

**Stints and Sustainability:
managing stock levels on common land in England, c. 1600-2006**

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Abstract

Stinting – the numerical limitation of grazing rights – was one of the primary methods for governing livestock numbers on common land in England. This paper charts the growth of stinting, explores the reasons behind its introduction, and considers the role of stinting in sustainable management of grazing reserves and in the evolution of concepts of property rights on common land since the medieval period. It is argued that growing pressure on grazing was only one driver behind the introduction of stinting and that some stinted rights in upland northern England originated in agistment on private forest pastures. The paper also considers the consequences of stinting, one of which was to convert a common right of pasture into a more adaptable, transferable and potentially profitable commodity, which could be severed from the holding to which it originally belonged, breaking a link which lay at the heart of the law on commons.

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