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*Photo Courtesy of Georgia Grazing  
Lands Conservation Coalition*



## Think Ahead for Stockpiling

*Source: Iowa State University*

The spring grazing season is just gearing up and yet it's not too soon to be thinking ahead to next fall and winter as well – and stockpiling forage to graze at that time. Iowa State University Extension agronomist Stephen Barnhart offers these ideas for stockpiling forage during the growing season for grazing into late fall or winter.

### What is stockpiled forage?

Stockpiled forage is forage that is allowed to grow and accumulate for use at a later time or during a period of forage deficit. It is common practice to harvest and store (stockpile) forage as hay or silage, but the purposeful stockpiling of forage for grazing at a later time is a useful concept for many livestock producers.

### Why stockpile forage for grazing?

The average climate of the upper Midwest United States permits forage to grow during a seven to eight month period. During this period grazed forage is the cheapest form of nutrition for livestock. Beef cow herd and sheep flock records over the past few years show that winter feed costs are the single largest production expense, and that keeping the winter feeding costs low is a key to profitable production.

Extending the grazing season by using stockpiled forage in late autumn and during the winter months has been shown to be a very economical way to maintain livestock profitability. Even an extra three to four weeks added to the grazing season is beneficial.

### What can be stockpiled?

Nearly any grass or legume species can be stockpiled. Tall fescue has probably been used most frequently in stockpiling systems because of its good fall growth and persistence under grazing. Although the palatability of tall fescue is relatively low during the grazing season compared to other grasses, it maintains its quality when exposed to adverse autumn and winter weather. Endophyte fungus-free varieties of tall fescue are recommended, but if you have endophyte-infected fescue in your pastures, it can still be used effectively in stockpile grazing systems. A few extra management practices such as seeding legumes into the pasture and clipping seedheads during the summer can minimize some of the undesirable traits associated with endophyte-infected fescue forage.

Smooth bromegrass and orchardgrass have slightly higher nutritive value than tall fescue, but may have less persistence in subsequent years following winter grazing. Legumes such as alfalfa and red clover increase the forage nutritive value and contribute nitrogen to associated grasses, but

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# Grazing Managers

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often live for a shorter period of time in mixed stands where winter stockpile grazing is practiced. Red clover has good seedling vigor and can be relatively easy to establish back into pasture stands by frost seeding in late winter or interseeding in the spring.

**Length of the stockpiling period.** The most common stockpiling practice is to allow the forage in the stockpile pasture to accumulate during the last 70-80 days of the growing season. This 70-day period can be achieved by terminating summer grazing or harvesting the last summer hay harvest by late July or early August to allow for uninterrupted growth during the stockpile period. The forage that grows during this autumn period is typically leafy and high in nutritive value.

## NEBRASKAN WINS TOP HONORS FOR RANGELAND CONSERVATION

Jeff Nichols, Resources Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Platte, Neb., was recently named National Rangeland Conservationist of the year.

The Rangeland Conservationist of the Year award recognizes professionals who have exhibited superior accomplishments in rangeland conservation. One winner is selected from nominated NRCS professionals from across the nation.

Nichols began his career with NRCS as a Soil Conservationist after graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1990 with a degree in Agronomy – crop production and range management. He started his career with NRCS in Schuyler, Neb., and then was transferred to Chadron, Neb. A year later, he was promoted to a Range Management Specialist position in Ogallala, Neb. In 2003, he moved to his current position as a Resource Conservationist in the North Platte NRCS Field Office.

According to Nichols, the best part of his career has been helping farmers and ranchers manage their natural resources. "The thing I enjoy most is working with landowners and having that exchange of ideas - being able to learn from them about their operation, and then share my ideas and technical assistance with them."

"Seeing the success of a landowner implementing a grazing system or invasive plant control strategy that improves their rangeland and the bottom line of the operation is a rewarding feeling," Nichols said.

Nichols has worked with many ranchers to help them improve their rangeland, one of which was rancher, Mike Kelly. Nichols assisted the Kelly Ranch with developing grazing management strategies for improving ecological conditions and production along the Birdwood Creek in McPherson County.

Kelly said, "Jeff has always been a dedicated professional that offers sound advice in a cordial and helpful manner. He is respected both among area ranchers and peers. I especially admire his work ethic and enthusiasm for his job. It is obvious that he has a love of the land. Professionals such as Jeff truly help keep ranchers on the land."



