



GRASSROOTS

KYLE SCHELL, EDITOR • SDSU • 1530 SAMCO DR. • RAPID CITY, SD 57702 • kyle.schell@sdstate.edu • (605) 394-1722

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 3

MAY 2012

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

SDGC Update

The summer season is upon us in full swing. I don't know about you but my schedule has been extremely busy. Thankfully much of the stuff that I am going to is fascinating range workshops across the state. I thought I would give a short update on some of the events I have been to so far and then talk about some of the things that are still to come. Early in May, I went to Oklahoma City with SD 4-H and FFA Range Judging Teams to help prepare for the National Range Judging Competition which is held annually in Oklahoma. That was a fun trip because the 4-H team ended up taking second in the nation. Congratulations to the group! That was quite an accomplishment. Then, a month after that, SD Range Camp was held in Sturgis. This is an awesome camp to help high school students learn about range judging and prepares them for the state contest that is held at Rangeland Days which also happened in mid-June. It is remarkable to how many young people there are out there that have a passion for rangelands and enjoy competing at these events. Also, between Range Camp and Rangeland Days, the SDGC held its annual bird tour near Belle Fourche on Jeff Smeenk's and Chance Davis's ranches. We had a great turn out for that event and everyone really enjoyed learning how grass management can help bird populations. A couple of other things that are still to come are the Leopold Award winner ranch tour at Todd Mortenson's Ranch near Hayes on June 21, the Excellence in Range Management tour on Dennis Evenson's ranch near McIntosh on June 26, NRCS Rangeland Health Training in Belle Fourche on June 17-20, and Tri-State Grazing Conference near Hankinson ND on August 21-22. If you would like more information about any of these events please feel free to contact Kyle Schell.

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>

In this Issue...

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

CALVING IN SYNC WITH NATURE

LEOPOLD FINALISTS

FORAGES COMING UP NOW

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

New NRCS State Conservationist Named for South Dakota

NRCS, Huron, S.D., Effective May 21, Jeff Zimprich will serve as state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Dakota. The selection, made by NRCS Chief Dave White, ensures continued leadership as the agency works with partners and landowners to apply conservation on the ground.



A native of South Dakota, Zimprich grew up on a small farm on the east side of the state. He began his 29 year conservation career in Montana as a student trainee for the Soil Conservation Service in 1983 while attending the University of Montana. After graduating with a degree in Rangeland Management, he worked in three Montana field offices as a soil conservationist and district conservationist. He transferred to Iowa in 1988 and worked in two area offices and the Des Moines State Office. He is currently the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Office Operations in southwest Iowa. Zimprich served several

details in NRCS national headquarters. He just completed a detail as the acting state conservationist in Illinois.

“I am honored to accept this challenging opportunity and pledge to work side-by-side with all the very talented employees in South Dakota, along with all the landowners and partners,” said Zimprich.

Zimprich said he is excited to continue the South Dakota tradition of conservation excellence. “The conservation challenges are many but it is important we face them head on and together so we can protect the bountiful natural resources of the state.”

Jeff and his wife Kim have one married son and twin daughters. In his spare time, Jeff enjoys spending time outdoors, traveling with his wife, and time with his family.

Low-input Heifer Development

By [Ryan Reuter](#)

This article originally appeared in the January 2011 Ag News and Views newsletter on the Noble Foundation Website.

The traditional recommendation for developing replacement heifers is to feed them to achieve 65 percent of their mature weight by the beginning of the breeding season. This recommendation was developed decades ago based upon some research that indicated that almost all heifers would attain puberty by 65 percent of mature weight. However, some recent research may call this long held recommendation into question.

Researchers from Nebraska (Martin et al., 2008. *Journal of Animal Science* 86, p. 451-459) conducted a very interesting study. These researchers fed crossbred heifers to achieve either 55 percent or 50 percent of their mature weight by breeding season. The heifers were exposed to fertile bulls at a ratio of one bull to 25 heifers. The heavier heifers were exposed to bulls for 45 days, while the lighter heifers were exposed for 60 days. Interestingly, there was no

difference in conception rate between these two groups - the conception rate was a very acceptable 88 percent. These data would seem to indicate that a target breeding weight of 65 percent may need to be reconsidered in some situations.

Let's take a look at what a reduced target breeding weight can mean. If we assume that mature weight of an example herd of cows is 1,200 pounds, then our 65 percent target breeding weight would be 780 pounds. If we assume we weaned a 450-pound heifer calf at 210 days, then we need this heifer to gain 330 pounds in the next 200 days. That is 1.65 pounds per day. During the winter, an average daily gain (ADG) this high will likely require good quality pasture or hay and a significant amount of supplement. If we reduced our target to 50 percent, then the required ADG is only 0.75 pounds per day. This gain could likely be achieved by grazing dormant native range with minimal protein supplementation. This low input program would likely reduce expenses and labor requirements. It is also possible that a low input development system would challenge these heifers a little, and the least efficient and least adapted heifers would be eliminated from the herd.

There are a few issues to consider with developing heifers to lighter weights. Obviously, there is a point at which heifers that are too light in weight won't cycle and therefore won't get bred. Secondly, in the Nebraska research, calves born from heifers bred at 50 percent of their mature weight were, on average, seven days younger and 13 pounds lighter than calves born from the 55 percent group. However, the lighter heifers cost an average of \$17 less to develop than the heavier heifers. Every ranch has a unique set of resources and opportunities. Be sure to put a pencil to the decisions you are making and determine which production practices may pay off in your situation. We may not be ready to recommend that you reduce your heifer breeding weight target based upon this one study, but don't get caught in the trap of doing things the same way

just because that is the way you've always done them.

Grazing During Drought

By: Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist, UNL

Warm temperatures and the extra early spring have caused pastures to use much more moisture than usual so far this year. If your rains haven't kept up, early management adjustments soon may be needed to maintain healthy animals and grazing lands. Most important is adjusting stocking rates to optimize animal performance and maintain healthy pastures. This can be accomplished several ways. Early wean to remove calves from pasture and reduce nutrient demands by cows. Send yearlings to the feedlot early and curtail replacement heifer production for a year. Cull those less productive cows early and heavily.

These livestock practices will save forage for your base herd. If you sell some animals, do it early while prices are strong and before others dump their livestock on the market and depress prices.

And how about your grazing management?

First, rotationally graze through all your summer pastures rapidly to make sure animals graze cool-season forages before they dry up or mature and become undesirable. Use weather-damaged crops as forage to extend pasture growth periods and accumulate more grazing. Group livestock into as few herds as possible and add more cross-fencing. Pastures with high stock density will be grazed more uniformly, and pastures being rested will accumulate more growth before grazing begins on them. As a result, the total number of animal days of grazing will increase. Even use windrow grazing during summer to reduce waste and use what growth you have more fully. Drought can devastate the unprepared livestock producer. Early adjustments can ease the pain.



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>
Leopold Ranch Tour	June 21	Hayes, 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