were first highlighted by Andre Voisin and to confirm the soundness of Voisin's Rational Grazing."--**Allan Savory, president, Savory Institute**

"With feet firmly planted in both practice and science, Sarah Flack introduces pasture-based livestock production in a way that is sure to encourage and empower."--**Joel Salatin, author of *Salad Bar Beef***

"*The Art and Science of Grazing* is a beautiful and highly useful book. Read it, learn how to manage pasture well, then do it! Sarah Flack's good counsel can save your farm and family and bring you happiness. What else is there?"--**Bill Murphy, author of *Greener Pastures on Your Side of the Fence***

“Amidst the flood of information on modern grass farming, Sarah Flack performs nothing short of a rescue operation, distilling the art and science of grazing into an immensely useful book. Experienced hands will learn plenty, but newcomers won’t be overwhelmed. *The Art and Science of Grazing* is sure to become one of the most well-worn books on graziers’ bookshelves.”--**Fred Walters, publisher, Acres U.S.A.**

“Sarah Flack has written a wonderful guide to sustainable grazing. She discusses fundamental principles and specific practices that make her book meaningful for anyone interested in the art and science of grazing.”--**Fred Provenza, professor emeritus, Department of Wildland Resources, Utah State University**

“More and more farmers and ranchers are thirsting for information on animal husbandry that truly protects and regenerates natural resources while enhancing economic viability. Sarah Flack is answering the call. In a readable, user-friendly format, her book provides concrete information and plenty of inspiration. An invaluable resource for anyone raising grazing animals.”--**Nicolette Niman, author of *Defending Beef***

“Sarah Flack’s *The Art and Science of Grazing* is an excellent guide for anyone with an interest in the regenerative potential of livestock grazing done right. Whether you are a farmer, rancher, conscientious consumer of meat, or concerned citizen of the planet, Flack’s clear, concise prose explains how good grazing is a natural fit in our world.”--**Courtney White, author of *Two Percent Solutions for the Planet***

“Intelligently managed grazing has tremendous potential to mitigate climate turmoil, and *The Art and Science of Grazing* contains everything you need to know to do the very best job of grazing. Sarah Flack explores every aspect of holistic pasture management in a most delightful manner that will help all who consult her book, from beginners to the most experienced graziers, to achieve their maximum potential in healing the Earth with livestock and land.”--**Jack Lazor, author of *The Organic Grain Grower***

“*The Art and Science of Grazing* is a comprehensive guide for new and experienced graziers. If I had to choose one book as a reference on grazing for both new and experienced livestock graziers, this would be it. The book is well organized, containing many excellent illustrations and beautiful photographs. Sarah Flack shares her knowledge on all aspects of grazing with emphasis on key principles that apply to all farms in humid regions. Multiple case studies provide interest and wisdom gained by farmers who have developed diverse, successful grazing operations throughout the country.”--**Guy Jodarski, DVM, CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley**

About the Author

Sarah Flack is the author of *Organic Dairy Production* and a nationally known consultant on grazing and organic livestock. She grew up on a Vermont family farm that used management-intensive grazing and mob stocking. She later studied Holistic Planned Grazing and pursued graduate studies on pasture management at the University of Vermont. She has written extensively about grass farming and is known for teaching workshops that take a practical approach to applying the science of grazing. Sarah has successfully helped many farmers create positive change in their pastures, soils, livestock, finances, and farm-family quality of life.

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