***Theme:***

***KurzRasen a new grazing system***

By Edmund Leisen

***Principles are:***

1. Letting the cows graze early in spring.
2. Don’t mow the grazed pastures
3. Low structure food.
4. Weekly rotation
5. Bring cows in the gassland when they are hungry

1. When cows graze in early spring (before the length of the grass becomes four cm), the grass will not become ‘old’ (long) and tasteless. When the grass becomes too long in Spring, because of a lot of rain and thus the fact that the cows cannot go outside, than a part of the grassland could be grazed by calves or heifers, as they are less picky. Is the area to big, than you might have to mow the grass once.

2. Mowing the grass will negatively influence the quality of the grass, as there won’t exist tussocks. Tussocks are important in this ‘KurzRasen’ grazing system as the grass will first grow horizontally over the soil before it will grow vertical. In this way, the grass seems to be grazed off very short, but in fact the grass has a very long horizontal growing stem from which the grass has the capacity to photosynthesize and thus can easily grow again without using the energy from the root.

3. As the cows are continuously (days (and nights)) eating little amounts of fresh, protein rich and sugar rich blades of grass, they won’t eat a lot of structure-rich feed. That’s why this grazing system is not comparable with other grazing systems which are normally expressed in yields of dry matter. In this system they calculate with amount of kg milk/ha/day. Normally protein and sugar rich food leads to unwanted acidosis in the rumen. This is not the case in this system as the cow cannot graze high amounts in short periods (as the grass is short). Another effect of this system is the fact that the cows are not ruminating so often anymore (as there is less structure-rich food to ruminate).

4. The cows will return on the same plot every week. This normally leads to a high pressure of worm infection. But because the grass stays short, the grassland is dry, which worms don’t like. This weekly disturbance of growing will make sure that other herbs are not disappearing so quick. Cichorei (a herb against worms) might stay longer in the grass.

Edmund advices to put calves early and for a few days/at most a few weeks (depending on soil humidity and weather) in the pasture. In this way, the calves get little infected by the worms and can build up some resistance.

5. Besides it is important to bring the cows to the pasture when they are hungry. In that way, you prevent grass residues (parts of the grassland which is not eaten) (10-15% instead of 25-30%).

This method needs some time to evaluate. Look at the cow and the fullness of the rumen. If the cow gets too less, you might need to give some additional feed.

**Examples of Research Questions:**

1. Compare the amount of kg milk/ha/day among farmers and different grazing systems
2. Focus on grass residues (mostly it are places where cows defecated). How to reduce them? When do they disappear again? Difference between wet and dry grassland?
3. Weight increase of cows, heifers and calves in the grassland? (e.g. investigate a farm whereby x heifers are inside and x heifers are outside and check their health aspects.
4. Compare grass roots systems among different graze systems. (e.g. productivity of the grassland by measuring the weight of the roots)
5. Compare labour intensity per grazing system