

Board of Directors

Lyle Perman, Chair

30872 143rd Street
 Lowry, SD 57472
 (605) 649-7629

James Faulstich, Vice Chair

33795 186th Street
 Highmore, SD 57345
 (605) 852-2622

Ellen Reddick, Secretary/Treasurer

1611 Reddick Lane
 Saint Onge, SD 57779
 (605) 642-3272

Dan Rasmussen

26151 Cedar Butte Rd.
 Belvidere, SD 57521
 (605) 344-2250

Larry Wagner

26314 350th Avenue
 Chamberlain, SD 57325
 (605) 894-4448

Dale Paulson

21757 375th Ave
 Wessington, SD 57381
 (605) 458-2376

Dale Boydston

PO Box 248
 New Underwood, SD 57761
 (605) 484-3027

Leopold Award Winner: Jim & Karen Kopriva

Jim and Karen Kopriva’s ranch, which they operate with their son, Lee, is located near Raymond and consists of approximately 2,000 acres. Initially, the Koprivas were grain farmers but economics and a fondness for cattle prompted the family to transition their cropland to grassland and hayland over the past decade. Today, just 130 acres are no-tilled and cropped. The remaining acreage consists of native rangeland, seeded pastures and hayland. The Koprivas utilize rotational grazing, which has helped them increase grazing by 50 percent. Their rotational grazing strategy includes cross fencing and water developments, such as two rural water pipelines that are designed to utilize geothermal heat to provide ice-free water for the cattle in remote areas. The family uses controlled burns to combat invasive species. They also have their herd graze cover crops and crop residue, taking grazing pressure off of their pastures and helping to lower costs and dependence on harvested and purchased feed. The Koprivas enhance wildlife habitat on their ranch by

leaving some acres on each quarter of their land for wildlife-friendly enhancements such as tree belt and extra wide fencerows.



SD Governor Dennis Dugaard recognizes the Kopriva Family

In this Issue...

**KOPRIVA’S ARE 2012 LEOPOLD
 AWARD WINNERS**

CALVING IN SYNC WITH NATURE

LEOPOLD FINALISTS

FORAGES COMING UP NOW

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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>

Calving in Sync with Nature

By: Garnet Perman

Calving in sync with nature means matching your cattle herd's peak nutritional requirement with your pasture's highest and best grass production. In South Dakota, that means starting calving season in May rather than March or April. Rick Doud, Larry Wagner and Dan Rasmussen are the SD Grassland Coalition mentors for this topic. All three admit that late calving isn't for everyone, but it works well for their individual operations. All three are cattle producers who implement rotational grazing plans tailored to their specific resources, and none of them plant crops.

Pros mentioned for a later calving date include saving money on feed and fuel costs, less stress on both cattle and people, less work for the producer, and improved herd health.

The first question most people ask is doesn't a later calving date mean either later weaning or weaning fewer pounds? The answer is yes, but... The money saved in feeding costs in late winter and spring more than makes up the difference. Wagner, who has been calving starting around May 1 for 15 years still weans sometime during the first two weeks of November like he always did. He weighed calves for the first couple of years after moving the calving date back and found the weights to average 2-5 pounds less than before depending on the year. Doud's goal is to wean half of the cow's body weight. He also weans around Nov. 1, selling the top half off the cow and backgrounding the bottom half. Rasmussen's goal is to run cattle on grass year round with little or no supplemental feed inputs. A May 10 calving date helps 33 Ranch achieve that goal.

Calving later allows the cows to drop their calves on grass instead of having to be kept closer to home, often in sloppy, less than sanitary conditions. The calving pasture no longer has to be close to home because they don't need to be checked in the middle of the night. Neither cow nor calf has to be moved to escape cold weather, which is less stressful for momma cow and calf, and far less work for the producer.

Calf health is vastly improved. Each producer employs some type of rotation that has virtually eliminated scours. Healthy calves gain well and savings is realized by reducing veterinary bills. Wagner noted that his calves start eating grass by the time they are a week old. He's read some studies

that show early calves don't take in enough nutrition. Rasmussen's production records before he switched to later calving showed that calves born in May had a higher weight per day of age than those born in March and April.

The only real drawback noted to later calving was heat stress on young calves. "Calves need to drink every couple of hours or they get dehydrated," said Doud. They solved some of their worries in this area by culling the cows that didn't bring their calves with them when they went for water. Wagner makes sure calves are out where they get some air movement on hot, sultry days.

Bulls are put out around August 1 in all three operations. Heat stress on bulls has not been an issue. Breeding back is no more of a problem than it was prior to moving calving back.

While all three producers are interested in doing more with less in terms of profitability, each had specific reasons for the later calving dates. For Rasmussen, late calving is part of the overall plan to utilize their resources to the fullest possible extent. Rick and Marlis enjoy the stress relief. "Our quality of life is so much better," said Doud. "Before we were having all summer and feeding all winter." Wagner doesn't have extra help and appreciates being able to manage by himself. Plus, he said, "I sure like checking cows in a t-shirt."

Extra information about calving in sync with nature can be found by googling Kit Pharo and Dick Diven on the Internet. Pharo, a Colorado cattleman, is a well known proponent of working with nature to produce beef. Information from Diven, a nutritional consultant, was helpful for Rasmussen.

