



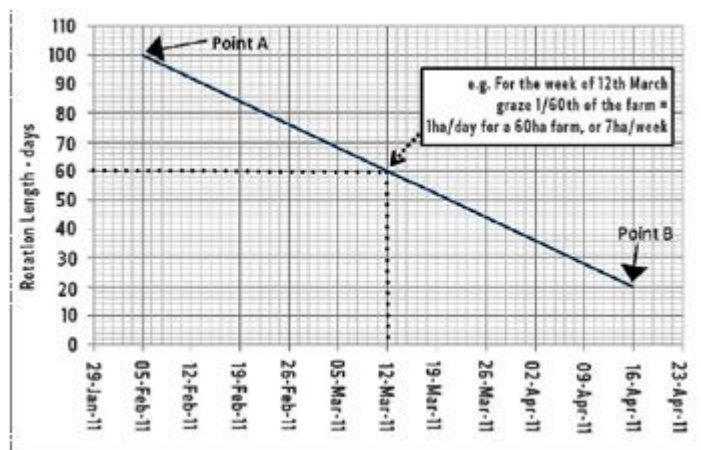
## The Spring Rotation Planner (SRP) – An essential grassland management tool

A Spring rotation planner (SRP) is a grazing management tool. The SRP should not be used in isolation but used alongside your feed budget. Combining these two tools makes spring-grazing management most effective because, when the actual pasture cover is monitored against the target cover, the rotation length applied can be slowed down and/or supplements introduced. Using a SRP to manage grass will keep good quality grazed grass in your cow’s diet unit magic day, when demand and supply level out.

With a SRP your farm is divided up into grazable units on a day by day basis. As grass growth doesn’t equal demand this leads to a gradual and controlled decrease of your overall farm cover. The SRP allocates a set area per day (or per week) from when the cows calve to the magic date, starting on a slow rotation and gradually speeding up the rotation until you finally reach the fastest rotation with which the farm will be grazed during spring. Area to be grazed daily is related to the rotation length, eg 1/60 is a 60-day rotation. On a 30ha milking platform, the rotation is calculated by 30ha/60 days, which equates to 0.5ha/day.

Point A on the graph is the start of calving. Point B is your estimated 'magic date'. It's usually in the first three weeks in April. To determine the optimum rotation length between Point A and B, simply draw a line between the two points as shown on the graph.

As a general rule of thumb around 30pc of the farm is grazed by March 1 and 100pc in the first week of April.



The SRP leads to a gradual decline in your opening cover and a gradual shortening of your rotation length. Yearly difference in spring weather can lead to poor or rapid early grass growth. When doing your SRP you need to be mindful of grass growth. You do not want to have your first rotation finished before magic day, likewise, you need to ensure every paddock is grazed with sufficient intensity to maximise grass quality for the second round of grazing. Keep an eye on overall farm cover across the spring and adjust your SRP to accommodate yearly variations.

Adjusting the spring rotation plan:



- For every 100kg DM/ha that your grass cover is behind your grass budget at the start of calving, eg actual cover of 600kg DM/ha vs a projected grass cover of 700kg DM/ha on February 1, increase the starting rotation by 10 days (ie, 110 days vs 100days) of a normal spring.
- Most rotation plans work on the first rotation length being around 58-65 days (eg, February 1-April 5). If your first grazing rotation is shorter than this, then reduce your starting rotation length from 1/100 by 10 days for every seven days shorter in this period. For example, a rotation length from February 22-April 5 is 42 days, or around two weeks shorter, therefore the starting rotation length should be cut by 20 days to 1/80.
- On any one week of using the SRP, if your average pasture cover is more than 50kg DM/ha below target, then hold last week's rotation length for one more week.

Once back on track, resume your rotation length as indicated by the SRP for each appropriate week.