

# Alfalfa Grazing Systems in Argentina

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Daniel Basigalup was Senior Scientist at INTA's Manfredi Agricultural Experimental Station, Córdoba, Argentina from 1980 to 2022. He graduated as Agronomist at the University of La Plata, Argentina and has a MSc and a PhD in Plant Breeding from the University of Minnesota, USA. Since he joined INTA has been involved in several aspects of alfalfa improvement, particularly cultivar development, N fixation and hay production. He has developed 10 commercial alfalfa cultivars, has edited/co-edited 5 alfalfa books and authored/co-authored 20 book chapters, more than 30 scientific papers and many technical articles on alfalfa to a national and international level. Also, he is given several dissertations on alfalfa around the world and directed several postgraduate thesis works. He coordinated the INTA's National Forage Breeding Program from 2006 to 2019 and was the Coordinator of the INTA Manfredi Plant Breeding Department between 2013 and 2017. From 2013 to 2016, he also acted as vice-Director of INTA Manfredi. From 2005 to 2022 he was a member of the National Seed Advisory Committee (CONASE), which advises the Argentine Ministry of Agro Industry in seed production and commercialization policies. At present, he is an Associated Professional at INTA.

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Alfalfa is the most important cultivated forage crop in Argentina, where about 3.2 million hectares are grown. Even though the use of direct grazing is coming down during the last 15 years or so, it is still important for both beef and dairy production. Alfalfa grazing can play an important role in reducing operative costs and decreasing quality loss due to forage conservation (hay or silage). In this paper, the main concepts necessary to implement adequate and practical rotational grazing systems are briefly discussed. Particular attention is given to issues such as grazing frequency, grazing period, pasture use efficiency, and alfalfa quality variation by canopy strata and time of the year. Specific management requirements for beef and dairy operations are also discussed. Argentine experience indicates that is possible to reach high animal response under direct grazing, provided appropriate management practices are used.