



# GRASSROOTS

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VOLUME 13, ISSUE 9

DECEMBER 2011

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## **Time to Renew Membership!**

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition is wrapping things up for the 2011 year and it has been more than successful. We have increased our membership to over three hundred members from almost every county within the state as well as several out-of-state members; however, it is that time of year again. The membership for the South Dakota Grassland Coalition is based on the calendar year, so everyone needs to renew their membership for 2012. Some of you have already renewed; if you have not, please renew as soon as possible to continue receiving this newsletter. Membership fees are \$20 per member; however, members can purchase a two-year membership for \$35. Hopefully, you are planning on attending one of the Jim Gerrish workshops that we have planned across the State in December and you can renew at that time. Everyone else will receive a membership renewal form in January; if you would like to send it in beforehand, the form can be located at [www.SDGrass.org](http://www.SDGrass.org). If you have any questions regarding the 2012 membership, or would like a membership application mailed to you, contact Kyle Schell at [Kyle.Schell@sdstate.edu](mailto:Kyle.Schell@sdstate.edu) or at (605) 688-6623. Please encourage others who are not currently members of the coalition to join as well. Our goal is to increase our membership again next year and continue maintaining the South Dakota Grassland Coalition as a successful organization. Thanks!

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For more information or other events the **SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION** is involved with, please contact Kyle Schell or visit the website: <http://www.sdgrass.org>

## Winter Grazing Part 2

By: Garnet Perman

Larry Wagner, winter grazing mentor from the Chamberlain area, has used swath grazing to extend his grazing season since 1996. He seeds pasture with intermediate wheat grass, swath grazes the first year and hays it for the next two years. More recently he's added cicar milkvetch to increase protein and production. "Milkvetch takes a ton of cold", said Wagner. He cuts the hay during haying season, baling two or three windrows to find the production per acre and calculate stocking rates. The rest of the hay stays in the swath until he turns in his pregnant cows with calves at side in early winter.

Wagner says it's important to watch the feed value of the swathed grass. One year 17 inches of rain fell after cutting it. "The protein was still amazingly good," he said. He takes samples if conditions vary widely. With the added milkvetch, the swathed grass acts as a natural creep feed.

Wagner uses sharpened rebar to section off the field into long skinny sections. The fence is moved daily. This ensures that the manure is spread evenly over the entire pasture, returning nutrients back into the soil. The cattle are watered with a tank that has underground rural water piped to it. His only regret is that he doesn't have enough hay land or wind protection to swath graze beyond the first of the year. He recommends trying a 20-30 acre patch the first year.

Jim Faulstich, Highmore, realized 20 years ago that winter grazing could cut his cost of operation. Today, he endeavors to take better care of his native grasses, leaving enough for winter grazing, and utilizes farmland by grazing cornstalks and cover crops. He and his son-in-law, Adam, enter winter assuming they won't feed hay. They do make some hay every year and store it in covered sheds, just in case.

"You have to have an emergency plan," said Faulstich. When Mother Nature doesn't cooperate, he's learned the value of trying

something new. In 2010 and 2011, they planted cane on prevent plant acres for late grazing.

Three years ago, faced with a tough winter, a reduced hay supply and unharvested corn, he figured out a way to use standing corn. They cleared eight row strips to place fences and put in steel posts prior to freeze up. Two wires, one hot, were used. Fences were moved every day. Tree belts provided wind protection, although, depending on wind direction, the corn itself provided protection.

Using the yield from the combined corn, they started with the cattle consuming two pounds per day and worked up to 10 pounds per day. They ran 320 cows on an acre per day at a cost of about 65 cents per head per day. The cows came through the winter in good body condition. "It's a viable alternative for people who have damaged corn," said Faulstich.

Pat Guptill lives near Quinn. Rolling hills and a wooded creek bottom provide good winter protection for Guptill's grass finishing operation. They keep enough hay on hand to get through a tough winter, using high quality alfalfa as a protein supplement. The last two winters found them dipping into their hay supply, but in a normal year, the Guptill herd grazes all winter long.

Most of their pastures are cool season introduced grasses. "That's our main challenge, too", said Pat. Their winter pastures are part of the rotation. They have electric fence posts set up with plans to move the cattle every seven days during the winter. They also use a custom mineral program.

