

IRRIGATED PASTURE

Irrigated pasture is an excellent source of low-cost feed for cattle, sheep and hogs. It is essential for the most economical production of dairy products and may be utilized to good advantage in the production of swine, and for feeding beef cattle and lambs for market. Since irrigated pasture as a crop is marketed in the form of livestock or livestock products, the grower should be able to stock his pasture to obtain satisfactory returns. It would seem inadvisable to plant irrigated pasture in the hope of renting it to dairymen or cattlemen at a fair price.

Requirements: Irrigated pasture may be grown on a rather wide range of soils. However, costs are higher and returns lower from pastures planted on light, sandy soils. Medium to heavy soils are better suited for pasture production. It grows rather well on shallow or heavy soils which may not be well suited for alfalfa or other crops. Irrigated pasture requires large quantities of water available at frequent intervals - every 7 to 10 days in hot weather. Total water requirements average about 60 acre inches per year in about 20 irrigations.

Allotment, Support Prices, and Agricultural Conservation Program: Irrigated pasture is not subject to acreage allotments. Dairy products are supported under the current U.S. agricultural programs and, therefore, indirectly returns from irrigated pasture may be affected by price supports. Prices of meat animals are not supported.

Yield: Pasture yields are often measured in animal unit months. An animal unit month is the quantity of feed required in one month by one mature head of cattle or the equivalent in other stock. It is the equivalent in feed value to about .4 of a ton of alfalfa hay. Irrigated pasture yields in Fresno County vary considerably. A good commercial yield would be about 14 animal unit months per acre per year. This would be equivalent to carrying 1 mature cow and a yearling per acre for 8 months of the year.

RECOMMENDED SEED MIXTURESMedium to Heavy SoilsLight, Sandy Soils

<u>Kind of Seed</u>	<u>Pounds</u>	<u>Kind of Seed</u>	<u>Pounds</u>
Alfalfa	2	Alfalfa	3
Ladino clover	2	Yellow blossom	3
Orchard grass	2	Orchard grass	3
Perennial rye grass	2	Dallis grass	2
Annual rye grass	2		
Tall fescue or Dallis grass	4	Tall fescue	4
(Total lbs./acre)	14		15

The above mixtures are for dairy cattle, beef cattle and sheep. Other kinds of livestock and unusual soil conditions may require special seed mixtures.

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WHAT WILL IT COST TO GROW IRRIGATED PERMANENT PASTURE - FRESNO COUNTY

Based on 14 Animal Unit Months of Pasturage
 Labor at \$.90 and light tractor at \$1.20

	<u>Sample Costs</u>		<u>My Costs</u>	
	'Per	'Per	'Per	'Per
	'A.U.	'A.U.	'A.U.	'A.U.
	'Acre	'Acre	'Acre	'Acre
	'Mo.	'Mo.	'Mo.	'Mo.
<u>LABOR AND FIELD POWER COSTS:</u>				
Mow, fertilize, drag, fence work, etc. 3 man hrs. & 2 tractor hrs.			\$ 5.10	
Irrigation labor - 10 man hrs.			9.00	
<u>Total Labor and Field Power</u>			14.10	1.01
<u>MATERIAL COSTS:</u>				
Irrigation water; tax & power - 5 ac. ft.			10.00	
Fertilizer & misc; annual average			8.00	
<u>Total Material Cost</u>			18.00	1.29
<u>CASH OVERHEAD COST:</u>				
General expense; 5% of labor & material cost			1.55	
County taxes			4.50	
Repairs & misc. overhead			1.00	
<u>Total Cash Overhead</u>			7.05	.50
<u>TOTAL CASH AND LABOR COSTS</u>			39.15	2.80
<u>DEPRECIATION:</u>				
Stand; \$30 net cost - 10 yrs. life			3.00	
Irrigation facilities; \$60 cost - 20 yrs. life			3.00	
Fences; \$20 cost - 15 yrs. life			1.33	
Other equipment; \$10 cost - 10 yrs. life			1.00	
<u>Total Depreciation</u>			8.33	.59
<u>INTEREST ON INVESTMENT AT 5%:</u>				
On stand, irrigation facilities, fences & other equipment at $\frac{1}{2}$ original cost \$60			3.00	
On land at \$250			12.50	
<u>Total Interest on Investment</u>			15.50	1.11
<u>TOTAL COST OF PRODUCTION</u>			63.03	4.50

The above sample shows a total cost of \$63.03 an acre or \$4.50 an animal unit month of pasturage. This \$4.50 an animal unit month is equivalent in feed cost to alfalfa hay at about \$11.00 per ton. But stock on pasture doesn't have to be hand fed or cleaned up after. Also good green pasturage is excellent nutritionally. It is a good economical feed. It must be carefully handled and grazed moderately to get high production; just as any other crop must be farmed correctly to get high yields per acre.

Irrigated pasture at the above costs can be used in dairy production, swine production and in feeding beef cattle and lambs for market. It is probably too expensive as the main source of feed for commercial breeding herds of beef cattle and sheep. Range and natural pasture cost about half as much.