

*Jake Tower*  
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### **Helping Dirt Stay Put**

Soil erosion is a problem in the United States. You may think crop farmers are the main problem, but cattle farmers also play a role in soil erosion. Cattlemen contribute to soil erosion by over grazing their fields leading to poor ground cover. For general reference, the height of the grass above ground is about equal to how deep the roots go in the soil. If your field is over grazed, the height of the grass is short and the roots are shorter, which can lead to poor soil holding capabilities. Three ways good pasture management can help prevent erosion are: deeper roots hold the soil together, taller grass slows down running water and a focus on general pasture management keeps forages and soils healthy, thereby reducing erosion.

One way good pasture management helps with erosion is that deeper roots hold the soil together during heavy rain storms. If the roots are not very deep in the ground, the soil erodes and washes away with the heavy rain. Another thing that deep roots help with is building soil organic matter and that leads to better water absorption. When the ground is loose and not compacted, the ground can absorb the rainwater more efficiently. This in turn feeds the forages and the cycle of healthy soil and plants continues.

Another way good pasture management helps control erosion is taller, thicker grass slows down running water. If the water does not run down the hill as fast, then the chances of it eroding the ground are less. Even if there is already a ditch in the ground, having grass in the ditch will slow down the running water and help keep the soil in place. Having plenty of leaves on the grass helps to protect the soil by preventing the rain drops from landing directly on the bare soil surface and reducing the damage from falling rain drops.

The final way good pasture management helps control erosion is that a general focus on

pasture management helps maintain healthy pastures overall. Having a well-managed pasture is the most beneficial practice to reducing soil erosion. A healthy pasture consists of thick grass, deep roots and little to no evidence of soil erosion. Thick grass and deep roots can be achieved by not over grazing and proper rest period for the forage type. If a pasture is getting bare, it is best to move the cattle off of the ground, allowing it to rest and recover. This is the best for pasture and soil health in the long run.

In conclusion, good pasture management is paramount in preventing soil erosion. Deeper roots, taller grass cover, and good pasture management in general all contribute to reducing and preventing soil erosion. With these three things, you can almost eliminate erosion in general. There is a lot of soil erosion in this country, but with some simple preventive measures, most of it could be contained. So go out and do your part!