## STATE SPOTLIGHT: MINNESOTA

In 2010 the Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association (GLCA) sponsored 35 grazing workshops, attended by over 2,100 people. These events demonstrated the techniques of grazing management that can help livestock farmers and ranchers achieve better forage growth and utilization and reduce the amount of expensive stored feed their livestock consume.

GLCA President Clarence Caraway of Lake Benton credits managed rotational grazing with keeping him in the cattle business. Clarence states, "Without rotational grazing management, I really doubt I would still be in the livestock business today. I'm always looking for an edge to give me the profitability I need and grazing has provided that for me. With the rising cost of land it's a necessity to rotational graze. I've been in the cattle business most of my life and getting involved with GLCA is a way to give back to people."

To help people make a profitable transition into managed grazing, some members of GLCA have offered to provide mentorship services to new graziers. Their contact information is published in a brochure that has been distributed at grazing events, farm supply outlets, and with the livestock associations.

Nathan Redalen, MN GLCA member from Olmstead County has hosted three grazing workshops in as many years and has also been a point of contact for people considering making the change to managed rotational grazing. "I've had several people contact me as a result of the mentoring brochure and one of my neighbors started grazing after he saw the results I got."

Past GLCA Chair Ralph Lentz says, "Grazing has saved me literally thousands of dollars a year. This year I grazed until December 3 when we got the big snowstorm. I still could have grazed after that if the weather had cooperated." Over the years Ralph has hosted numerous events and mentored numerous people. Two years ago he hosted a "Slow Foods" gathering where a chef prepared Ralph's grass fed beef for a crowd of over 100 people, some of whom had flown in for the event.

GLCA member Dean Thomas of Fountain Minnesota has a cow calf herd and keeps records or weaning weights. Dean says, "Before we started rotational grazing our weaning weights were at around 500 pounds across the board. Since rotational grazing we're running 50-80 pounds heavier across the board, depending on the year."

In 2011 GLCA members will continue to be a point of contact for potential graziers and will sponsor on farm grazing workshops. They also sponsor large scale events for the general public. Dave and Florence Minar of New Prague hold their "Milkapalooza" each June on their farm near New Prague, Minnesota. The Minars operate a grass based dairy farm in close proximity to the Twin Cities and have capitalized on their location by operating an on farm milk bottling plant and selling their products through retail outlets in the central city and metro area.

"Milkapalooza" will be held on June 25 this year and typically draws over a thousand people. People tour the farm, the bottling plant, sample products, and take a walking tour of the rotational grazing system. Representatives of the Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service talk about the wildlife benefits of a rotational grazing system and identify birds, insects and mammals that benefit from it. An NRCS grazing specialist explains how the livestock benefit from the rotational grazing system and how it improves the profitability of the farm.

In addition to these activities, Minnesota GLCA plans to build a website this year and to hold a research summit with forage and livestock scientists to become acquainted with their current research and to help them identify future research needs.

*Submitted by John Zinn, Minnesota NRCS Grazing Specialist*

# Iowa Cattle Operation Wins NCBA Environmental Stewardship Award

Couser Cattle Company, owned by Bill and Nancy Couser of Nevada, Iowa, was the national winner of the National Cattlemen's Foundation Environmental Stewardship Award. The award was presented at the Cattle Industry Convention held in Denver in early February.

Through the years, Bill Couser has actively partnered with environmental agencies and universities to use his farm for a number of sustainability-related research and pilot projects.

Couser Cattle Company is a second and third generation multi-faceted operation that annually feeds and finishes 5,000 to 6,000 head of cattle and farms 5,000 acres, producing both corn seed and soybean seed. The business philosophy centers on working to ensure that both profit opportunities and environmental performance are present in cattle and farming operations.

Forrest Roberts, NCBA Chief Executive Officer, said, "Bill's partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa State University and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency resulted in innovative technologies that ultimately led to a very significant reduction in feedlot runoff. His efforts not only made his operation more environmentally sound but also led to improvements throughout the state of Iowa and in the entire country. Developing consensus with environmental groups and government officials isn't easy but it is necessary in order to achieve commonsense legislation and regulation."

Bill Couser, who was nominated by the Iowa Cattlemen's Association (ICA) has won numerous awards for conservation and community service and was named as one of 10 People Who Matter by *Time* magazine in 2006. He has been a director of the Story County Cattlemen's Association for 33 years. Additionally, he is chair of ICA's business issues committee and a past vice chairman of NCBA's animal health committee.

