Livestock Grazing Management & Research Activities

Beginning in November 2006, a new livestock grazing management scheme was implemented on the Santa Rita Experimental Range (Santa Rita) under the supervision of Dr. George Ruyle, School of Natural Resources and the Environment and in cooperation with Andrew McGibbon who owns the livestock. This new management replaces the “Santa Rita Grazing System” experiment that was in place since 1972 (Martin and Severson. 1988. J. Range. Man. 41:291-295, and Mashiri et al. 2008. Rangeland Ecol. Manage. 61:368-379).

The new scheme applies adaptive grazing management principles to establish expected dormant season grazing capacity based on summer forage production, and summer grazing periods of only 10 days to avoid the re-grazing of plants in the summer growing season (Noelle et al. 2021. Frontiers in Veterinary Science, section Animal Behavior and Welfare. 7, 1023. https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.600734). The adaptive management elements include 1) use of summer production values to re-adjust stocking rates each fall, 2) start and duration of the summer growing season to determine when livestock should be moved between pastures, and 3) flexible pasture use to support the variety of research projects being performed on the Santa Rita.

Currently, there are two herds moving through multiple pastures to consolidate livestock handling activities and more precisely manage grazing use. The large herd of ~400 animals will move through a combination of 21 pastures, 15 are located on the Santa Rita, and 3 on the Coronado National Forest, and 3 on Arizona State Lands. The small herd, ~100 animals, will move through 11 pastures all but two are on the Santa Rita. Brett Blum and associates are measuring forage production and utilization, livestock movement patterns, and developing methods to forecast forage availability and likelihood of re-grazing plants in the summer growing season.

Researchers, instructors, and other interested parties are advised to consult the accompanying tables and maps to learn the specific location, timing and number of livestock expected in each pasture; as well as the actual use in those areas. Be aware that 1) some animals may appear in pastures outside these expected periods because of handling problems, 2) livestock use of unintended pastures is not shown in the report below, and 3) adjustment to timing and numbers can be made to accommodate research and instruction needs.

Since November 2008, a new practice has been implemented by opening pasture gates 1-2 days before the official start date for grazing in the new pasture. Typically, the gates will open 1 day earlier, but the 2-day window will be common when there are frequent moves (every 10 days) during the summer growing season. This practice is being adopted to reduce the separation of calves from cows during the move between pastures.

Planned Livestock Grazing on the Santa Rita Experimental Range

01 November 2025 - 31 October 2026

Below are the projected livestock grazing days for the “large herd” and “small herd” of livestock on the Santa Rita Experimental Range for the grazing year 01 November 2025 - 31 October 2026 and extended beyond October 2026 for planning purposes. Projected grazing use is based on our current best estimates of available forage and the commencement of summer rains. The projected dates and herd size may change as forage conditions change and monitoring data are analyzed.

Both large and small herd plans are followed by a figure comparing the cumulative projected and actual grazing days on the SRER throughout the grazing season. Grazing Days for a month is the sum of the number of cattle present each day for that month, and Cumulative Grazing Days is the sum of all months before and including the current month. Projected Grazing Days are based on the grazing plan starting on November 1st. Actual Grazing Days are reported monthly by the Santa Rita Ranch. Cumulative grazing days consider only pastures on the SRER. Private, Forest Service, and State pastures outside the SRER are not included.

