

FOREST PRODUCTS

Indiana is known for its quality hardwoods and hardwood timber industry. The influence of livestock grazing upon the timber resource is pronounced.

Livestock browsing destroys young hardwoods by girdling and physical deformation. Elimination of these young seedlings, along with the damage to larger trees, reduces the number of trees in the woodland and threatens continued production of fine hardwood timber.

Grazing of woodlands often results in changes in the species make-up of the woods to less desirable trees, such as: cedar, locust, buckeye, hawthorne, dogwood and crabapple.

The value of existing timber is reduced in a grazed woodland. Hoof damage to tree butts and exposed roots allow entry of damaging insects and diseases. Prolonged grazing results in log rotting and staining. A white oak veneer tree may become a lower value saw log after such staining.

The value of Indiana's forests is not in pastures, but in the production of quality wood products. Compared to a good pasture, a woodland has little or no food value.



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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Woodland soils, waterways and timber production all suffer when a woodland is grazed. This disturbance to the forest environment has many other destructive impacts.

Wildlife cover and food supply are reduced or eliminated in a pastured woods. Consequently, so is the quantity of wildlife.

Other forest products, such as firewood, mushrooms and ginseng are eliminated or reduced in a grazed woodland.

A pastured woodland does not possess the beauty of forest wildflowers, ferns and clean spring streams.

Poisonous plants and predators may injure livestock in the woods.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Practice good pasture and woods management. Woodlands make poor pastures and livestock make poor foresters.

Cost share assistance is often available through the County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service to fence off your woodlands from grazing livestock.

Protect your springs and stream banks from livestock traffic.

Develop alternative livestock water supplies. Again, Federal cost-share assistance is available in many cases.

Convert some of your marginal forestland into productive pasture. A small corner of the woods could be included in the pasture for summer shade and winter wind protection, while the remainder is protected from livestock.

Improve existing pasture areas and remove your livestock from the woods.

Contact your state District Forester for woodland assistance and the Soil Conservation Service for other farm assistance.

Woodlands Make Poor Pastures



Developed by: Four Rivers Resource Conservation and Development (R C & D) Forestry Committee in cooperation with the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry.

DNR DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY





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Ever since the early settlement of the United States, woodlands have been used as pasture and rangeland. Even with low forage values, the eastern forests were grazed until the farmer could clear enough land to plant the needed crops to support his livestock.

By creating open pastures, the farmer found he could keep much closer watch on his animals. This greatly helped his efforts in locating livestock and protecting them from predatory animals. Open pastures also supplied the livestock with a greatly increased quantity and quality of forage compared to the old forest pasture. Despite the advantages of pasture land grazing, thousands of Indiana's woodland acres are presently being grazed, resulting in significant production losses to farm and woodland owners.

The Indiana Division of Forestry was asked by the Four Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Forestry Committee to take a closer look at woodland grazing. The information collected provided some striking results.



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A large amount of soil erosion resulting from grazed woodlands was found. An average annual erosion rate of 23 tons of soil per acre was found on the grazed woodlands sampled. Spread out evenly over an acre, this amounts to about 1/5 of an inch of soil erosion every year. Erosion was found to increase with steepness of slope and grazing intensity.



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Grazing livestock tend to remove the ground cover and vegetation which once held the woodland soil in place. Soil lost in the erosion process is eventually deposited in low spots and waterways, polluting streams and filling ponds. This in turn leads to higher costs for such things as road ditch maintenance and water purification.

1 A fine stand of Indiana hardwoods providing a healthy dollar return for the landowner and protection of our soil and water resources.

2 A study of the soils in grazed woodlands indicates that erosion is a serious problem

3 The lack of leaf litter and the presence of exposed roots indicates that considerable erosion of forest soil is taking place.

4 Woodland pasturing of livestock adds to poor water quality and sedimentation problems

5 Repeated injury to the trunk and roots from livestock resulted in the complete economic loss of this black walnut tree.