



Grazing Cover Crops

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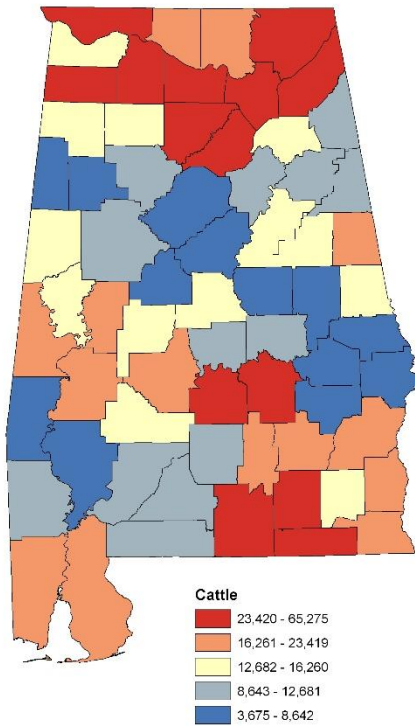
Grazing Cover Crops Can Make Them Profitable

- Row-crop producers often face short-term losses from using cover crops
 - Mostly due to cover crop planting costs (~\$40 per acre)
- Grazing cover crops or harvesting forage can offset these losses
 - \$20-\$80/acre additional revenue from grazing cover crops found in Iowa
 - Many row-crop producers do not have livestock, so arrangements between crop and livestock farms could benefit both parties

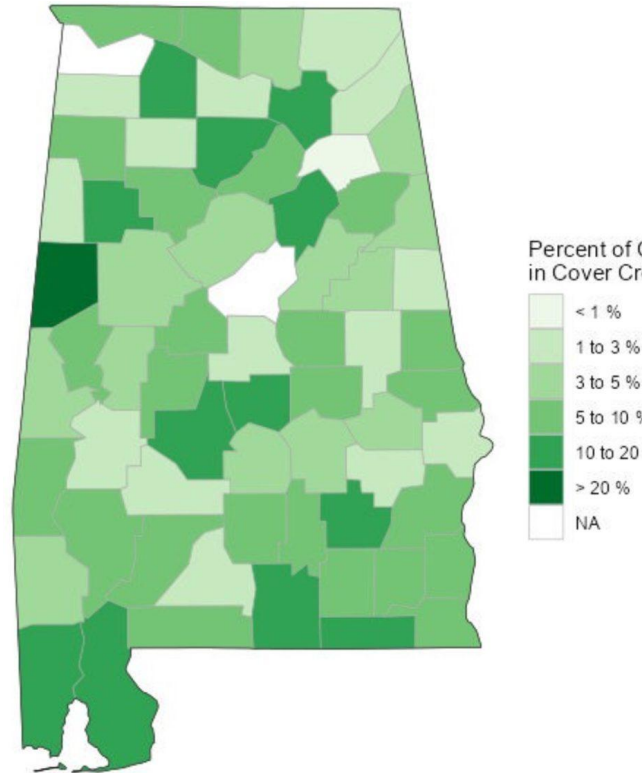


Integrated Crop-Livestock Systems

Total Number of Cattle by County, 2007



Produced by: Cartographic Research Lab
Department of Geography



- In the SE, 41% of farms have pasture
 - 80% have cropland
 - 53% have cattle



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Soil structure and productivity