Finalists announced for the 2012 Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota

March 29, 2012– PIERRE, SD – Sand County Foundation, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition are pleased to announce the finalists for the 2012 Leopold Conservation Award.

"The high caliber of nominees for the Leopold Conservation Award, year after year, is an indication that South Dakota's natural resources are in good hands," said Brent Haglund, president, Sand County Foundation. "The nominees and finalists for the 2012 award are all highly dedicated to a land ethic that will help to ensure that the land, water and wildlife in their care will flourish for future generations."

The Leopold Conservation Award, named in honor of world-renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, is comprised of \$10,000 and a Leopold crystal. The award is presented annually in eight states to private landowners who practice responsible land stewardship and management.

The 2012 finalists, listed alphabetically, are (brief bios appear below):

- **Arneson family**, Perkins County
- **Gary & Amy Cammack**, Meade County
- **Ray & Linda Gilbert**, Harding County
- **Jim & Karen Kopriva**, Clark County

The Leopold Conservation Award recipient will be announced in late April and formally recognized November 28 at the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association's Annual Convention in Pierre.

The Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota is sponsored by American State Bank, Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership, Daybreak Ranch, Ducks Unlimited, Farm Credit, Millborn Seeds, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the Rasmussen Leopold Fund, South Dakota's Conservation Districts, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition, the South Dakota State University Foundation, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

For more information, please visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

Forages Coming Up Now!

By: Kathy Voth

It's been an early spring here in Colorado and today will feel like summer as we're expecting temperatures in the 90s – a record for this time of year. If your area has been anything like ours, you've probably noticed that plants are coming up early too, and if it has been as dry for you as it has been for us, you might be wondering how much forage your pastures will produce. To help you with that, here are some plants you might have that can be useful alternatives to your traditional pasture grasses:

Canada thistle-This remains one of the easiest plants I teach cows to eat. When I started paying better attention, I found that many trainees started eating it in pasture after their first taste of it in

training tubs. Its protein values stay high through the grazing season, never dropping below 16%. Since it reproduces from roots and seed, it's a hard one to eliminate, but that also makes it a pretty persistent forage in times of drought.

Whitetop/Hoary Cress-This plant also seems to persist in droughty conditions, and as [Ruby Valley Rancher Lance Knudsen will tell you](#), it regrows after grazing, giving you a good grass alternative through the entire grazing season. Once your other pasture grasses have dried for the season, the good protein content in this plant (or any other weed for that matter) will help them turn those dry carbs into the protein they need in their rumens. That's what high protein supplement tubs do, so think of your weeds as a cheaper supplement alternative.

Rabbitbrush-The trainees I've been following in Boulder County, Colorado added this plant to their diets on their own. Why? 21% protein could have something to do with it. I just visited their test pasture and was reminded how much they like this plant when I looked at all of last year's grazed stems.

Knapweeds-Russian, spotted, diffuse – they're all high in protein, they all regrow after grazing, and none of them have any toxins to be concerned about. Because of how easy it is to train cows to eat them, their high protein values, and the fact that cattle like grazing them, these are also some of my favorite weedy plants.

Toadflax-Yellow or Dalmatian, they're both nutritious forage alternatives. I trained cows in Boulder County to eat Dalmatian toadflax in 2009. When I walked through their 500-acre pasture at the end of the 2011 grazing season, I couldn't find a single toadflax that they hadn't bitten off. Since it reproduces from roots, its response has been to try harder. I'm really itching to get my educated cows back into the pasture this spring to mow it back down again!

Write and tell me what's growing in your pasture and I'll tell you whether it's a good forage alternative or not!

Kathy Voth of Livestock for Landscapes has agreed to contribute some article to the Grassroots newsletter. In 2004, Kathy developed a method for training cows to eat weeds in as little as 10 hours over 10 days. The training process is just a matter of understanding how animals choose what to eat and applying some simple behavioral principles. All information comes from www.livestockforlandscapes.com. Kathy's email is kvoth@livestockforlandscapes.com.



Kyle Schell
1530 Samco Dr
Rapid City, SD 57702

Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
Range Camp	June 4-6	Sturgis, SD	Tate Lantz	605-343-1643
SD Bird Tour	June 8-9	Belle Fourche, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Rangeland Days	June 19-20	Philip, SD	Kyle Schell	605-394-1722
Leopold Ranch Tour	June 21	Hays, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
SD AgXchange	June 28-29	Pierre, SD	Kyle Schell	605-394-1722
Rangeland Health Training	July 17-20	Belle Fourche, SD	Kyle Schell	605-394-1722
Tri-State Grazing Conference	Aug 21-22	Hankinson, ND	Kyle Schell	605-394-1722
SD Grazing School	Sep 10-14	Chamberlain, SD	Kyle Schell	605-394-1722
HRM Workshop-Josh Dukart	Sep 25-26	Bison, SD	Ryan Beer	605-244-5222

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Kyle Schell, SDSU-1530 Samco Rd, Rapid City, SD 57702, kyle.schell@sdstate.edu, (605) 394-1722