NCBA's Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP), now in its twentieth year, was created to recognize beef producers who make environmental stewardship a priority on their farms and ranches while they also improve production and profitability. The ESAP award is sponsored by Dow AgroSciences; the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service; NCBA; and the National Cattlemen's Foundation.

For more information about the award and other honorees from around the country visit: [www.environmentalstewardship.org](http://www.environmentalstewardship.org).



## STATE SPOTLIGHT: HAWAII



Keep up with the Hawaii GLCI via their recently launched website at <http://www.grazinglandshawaii.org/>. The site will feature weekly posts of events and management efforts related to grazing – and their activities might just give you some fresh ideas for events in your own state. Thanks is given to the PIA-NRCS, HI-GLCI, Kauhane Communications, and Kaiscapes for getting the website up and running.

Submitted by Lori Metz, NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist, Pacific Islands Area

## UPCOMING GRAZING EVENTS

**August 9-10** – 2011 Nebraska Grazing Conference, Holiday Inn, Kearney , Nebraska <http://www.grassland.unl.edu/grazeconf.htm>

**Nov. 29-Dec. 1** – 23rd Range Beef Cow Symposium (RBCS), in Mitchell, Neb.

**January 29 - February 3, 2012** – Society for Range Management 65th Annual Meeting in Spokane, WA. Under the leadership of Kevin Guinn, Will Keller, and J.D. Wulffhorst, the Idaho and Pacific Northwest Sections (British Columbia, Washington and Oregon) will host the event.

Workshops and symposia will guide participants to explore "**Lessons from the Past – Strategies for the Future.**" Presentations will be geared to the interest and needs of ranchers, rangeland managers, and new or experienced state and federal agency professionals, with a focus on management for whole systems, from soil and water, to plants and animals.

Tours, mixers for a multitude of groups, a dance and the special dinner, "The Taste of the Pacific Northwest" will allow participants ample opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new friends.

The event will be held at the Spokane Convention Center. For updated information, visit [www.rangelands.org](http://www.rangelands.org).



SRM 65<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Meeting  
Spokane, WA

# New Beginning Farmer Website Unveiled

The Northeast Beginning Farmer Project is pleased to unveil a colorful new website with expanded tools and a wealth of new resources. Point your browser to <http://nebeginning-farmers.org> to find the enhanced site, which will extend high quality support to aspiring, new and diversifying farmers across the entire Northeast.

The new site features a growing selection of video footage capturing experienced farmers and their successful production techniques in action. You'll also find a library of video interviews with farmers sharing advice on profitability, choosing an enterprise, evaluating land, and much more. Looking for upcoming classes, events and trainings? You can browse the events calendar, subscribe to a monthly e-news, follow their blog, or visit them on Facebook and Twitter, all from the homepage of the new site: <http://nebeginningfarmers.org>.

Enter the ‘New Farmer Hub’ to start drafting your business plan with the help of tutorials and interactive worksheets. Find answers to common questions, browse the Guide to Farming, and check out the latest beginning farmer online courses which can help you turn your dreams into action right from your home computer. Need some face-to-face guidance in your neck of the woods? Visit the ‘Who Can Help Me?’ map to locate organizations that serve new farmers near you.

The Northeast Beginning Farmer Project is part of the Cornell Small Farms Program and is funded by a Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. With the help of this team of partners, the effort is:

- Developing new online courses and how-to videos for new farmers on production-oriented topics.
  - Working with middle and high schools to develop classroom and on-farm learning opportunities to recruit young people into farming as a career.
  - Analyzing the hurdles that challenge new farmers when trying to grow their operations
  - Making training opportunities more visible to all new farmers in the Northeast
  - Assisting organizations serving beginning farmers with publicity, evaluation, training and information to enhance the success of the new farmers they serve.

To learn more about the Northeast Beginning Farmer Project, visit <http://nebeginningfarmers.org>.



To have your GLCI activities or upcoming events highlighted in this newsletter, contact Kindra Gordon at phone 605-722-7699 or [kindras@gordonresources.com](mailto:kindras@gordonresources.com).

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Visit the GLCI homepage at <http://www.glc-i.org>

American Farm Bureau Federation (202) 484-3608

American Frighted Council (800) 944-2342

Amherst Sheds Industry (303) 771-3500

Dairy Industry (517) 232-6575

National Association of Distillers (202) 577-6233

National Cattlemen's Association (202) 347-0228

National Farmers Union (202) 554-1600

Society for Range Management (303) 986-3309

Souil And Water Conservation Society (515) 289-2331

Contact these affiliated organizations: