Cattle that are grazing in pasture systems tend to be unevenly distributed across the landscape. This includes not only overgrazing in areas but also underutilization of forage in areas of little or no use. Improving livestock distribution will allow landowners and managers the ability to more efficiently use resources across the landscape.

**Factors Influencing Grazing Distribution**

Many factors (i.e., age and sex of cattle, vegetation type, slope, winds, and mineral availability) can be attributed to the disproportionate utilization of an area. Water is typically the major influence.

**Class of Animal**

The stage of a cow in lactation, and the age of her calf, may influence her tendency to travel and climb. Cows, in early stages of lactation, require more water and thus tend to stay nearer to the source. Additionally, those with younger calves may not be as apt to travel compared to dry cows or those with older calves.

Age and prior experience on the landscape have large influences on grazing distribution in rangeland pastures (Vallentine 1990). Cows that have grazed a pasture repeatedly tend to range more widely than yearlings grazing the area for the first time (Bell 1973). However, managers recognize that yearling steers, yearling heifers, and non-lactating cows typically utilize extensive pastures more evenly than cow-calf pairs.

Personal observations by the land manager will help adapt management specifically for the class of animal and pasture type. Managers may want to select animals based on their prior grazing patterns and terrain use for improving livestock grazing distribution (Howery et al. 1996). Selecting animals that prefer uplands slopes, higher elevations, or further distances from water may improve distribution in areas with these attributes. In turn, offspring from these animals may graze in the same manner (Bailey 2004).

**Terrain or Topography**

Cattle do not climb hills unless they must, and they do not climb well until they become acclimated to