"Our goal is to be able to graze any pasture at any time of the year. We're able to just throw gates open with bad weather," said Guptill. They track the herd by keeping a range monitoring book.

For Pat, profitability is not the number of pounds weaned, it's the cost of producing the pounds he weans. He figures his cost of taking a calf to weaning is less than half of the industry average of \$634. "In 1989 we used 1474 gallons of tractor fuel. In 2006, we used 294 gallons with the same number of cattle on the same

number of acres. The savings is huge,” he said. Along with winter grazing, the Guptill's have converted to May calving and also have smaller cattle. Their vet bills have decreased as have calving problems. They also invest less labor and put fewer hours on equipment throughout the year.

Guptill encourages other producers to attend seminars and be willing to think out of the box. Wayne Berry, Gabe Brown, Jim Gerrish and Terry Gompert are grazing authorities that Guptill and other mentors mentioned as influencing their decisions. The Stockman Grassfarmer is a publication that was mentioned.

Questions regarding winter grazing can be directed to Larry Wagner at 894-4448, Jim Faulstich, 852-2622, and Pat Guptill at 386-2323.

### **South Dakota Society for Range Management Annual Meeting Held in Wall**

The Annual South Dakota Society for Range Management Meeting was held October 12-13 in Wall, SD in conjunction with the South Dakota Soil and Water Conservation Society. Producers, agency and academia from across the state attended to share ideas about range, soil and water management.

Wednesday began with registration and welcome from Jessica Michalski representing the SD SRM and Tom Martin representing the SD SWCS. The rest of the day was full of presentations on pollinators, water resources, salt cedar, prairie dogs, and the geology of the local area. These were given by the following experts to provide an educational aspect to the meeting: Paul Johnson, South Dakota State University Entomologist; Matthew Rigge, SDSU graduate student; Sara Brunette, United States Geological Service and SDSU; Michelle Ohrtman, SDSU; Randy Griebel, United State Forest Service; and Roger Assmus, Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Scientist.

A banquet and awards presentation was held that evening where Excellence in Range Management Awards were presented to the Valburg Limited Partnership in Jones County, Dan and Sharon Anderson in Perkins County, Evenson Ranch in Corson County, and Mike and JoAnn Deurmier in Campbell County (east of the river). These winners received a plaque and will host a tour next summer to showcase their operations. Macayla Heisler from Newell presented her High School Youth Forum speech that she will present at the International SRM meeting to be held in Spokane, WA next February. Macayla's speech was centered on sage grouse habitat and what we can do to preserve it. Awards were also presented to the South Dakota SRM Outgoing President Jessica Michalski and Outgoing Director Mitch Falkner. The South Dakota SRM would like to thank these folks for their dedication to the range resource in the State! The night was capped off by a crazy auction that raised money to provide financial support to these two organizations providing scholarships to SD youth to attend college and to further range, soil and water education throughout the State.

There was a tour on Thursday to the South Dakota State University crop research facility near Wall where John Rickertson discussed their ongoing crop rotation trial. The group then traveled to the Badlands National Park where Roger Assmus from the Natural Resources Conservation Service discussed geology formations and soils in the Park. Pat Johnson from SDSU then explained her research on range recovery after prairie dog removal. The Cottonwood Research Station east of Wall just off highway 14 was next on the tour, where Roger Gates discussed long term grazing trials that have been held at the Station. Finally the group journeyed to Pat Guptill's ranch to discuss his mob grazing practices.

This was a great meeting this year and we look forward to the 2012 meeting that will be held in the Black Hills Area at the beginning of October. Please plan to attend!



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**Calendar of events:**

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
Jim Gerrish Workshop	Dec 12	Bison, SD	Ryan Beer	605-244-5222
Jim Gerrish Workshop	Dec 13	Mobridge, SD	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
Annual Meeting w/ Jim G.	Dec 14	Chamberlain, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Jim Gerrish Workshop	Dec 15	Milbank, SD	Matt Hubers	605-432-6570
Rancher's Wkshp.	Jan 24	Mission, SD	Lealand Schoon	605-259-3252
Intro. HM Tour	Jan30-Feb2	Rapid City, SD	Randy Holmquist	605-473-5356

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Kyle Schell, SDSU Box 2170, Brookings SD 57007, [kyle.schell@sdstate.edu](mailto:kyle.schell@sdstate.edu), (605) 688-6623