



GRASSROOTS

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SD Grassland Coalition's Mentoring Program

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition has developed a new program called "Land Use Strategies – Networking for Profitability". This is a program designed to recognize experienced producers in various agriculture fields who can provide technical and planning assistance to other South Dakota farmers and ranchers. There is a list of topics relating to 25 grassland management issues such as Monitoring & Record Keeping, Winter Grazing Strategies, and Drought Planning. Garnet Perman of Lowry, SD will be writing an article about each of the topics that will be featured each month in this newsletter. Cross-Fence Weaning is the first topic which can be found on the next page. To obtain a copy of the brochure, visit the SD Grassland Coalition's website at www.SDGrass.org and click on the Mentoring Network link or contact Kyle Schell for a paper copy.

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Cross-Fence Weaning

By: Garnet Perman

Hate tiptoeing around the corral so your newly weaned calves won't bolt? Tired of treating sick calves? Maybe this year is the time to try cross-fence weaning. The Grassland Coalition mentor program can help.

The Grassland Coalition has compiled a list of experienced stockgrowers who are willing to share what they've learned with those looking for a better/easier/cheaper way of raising livestock and making key management decisions.

Those who have tried cross-fence weaning are enthusiastic about the results. "It makes weaning fun," said Dallas Anderson of Eureka. He became a true believer after a 3 1/2 inch rain fell three days after weaning and he didn't treat a single sick calf. "That would have been a mess in the corral," he said.

Dale Paulson of Wessington made the switch three years ago hoping to see health benefits, stress reduction, reduce dust, decrease shrink and increase feed intake. "I got everything I wanted," he said.

Some of the prerequisites for cross-fence weaning are the same for everyone. Two spaces, each with a water supply should be divided by a fence that will prevent calves from crawling through. Bringing pairs into the pasture where the calves will remain in a few days prior is a common practice. That way, the calves are in a familiar place and know the location of the water and perhaps creep feed. The cows are then moved to the other side of the fence. "The calves can see mama, hear mama and smell mama, and if one gets out, it goes to mama," said Jim Kopriva of Raymond. "Not much has changed for them except they can't suck." Larry Wagner of Chamberlain keeps a couple of older cull cows with the calves to act as leaders in finding water and new pasture when they are moved.

The lowered stress eliminates most of the spookiness that weaned calves often exhibit. Anderson said, "They get tamer instead of wilder." Ed Blair of Vale observed, "They don't bawl, they just lay around and go to feed." He estimates that the shrinkage on cross-fence weaned calves is about 1%. Everyone reported minimal weight loss and better gain than their old weaning methods produced.

The details are operation specific. Most of the mentors contacted use at least one hot wire in the fence between cows and calves. Barbed wire and high tensile wire are both used. Some corral the cows next to the pasture. Some leave the cows next to the calves for only a few days, others for several weeks. Weaning dates range from early October to December.

Most mentors emphasized that the pasture the calves remain in should be in good grazing condition. Anderson plants a cover crop mix of turnips, radish and a sorghum/sudan cross in early June. Kopriva grazes the weaning pasture early and then rests it, so the regrowth is tender. Paulson weans on an alfalfa/grass mix that was cut for hay earlier in the season. Wagner plans for the calves to be in a pasture with good native grass, and the cows in a somewhat overgrazed pasture so they'll be hungry and ready to move someplace else.

Cross-fence weaning mentors include Dallas Anderson, Eureka, Ed Blair, Vale, Jim Faulstich, Highmore, Jim Kopriva, Raymond, Dale Paulson, Wessington, Dan Rassmussen, Belvidere, Ellen Reddick, St. Onge and Larry Wagner, Chamberlain. Each one would be happy to share their experience.

Twenty-five additional topics are covered in the SDGC mentorship program including various grazing management options, financial concerns, soil health and other livestock and land management techniques. A copy of the topics and mentors can be obtained at www.sdgrass.org.

SOUTH DAKOTA GAZING SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition hosted another successful grazing school this year in Chamberlain and Oacoma on September 12-16. There were two schools back-to-back similar to last year. This allows for 60 participants to receive the education from the school. There was another excellent line-up of speakers at the school including: Stan Boltz, Wade Christensen, Mitch Faulkner, Jim Faulstich, Roger Gates, Terry Heck, Judge Jessop, LeRoy Ness, Ken Olson, Chuck Pyle, Dan Rasmussen, Kyle Schell, Dave Steffen, and Stacy Turgeon. Thanks to all of these instructors as they are the reason that the school is so successful.



Dave Steffen visiting with participants at the 2011 SD Grazing School

A special thanks also needs to be extended to all of our sponsors who helped make the Grazing School possible. They include the NRCS, South Dakota Conservation Districts, South Dakota State University, Ducks Unlimited, US Fish & Wildlife Service, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, Professional Alliance, Millborn Seeds, Gallagher Fencing, Cammack Ranch Supply, and Kennebec Telephone Company. Thank you!



A group of Grazing School participants calculating forage production during pasture allocation exercise at the 2011 SD Grazing School

If there is anyone interested in attending the 2012 SD Grazing School, please contact Kyle Schell as soon as possible in order to reserve a spot. Space is limited. We hope to see you next year.

SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT – SOUTH DAKOTA SECTION ANNUAL MEETING

The South Dakota Section of Society for Range Management will be having their annual meeting in conjunction with the South Dakota Soil and Water Conservation Society on October 12-13, 2011 in Wall. Wednesday, October, 12th will include presentations covering topics such as, What Producers Can Do to Benefit Pollinators, Alternative Water Resource Project, Saltcedars in the Great Plains, Prairie Dogs and Black Footed Ferrets, and the Geology and Soils of the Badlands. The evening will conclude with a banquet and an awards ceremony. Thursday's schedule contains multiple tours including the Wall Crop Rotation Trial, Geology and Soils of the Badlands, Long Term Grazing Trial at Cottonwood, and Mob Grazing. For more information about this event contact Ken Olson at 605-394-2236 or Kenneth.Olson@sdstate.edu



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Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
SRM Meeting	Oct 12-13	Wall, SD	Ken Olson	605-394-2236
State Technical Meeting	Nov 13	Huron, SD	Jim Faulstich	605-852-2622

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Kyle Schell,
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