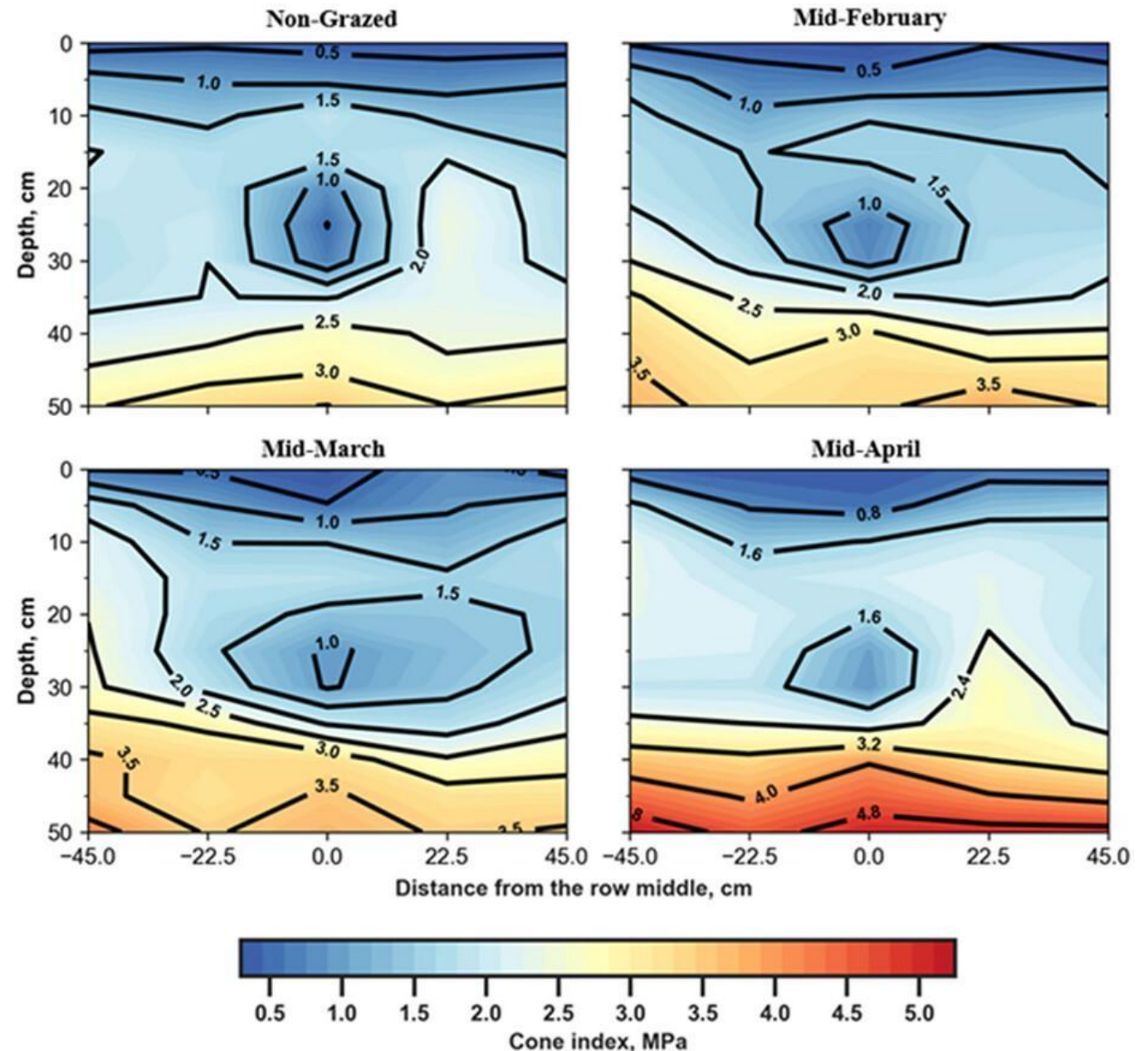
- Leave more residue than typical annual grazing system
- This allows for the cover crop to provide cover crop benefits
- Removal cattle 2-4 weeks before planned CC termination

Soil Compaction

Cereal rye, black oat, crimson clover, and turnip-rape hybrid

Cotton/peanut rotation at Wiregrass REC (Headland)

Removing cattle mid-March allowed enough regrowth to prevention compaction



Effect of Grazing Cover Crops on Cotton/Peanut Performance in the Wiregrass (Headland, AL)

Treatment	Cotton lint (lb/acre)	Peanut (lb/acre)
Non-grazed	1,517a	5,870
Mid-Feb Cattle Removal	1,561a	5,103
Mid-March Cattle Removal	1,347b	4,809
Mid-April Cattle Removal	1,445a	4,809

