

Reconsidering the efficiency of grazing exclusion using fences on the Tibetan Plateau

June 5 2020



Donkeys on Tibetan Plateau. Credit: Science China Press

A study about grazing exclusion using fences on the Tibetan Plateau(TP) by a team of researchers from China (Dr. Jian Sun's research team at Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research,

Chinese Academy of Sciences), Australia and Japan recently published in *Science Bulletin*, and commented in the Editors' choice column of *Science*.

Grazing exclusion using fences is a big issue across TP. Given the complexity of the effects of fencing on ecosystem processes, livestock carrying capacity, [wildlife habitat](#), and herders' livelihoods and culture, authors do not consider the existing studies on the topic to be conclusive and suggest that further studies, especially long-term field research, are urgently needed.

Nevertheless, according to results, they propose the following methods for improving current grassland management policies on the TP: (1) traditional free grazing is encouraged to maintain or resume the traditional grazing practices and culture if the grasslands have not been degraded; (2) in case fencing is necessary, such as in a severely overgrazed area, short-term [fencing](#) of four-eight years is preferable, with removable fences that can be reused elsewhere afterwards; (3) high fence density and connectivity should be avoided, and the existing long-term fences should be removed for the benefits of wildlife; and (4) regular and comprehensive assessments are needed to ensure the policy is being effectively managed to deliver benefits in a timely fashion.

More information: Jian Sun et al, Reconsidering the efficiency of grazing exclusion using fences on the Tibetan Plateau, *Science Bulletin* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.scib.2020.04.035](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scib.2020.04.035)

Provided by Science China Press

Citation: Reconsidering the efficiency of grazing exclusion using fences on the Tibetan Plateau (2020, June 5) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-reconsidering->

efficiency-grazing-exclusion-tibetan.html

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