Aso Grassland Conservation Center

Grazing

The grassland in Aso is managed using a number of traditional techniques, one of which is livestock grazing on designated pasture land. Grazing ensures a continual grass growth cycle, with cattle feasting on the long grass to ensure fresh growth. Without this management, Aso’s grassland would become forested and the natural fertility of the land would be lost.

Today there are around 5,700 grazing cattle in Aso. The cattle are an effective method of maintaining the grasslands as they are allowed to roam freely across the land. They can climb steep valley sides to reach areas that are inaccessible to humans and machinery. More than 70% of the grasslands cannot be accessed by tractor and so must be naturally managed by grazing cattle.

The effects of grazing cattle on the landscape can be seen in the stripe patterns that appear over Aso’s hills. These are the result of years of cattle wandering around the mountainsides. If grazing did not take place, the grass would grow so high it would become dangerous to manage the controlled burning. Cattle are vital in conserving Aso’s grasslands and its distinctive flora and fauna.