

## Pasture Rental Rate

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Rental rates for pasturing cattle and sheep vary depending on animal size or weigh weight, condition of pasture, work done by each party, and lease length. On years when forage is plentiful, rates run from \$7.00 to \$12.00 per head per month. Some years, when forage is short, it runs \$9.00 to \$15.00 per head per month. See below for more detail on choosing what fits your situation.

First, let me define "head" of livestock. For the purpose of pasture rent, we do this in units called an animal unit (AU).

An AU is equivalent to a 1,000-lb cow or 5 large sheep or 7 smaller sheep

A larger cow would be more (1,200 lb cow = 1.2 AU)

500 lb feeder calves are 0.5 AU

750 lb feeder calves are 0.75 AU

A cow-calf pair is charged only for the cow if the calf is less than 3 months old.

Calves over 3 months old start eating a significant amount of forage

Assuming weaning age of 7 months and weaning weight of 500 lbs, use

0.3 AU from 3 to 5 months, 0.4 AU from 5 to 7 months, 0.5 AU at 7 months

Lambs are not charged extra as long as they are with their dams

Weaned lambs are charged at 7 lambs per AU

Next, let me describe pasture conditions. Pasture conditions can vary. Forage quantity and quality are both part of the condition. Good pasture conditions are where water is readily available to the animals, and there is a good system of cross-fencing so pastures can be rotationally grazed.

Pasture Quantity – Good forage quantity is described as a condition where there is readily available amount material for grazing (proper plant height and plant spacing). The height of the forage is maintained between 3 and 8 inches during the pasture season. Cattle are let in at the 8-inch height and moved out of the pasture at the 3-inch height so that animal performance is not limited by amount of feed available. That is, they do not have to work hard to graze the forage. Plants fill in all the space of the field, without lots of bare spots or weeds. Low quantity forage conditions are when over grazing has plant height very short (<2") and forage plants are sparse in the field because of bare ground without plants or because weeds are prevalent.

Pasture Quality - High quality forage is described as being high in protein and energy, and is easily digested by the animals. High quality forage is actively growing, lush forage (that is, it is in a vegetative phase of growth and has lot of green, leafy material). Low quality forage is

slow growing, dry forage (that is, it is in a reproductive phase of growth, has mature seed heads, and contains a lot of stems compared with leaves). It is low in protein and energy, and is not very digestible - like straw). Low quality forage limits animal performance (calving rate or weight gains).

Lastly, there are some miscellaneous items that help determine rental rate. One is amount of work each party does. Work includes fence repair, moving irrigation lines, fertilizing fields, rotating animals about the different pastures, and such. Another item is the length of lease. Short-term leases are for one, or part of one, grazing season and are on a monthly basis. Long-term leases are two or more years. You need to figure out the stocking rate on the pastures and the number of animal units you would have for that time period. Additionally items to consider could include things like ease of pasture use. For example, if the gate to the pasture where the animals are now were adjacent to the pasture for rent, it would be easy to get the cattle back and forth compared to the situation where cattle would have to be trucked in to the new pasture.

These factors are some of the things you need to think about when you determine pasture rental rates. Well-managed, deep soiled, bottom-ground, irrigated pasture systems planted to improved, cool season perennial grasses and legumes would fetch the higher rental rate. Shallow soiled, hillside pasture, non-irrigated ground with native annual grasses would be at the lower rental rate. If the owner does all the work, the rental rate is at the high end. If the renter does all the work, the price is lower. If the lease is short-term, the rental rate is at the high end. If there is a long-term lease agreement, the rental rate is lower.