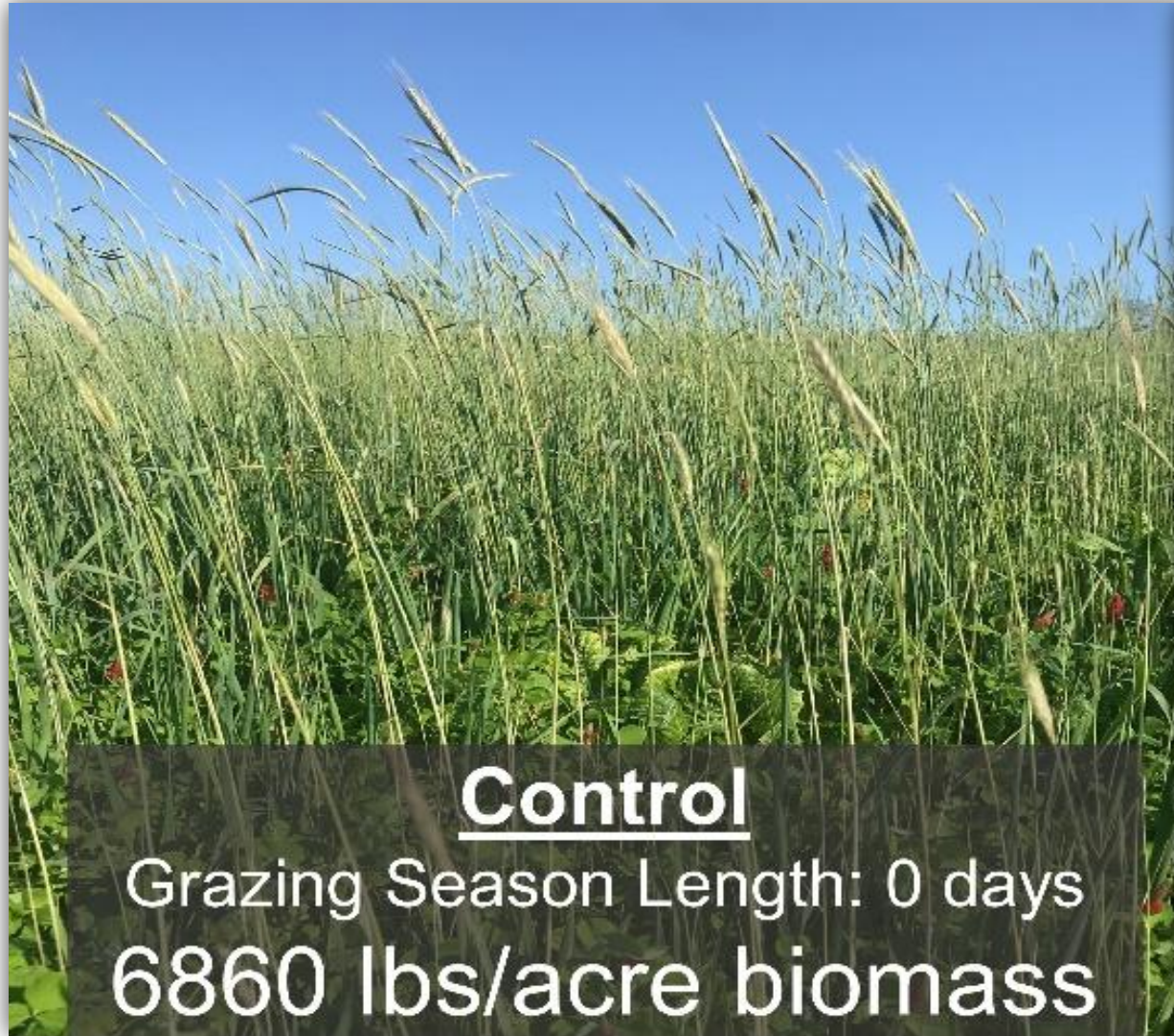


Effect of Grazing Cover Crops on Steer Performance in the Wiregrass (Headland, AL)

	Non-grazed	Cattle Removal Date		
		February	March	April
ADG, lb/hd	_____	2.6a	2.6a	3.1b
Gain per acre, lb/acre	_____	178a	247a	368b
Length of grazing Season (d)	_____	36	58	72
Est. Cattle Revenue (\$3.50/lb)	\$0.00	\$623.00	864.50	\$1,288.00



Cover Crop Production



Cover Crop Production



Mid-Mar Cattle Removal

Grazing Season Length: 46 days

2550 lbs/acre biomass



Mid-Apr Cattle Removal

Grazing Season Length: 65 days

2080 lbs/acre biomass

April 5, 2019



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Which cover crops can I use?

Cool-Season Annuals

- Small grains
 - Wheat, oat, rye, triticale
- Brassicas
 - Turnip, radish, rapeseed
- Legumes
 - Crimson clover, winter pea, hairy vetch



Fencing and Watering Systems

Fencing

- Temporary electric fencing provides easy movable interior fencing
 - Only 1 wire necessary for trained cattle
- Will need more fencing for perimeter fence
 - Can be permanent or temporary



Watering systems

- Animals will need to access to clean water at all times





Leases for Grazing Cover Crops

1. Contract Considerations

- What type of contract
 - \$/acre/month rental payment
 - \$/head/month (or animal unit month)
 - \$/lb. gain
 - Split cost of cover crop seeding and some other specification
- Are facilities available? (e.g. water and fencing)
 - If not, who will provide them?



Leases for Grazing Cover Crops

2. Cover Crop Considerations

- Who is responsible for planting/terminating the cover crop? Who covers the cost?
 - May depend on whether the crop farmer currently uses cover crops
- When and how is it planted? Is there a planting date deadline?
 - The planting date impacts available forage
 - Flying on seed ahead of cash crop harvest can prolong the cover crop grazing season
- Cover crop seed mix and seeding rate
 - A simple cereal grain cover crop costs less than a mix but may provide less grazing value
- Make sure to avoid toxins (certain herbicides or cover crop species)



Leases for Grazing Cover Crops

3. Cattle Considerations

- What is the allowable stocking rate?
- Who will be responsible for cattle management? (e.g. water, minerals, fence repair)
- Who is liable for losses?
- When do livestock need to be removed?



For more information:

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