



Silvopasture

A Guide to Managing Grazing Animals,
Forage Crops, and Trees in a Temperate
Farm Ecosystem

Steve Gabriel

foreword by Eric Toensmeier

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Full-color photographs and illustrations throughout

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“Due to its climate and other benefits for people, livestock, and ecosystems, silvopasture’s time has come. . . . This book is the single most important resource for planning and management.”

—**ERIC TOENSMEIER, from the foreword**

In a 2017 study published by environmental leader Paul Hawken analyzing 80 climate change mitigation solutions, silvopasture was ranked as having the most powerful climate impact of all agricultural strategies.

In this how-to guide, ecologist and forest farmer Steve Gabriel explores the philosophy and techniques behind silvopasture—integrating trees, animals, and forage in a whole-system approach that offers a number of opportunities for livestock, farmers, and the environment. Some benefits are:

- **Increased use of farmland**—Silvopasture takes advantage of the many acres of land that are in farms, but not used. Animals can benefit from the protective aspects the forest has to offer, while the farmer benefits from better utilization of his or her land, as well as a diverse ecology of habitats to work from in a dynamic and ever-changing climate.
- **Climate change resilience**—The inclusion of trees can help buffer impacts from the unpredictable effects of climate change, such as increased rainfall, longer droughts, and more intense storm events.
- **Increased animal comfort equals improved performance**—One of the most critical benefits of silvopasture is shade. A better distribution of trees means that animals will continue to comfortably forage, rather than cluster in one spot during the hottest part of the day. Thus their impact can be spread more evenly, and they can forage for longer periods of time, better utilizing the forages available.
- **More yields from the same acreage**—Trees offer a number of possible yields, including feed for animals, firewood, fence posts, mushroom logs, timber, and more.
- **Wildlife habitat and forest restoration**—Silvopasture can erase the stark line that is so often drawn between field and forest. Its inclusion into the farm landscape can greatly enhance the structural diversity of vegetation, supporting greater diversity of wildlife.
- **Builds healthy, carbon-rich soil**—This complex ecology is much more effective than forests or grasslands individually at sequestering significant amounts of carbon, as systems utilize both aboveground (trees) and belowground (roots) storage of carbon.



Steve Gabriel is an ecologist, educator, and a forest farmer who has lived most of his life in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He currently splits his time between working for the Cornell Small Farms Program, and developing the farm he runs with wife Elizabeth, Wellspring Forest Farm. He is also the author of *Farming the Woods* (with Ken Mudge).

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