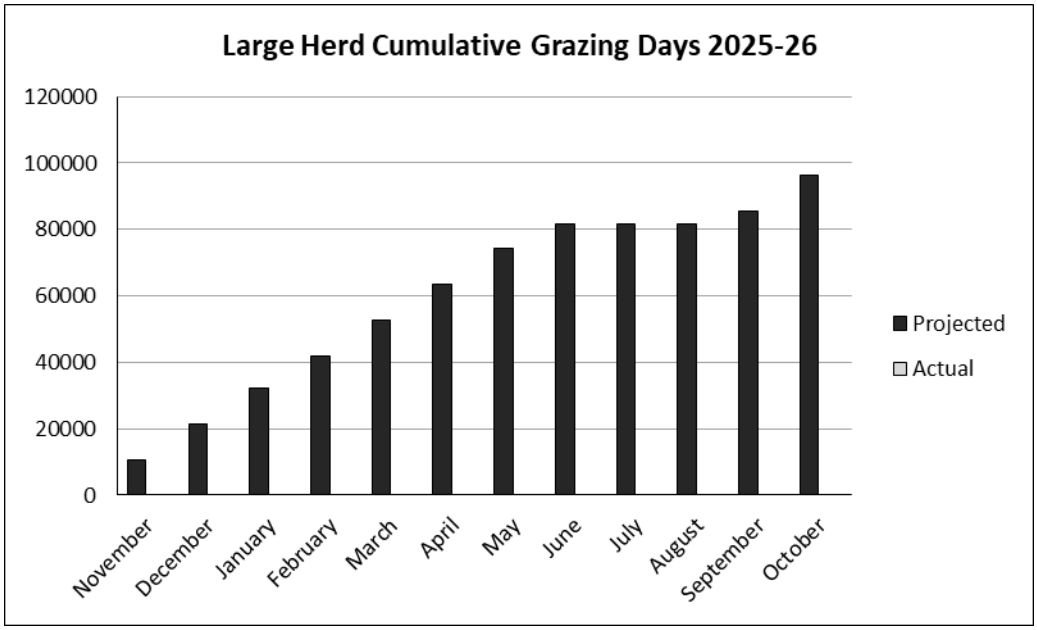
Significant changes in the grazing schedule will be announced on the list serve srer@list.cals.arizona.edu. Assume accuracy of projected dates to increase as those dates get closer. See the Grazing Management Map (below) for spatial details. Direct questions to Brett Blum (bcb@arizona.edu) or Mitch McClaran (mcclaran@u.arizona.edu).

Plan Update 01 November 2025

SRER Large Herd (Herd 1 on map) **Plan Update:** **01-Nov-2025**

		Projected					Actual				
Year	**Pasture** (*acres*)	**Herd Size (AU's)**	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Days**	**Animal Days per Acre**	**Herd Size (AU's)**	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Days**	**Animal Days per Acre**
2025	**5S** (*4699*)	350	16-Nov	23-Dec	38	2.8					
	5M (*3448*)	350	24-Dec	12-Jan	20	2.0					
2026	**5N** (*2025*)	350	13-Jan	22-Jan	10	1.7					
	15 (*4217*)	350	23-Jan	01-Feb	10	0.8					
	6D (1978)	350	02-Feb	26-Feb	25	4.4					
	6B (*1677*)	350	27-Feb	13-Mar	15	3.1					
	6A (*2686*)	350	14-Mar	28-Mar	15	2.0					
	6E (*910*)	350	29-Mar	07-Apr	10	3.9					
	2N (*4585*)	350	08-Apr	02-May	25	1.9					
	2S (*1389*)	350	03-May	12-May	10	2.5					
	12A (*995*)	350	13-May	17-May	5	1.8					
	12C (*1886*)	350	18-May	06-Jun	20	3.7					
	12B (*1610*)	350	07-Jun	11-Jun	5	1.1					
	12E (*2562*)	350	12-Jun	21-Jun	10	1.4					
	Canoa N/S* (*5513*)	350	22-Jun	20-Aug	60	3.8					
	State (*2778*)	350	21-Aug	19-Sep	30	3.8					
	12C (*1886*)	350	20-Sep	09-Oct	20	3.7					
	12A (*995*)	350	10-Oct	14-Oct	5	1.8					
	3 (*4104*)	350	15-Oct	03-Nov	20	1.7					

* These pastures are not part of the Santa Rita Experimental Range; and Canoa pastures not yet split.

