

ANTONIHOFF

Good Practice Collection



Introduction

Christoph Trütken, graduate agricultural engineer, and Birgit Strohmeier, graduate agricultural economist, bring over 30 years of combined experience in organic farming. They follow an animal-centered, sustainable approach to land use, always placing the well-being of their animals first.

Christoph Trütken is responsible for cattle husbandry at Antonihof. His self-designed cattle barn, which follows innovative animal welfare practices, was awarded the state animal welfare prize. Grazing on the farm follows the principles of holistic management, with regular rotations to build humus and protect the grass sward from overuse, ensuring the land remains fertile.

Birgit Strohmeier manages the farm shop, subscription boxes, catering, and educational activities. She is also passionate about introducing children and young people to organic farming through farm tours. Together, they bring over 30 years of experience in organic agriculture and are dedicated to a livestock-centered, sustainable approach to land use, always prioritizing the well-being of their animals.

The Farm

Antonihof specializes in dairy farming, cattle rearing, laying hens, and rooster fattening. The farm is home to 45 cattle, 310 laying hens, and cultivates 20 hectares of arable land. Trees have been planted in the pasture areas to provide shade, making the agricultural operation more resilient to climate challenges and improving animal health. This agroforestry approach not only supports animal welfare but also promotes carbon sequestration and enhances biodiversity, contributing to long-term environmental sustainability.

The Location

Antonihof is located on the Baar, a high basin situated between the Black Forest and the Swabian Jura at an elevation of around 700 meters. Due to this location, the farm experiences very cold temperatures on clear nights, often continuing well into the spring.

Agricultural regeneration objectives

At Antonihof, the core objectives of agricultural regeneration focus on improving soil health, promoting biodiversity, and enhancing the farm's resilience to climate challenges. The holistic grazing management system is central to these efforts, with regular rotations of the dairy and suckler cows to promote humus formation and protect the grass sward from overuse. This method improves water infiltration and retention, particularly important during dry periods.

Additionally, trees have been planted in the pasture areas to provide shade, which not only benefits animal health but also contributes to carbon sequestration and supports biodiversity by creating diverse habitats. By integrating agroforestry and regenerative agricultural practices, Antonihof aims to create a sustainable, resilient farming system that enhances both the ecological and economic aspects of the farm, while prioritizing the well-being of the animals.



Best Practice Focus

The primary objective of holistic grazing management is to promote humus formation through nature-inspired grazing that mimics natural cycles, thereby enabling resilient ecosystems and sustainable agricultural production. Specifically, it improves soil structure and increases water infiltration, especially during dry periods. The close interaction between humans and animals promotes animal welfare. At Antonihof Christoph applies holistic grazing management to both grassland and arable land. It is crucial to ensure sufficient feed availability on the pastures and to consider varying growth rates throughout the year. Resting periods must be adjusted accordingly, requiring careful observation. Dairy cows are rotated daily, while suckler cows are moved up to five times a day.

The system is continuously adapted based on past experiences. To manage this, multiple pastures are used, with constant attention to maintaining adequate feed on each one. Grass growth rates vary, especially in spring, making it necessary to adjust resting periods. In May, the recovery period is 21 days, extending to 42 days later in the year. Sometimes, supplemental feeding is needed if the recovery time isn't sufficient.

Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementation – challenges faced

In the beginning, a significant amount of feed is lost through mob grazing, however this may potentially benefit soil fertility. For suckler cows, this is less of a concern since the feed requires less energy. However, for dairy cattle, this presents a greater challenge.

Additionally, the costs for materials and labor are considerably higher, as the regenerative practices demand more intensive management and resources in comparison to conventional methods.

Main Slogan

"Grassland without grazers is like a bog without water."

Categorisation, keywords

Mob Grazing; Holistic Management, Soil regeneration, Humus, water retention, drought prevention



Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Significantly better water infiltration.
	Increased humus build-up.
	Strong human-animal relationship due to frequent rotation. Animals are easy to handle and can be moved stress-free. Regular checks and observations allow for early intervention in case of health issues.
Disadvantages	Less feed available, resulting in lower animal performance if the resting period during mob grazing is too long.
	Higher material costs for fencing, mobile water troughs, and especially for the increased labor demand.

Learning points

Good holistic grazing management is knowledge-intensive and requires extensive observation and experience. Christoph completed a course and read a lot of literature on the subject. However, much of the literature is in English.

References/Bibliography

- Alan Savory
- Gabe Brown
- Anita Idel: Die Kuh ist kein Klimakiller

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Regenerative Agricultural Practices for Environmental Rejuvenation and Sustainable Ecosystems on European Farms



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