Do you have a problem with:

- Insufficient livestock feed
- Cost of buying livestock feed
- Poor feed quality
- Weed, insect, or disease problems
- Poor soil tilth (soil workability)

A crop rotation can address these problems and provide your livestock with the types and quantities of feed needed for your livestock operation.

Confined livestock require quality feed. A rotation designed to fit your livestock operation can provide the feed with little or no off– farm feed purchase.

Benefits of a rotation to provide livestock feed:

- Reduce feed costs
- Improve feed quality and quantity
- Provide a better income
- Manage pests and recycle nutrients
- Enhance soil tilth and workability
- Reduce runoff and erosion
- Provide better distribution of labor during the crop season by using different crops, planting dates, and harvest periods

Growing your own forage can provide high quality feed and reduce your out-of-pocket feed costs.

Costs:

Generally there is no capital cost to establish the rotation. However, time may be required to plan and maintain the rotation best suited for your needs.

A well-planned rotation can provide the needed grain and forage for a livestock operation as well as cash crop.

Rotations for Livestock Feed

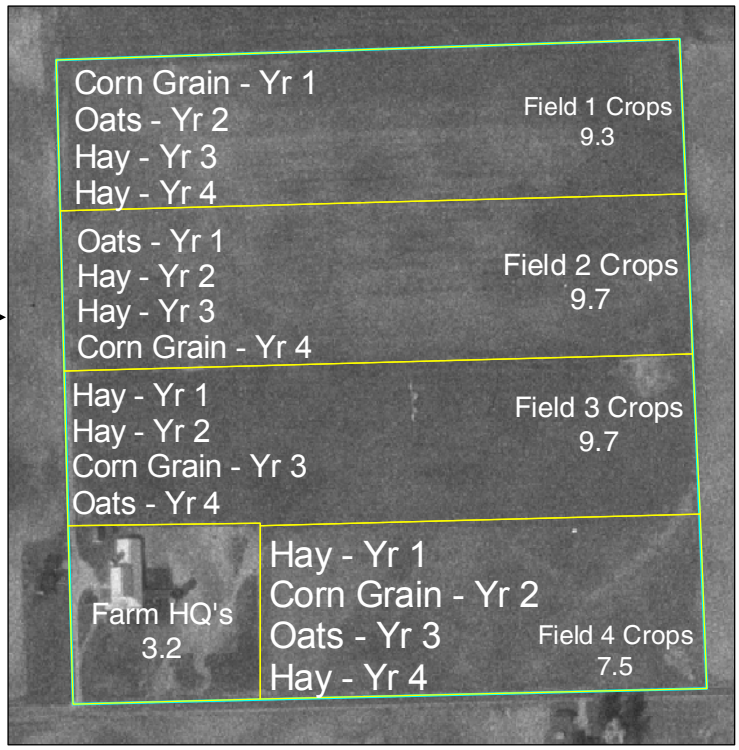
Crop Rotation Planning Considerations:

- Determine livestock feed requirements.
- Choose the crops/varieties to meet livestock feed needs and other producer objectives.
- Identify soil erosion, nutrient, and soil health concerns.
- Soil test (every 3-5 years) for pH, organic matter, and nutrients. Use soil test recommendations to adjust pH and nutrient levels for optimum crop yields and quality.
- If manure is used, develop a manure management plan to utilize the manure nutrients.
- Evaluate and modify the planting sequence annually based on the identified concerns.
- Attend training needed for crop and soil management and pest scouting.
- Evaluate cover crop needs.

Rotations can be designed to provide the mix of grain and forages needed for the farm operation.

Practice Application:

1. Using a map, lay out a rotation for the crops by year for the length of the rotation.
2. Plan the rotation for the operation to establish a nearly equal acreage for each crop each year.



Example 4 year rotation: Corn – Oats – Hay – Hay

Crop Rotation Maintenance:

- Periodic soil testing
- Crop and pest scouting
- Evaluate cropping sequence for feed needs and soil concerns
- Calibrate sprayers, planters, and fertilizer applicators to:
  - set rate of applications
  - establish uniform distributions
  - provide uniform seeding depths.

Rotations for Livestock Feed

A rotation can not only produce your feed, but can balance your farm labor requirements throughout the year.

Planning is the key to a good rotation system. Assistance to help plan your system is available from the NRCS

Multiple crop rotations can better utilize manure for nutrients

Help is Available

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

SMALL SCALE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR FARM

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you with developing rotations for livestock feed. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment and we will come to your farm.

You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance, through a state or federal program. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

Helping People Help the Land

For More Information Contact the:

Natural Resources Conservation Service

60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, RI 02886
(401) 828-1300
Web Address: www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov
E-mail Address: NRCSInfo@ri.usda.gov

NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis throughout the year.

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