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June 22nd, 2005

Grazing

This week I would like to talk about pasture management and how people utilize resources they have available to them. It's not big news that land values have increased considerably over the last decade. Combine that with cattle prices and there lies a greater chance that producers are grazing more on the same acres.

I'm sure that if you were to ask anyone that raise cattle if they overgraze, you would get a common answer, "No." Or you might hear people at the coffee shop talk about how their neighbor is wasting all of that grass he left out in the pasture. Just to set the record straight and clear up some confusion, I would like to share some information with all of you.

Under grazing means that you could have put more livestock out or grazed for a longer period of time and it will have an impact on your short-term efficiencies and unit costs of productions. Overgrazing or grazing too late into the season will also have an impact but it might not be noticed right away. If pastures are overgrazed, there is not enough energy left in the leaves for the plant to capture sunlight and build up an adequate food source in the roots for over-wintering. This can lead to increased winter-kill and thinner stands of grass. Thin stands of grass leads to more weeds, less forage, and ultimately lower productivity.

I'm sure that many of you are wondering what an appropriate level is. Is it leave an inch or a foot? Well, the general rule for grassland management is to take half and leave half. To some this might mean that if the grass is two feet tall to begin with, you leave one foot still

standing. Although this is close, it's not quite correct. The take half/leave half theory is based on pounds of forage and grass stands are typically more dense near the ground. As a more accurate rule, one half of the weight can be found in the lower one-third of the plants. So if your grass is two feet tall you have about 8 inches standing going into winter.

The other question you should ask yourself is, "how many cattle can I graze and for how long?" The answer to this question can vary greatly from pasture to pasture. The only way to tell for sure is to take grass clippings. Specially sized rings are randomly tossed out and all the grass in that area is clipped and dried. The dried grass is then weighed and the total dry-matter/acre can be calculated and the amount of time a certain group of livestock can graze that area can be calculated. I have the tools and equipment needed to take clippings. If you would like samples of your pasture taken, feel free to call and set up a time. The clippings can be a valuable management tool and my services do not carry a fee.

One-Stop Shops

The One-Stop Shops will be held at locations across the state and combine a great deal of information from different areas and organizations. Representatives from the South Dakota Department of Ag will discuss the rules and requirements for the SD Certified Program. SDSU Specialist Jack Davis will give information on the Livestock Risk Protection Program. Also information will be presented on Premise ID's and attendees will have an opportunity to fill out the forms right there. Representatives from livestock identification companies will be on hand to display their products and answer questions and a BQA/CMP Training will be put on for those producers interested. Huron's One-Stop Shop is scheduled for July 19th starting at 10:00 am.

If you have any questions about these or any other topics, please feel free to stop in to the Extension office or give me a call at 353-8436.

Upcoming Dates

7/6	4-H Horse Show	8:30 am
7/18	Huron One-Stop-Shop	10:00 am
7/19	Manure Mgmt Training	9:00 am