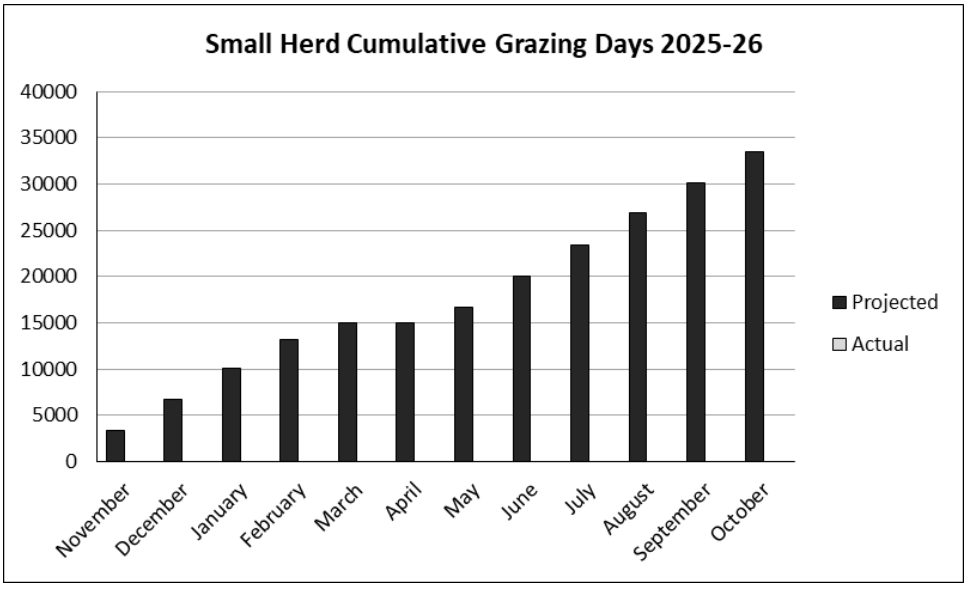


Comparison of Projected and Actual Cumulative Grazing Days for the Large Herd in 2025-26. In this grazing year, cattle were projected to be on the Santa Rita pastures for 275 days, and through November 2025, they have been on for 0 days.

SRER Small Herd (Herd 2 on map) **Plan Update:** **01-Nov-2025**

		Projected					Actual				
Year	**Pasture** (*acres*)	**Herd Size (AU's)**	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Days**	**Animal Days per Acre**	**Herd Size (AU's)**	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Days**	**Animal Days per Acre**
2025	**UA-E** (*156*)	110	16-Nov	25-Nov	10	7.1					
	UA-F (*336*)	110	26-Nov	09-Dec	14	4.6					
	1 (*782*)	110	10-Dec	05-Jan	27	3.8					
2026	**8** (*815*)	110	08-Jan	06-Feb	30	4.1					
	11C (*214*)	110	07-Feb	09-Feb	3	1.5					
	4 (*670*)	110	10-Feb	16-Mar	35	5.8					
	FS Ranger Pasture	110	17-Mar	15-May	60	13.6					
	11C (*214*)	110	16-May	18-May	3	1.5					
	11B (*212*)	110	19-May	28-May	10	5.2					
	UA-A (*549*)	110	31-May	15-Jun	16	3.2					
	UA-C (*365*)	110	16-Jun	01-Jul	16	4.8					
	UA-G (*441*)	110	02-Jul	28-Jul	27	6.7					
	UA-H (*453*)	110	29-Jul	21-Aug	24	5.8					
	UA-D (*357*)	110	22-Aug	14-Sep	24	7.4					
	UA-E (*156*)	110	15-Sep	24-Sep	10	7.1					
	UA-F (*336*)	110	25-Sep	14-Oct	20	6.6					
	1 (*782*)	110	15-Oct	03-Nov	20	2.8					

*These pastures are not part of the Santa Rita Experimental Range. Forest Service Pastures include Ranger and Florida pastures.



Comparison of Projected and Actual Cumulative Grazing Days for the Small Herd in 2025-26. In this grazing year, cattle were projected to be on the Santa Rita pastures for 305 days, and through November 2025, they have been on for 0 days.

SRER Pastures **Plan Update:** **01-Nov-2025**

Pasture (*acres*)	Use	**Projected**				**Actual**			
		Herd Size (AU's)	Start Date	End Date	Grazing Days	Herd Size (AU's)	Start Date	End Date	Grazing Days
140 Trap (*209*)	temporary	110	29-May	30-May	2				
Huerfano Trap	temporary								
Madera Trap	Bull calves								
N Shipping	temporary								
HQ (*25*)	temporary	110	06-Jan	07-Jan	2				
UA-Corral	temporary								
UA-E (*156*)	Bull calves								
6C (*427*)	temporary								
9 *(955)*	TBD								
11A (*204*)	temporary								
16 *(636)*	temporary								
10 *(603)*	TBD								
12D *(1079)*	temporary								
302 *(132)*	temporary								

Map of Livestock Grazing Patterns for Two Herds on the Santa Rita Experimental Range