

Volume 15, Number 5  
September/October 2010

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Keep your forages and animals in tip-top shape.

### Hats Off!

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### In Praise of Grassland

A new book looks at the past, present and future of this important resource.

# GLCI News

## Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

### 4 Management Reminders for Improving Forage Quality

Severe drought, high fertilizer prices, fluctuating livestock prices and difficult economic times have made producers even more aware of how the production choices they make affect the bottom line. This economic pressure has led more pasture managers to examine the benefits of improving the quality of forage on every acre. Whether grazing those acres or producing hay for winter feeding or sale, producing quality forage can have a major impact on herd performance and return.

"By generating the type of forage needed to meet a herd's nutritional requirements, producers not only protect animal health, but also reduce or eliminate the cost of purchasing alternate feed sources, which can add up quickly," says Vanessa Corriher, assistant professor and extension forage specialist, AgriLife Extension Service, Overton, Texas. "While improving forage production is an investment, it's a better alternative than having to invest in additional food sources or allowing animal health to decline."

Corriher suggests four key steps to improving forage production:

1. **Test your soil.** Use regular soil tests to identify which nutrients are available and to check soil pH. "Unless you do a soil analysis, you don't know which nutrients are needed."
2. **Replace deficient nutrients.** Your soil analysis results should include nutrient recommendations for your soil type. Fertilize accordingly to replace missing nutrients. "Depending on your location, some alternate nutrient sources may be available at less cost than commercial fertilizer, such as poultry litter or dairy, beef or other animal manures."
3. **Control weeds.** If weeds are dominant, they will try to out-compete desirable grasses for existing and added nutrients and moisture. "Applying a targeted herbicide is much more effective than mowing long-term and can actually be cheaper."
4. **Manage grazing.** Active grazing management is needed to ensure you're not overstocking the forage area. Allowing animals to graze too long gives weeds the advantage and makes it difficult for grass to recover. "While a number of grazing strategies can be used, they all are geared toward properly matching the number of grazing animals to the amount of available forage."

### The Bottomline

To determine whether a forage stand should be improved, Corriher recommends starting with a visual assessment. "Do you see more weeds than consumable grass?" she asks. If weeds have the upper hand, you probably have lower-quality forage, since the desirable grass is com-

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# 4 Management Reminders

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peting with weeds for nutrients and moisture. Also check for signs of plant disease, which can cause forage quality to decline.

Body condition is another way to measure forage quality. "If you see changes like weight loss or deteriorated body condition, it's a sign of poor nutrition," Corriher notes.

Proper grazing management is the foundation for high quality forage nutrition and, in turn, healthy animals and efficient production.

## CORRECTION...

The link to learn more about the Illinois GLCI and their "Good Grazing campaign was listed incorrectly in the July/August newsletter. The correct link is [www.il.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov)

## SCIENCE SHOWS BEEF PRODUCTION IS EARTH-FRIENDLY

Recent studies from the scientific community have complimentary findings toward beef production with regard to its environmental impact.

Washington State University animal scientist Jude Capper says, "Comparing the environmental impact of the US beef industry in 1977 to 2007, improvements in nutrition, management, growth rate and slaughter weights, have significantly reduced the environmental impact of modern beef production and improved its sustainability."

He added, "These findings challenge the common misconception that historical methods of livestock production are more environmentally sustainable than modern beef production...Contrary to the negative image often associated with modern farming, fulfilling the U.S. population's requirement for high-quality, nutrient-rich protein while improving environmental stewardship can only be achieved by using contemporary agricultural technologies and practices."

Specifically from his research, Capper found that in 2007, there were 13% fewer animals slaughtered than in 1977 (33.8 million vs. 38.7 million), but those animals produced 13% more beef (26.3 billion lbs. of beef versus 23.3 billion lbs. in 1977). By producing more beef with fewer resources, Capper calculates that the total carbon footprint for beef production was reduced by 18% from 1977 to 2007.

When compared to beef production in 1977, each pound of beef produced in modern systems used:

- \* 10% less feed energy;
- \* 20 percent less feedstuffs
- \* 30% less land
- \* 14% less water
- \* 9% less fossil fuel energy
- \* 18% decrease in total carbon emissions (methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide)

"As the global and national population increases, consumer demand for beef is going to continue to increase," Capper says. "The vital role of improved productivity and efficiency in reducing environmental impact must be conveyed to government, food retailers and consumers."

*This project was supported by the Beef Checkoff Program through a research grant from state beef councils in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Washington.*

## SEVEN U.S. CATTLE OPERATIONS RECOGNIZED FOR NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS

Seven diverse U.S. cattle operations were recognized as regional winners of the 2010 Environmental Stewardship Award during the 2010 Cattle Industry Summer Conference, held in Denver July 28 – Aug. 1. The Environmental Stewardship Award Program has honored farm and ranching families for outstanding resource management since 1991.

"To be successful in the long run, farms and ranches have to be sustainable both environmentally and economically," said Dave Owens, a marketing executive for award sponsor Dow AgroSciences. "You see that tradition in these regional winners. It's not uncommon in the beef industry, but it is worth noting. So much of the hard work and personal investment is done by people who don't call attention to themselves."

The seven regional winners are:

**Region I:** Cleremont Farm, G.P., Loudoun County, Va.

Ann-Mari Lindgren Horkan, the late George Horkan Jr., Carl Lindgren, Tony Horkan and the late Lorna Talbot

Nominated by the Virginia Cattlemen's Association and Thomas Massie Jr., DVM, president, Virginia Veterinarian Medical Association

**Region II:** Deseret Cattle & Citrus, Orange, Brevard and Osceola Counties, Fla.

Erik Jacobsen, general manager  
Nominated by the Florida Cattlemen's Association

**Region III:** Couser Cattle Co., Nevada, Iowa

Bill and Nancy Couser  
Nominated by Iowa Cattlemen's Association

**Region IV:** JA Ranch, Bowie, Texas

J.K. "Rooter" Brite Jr. and Family  
Nominated by Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and the Texas Section, Society for Range Management

**Region V:** Mesa De Maya Ranch, Branson, Colo.

John and Carolyn Doherty; Joe and Lisa Doherty  
Nominated by Colorado Cattlemen's Association

**Region VI:** TN Ranching Co. and Tavaputs Ranch, Price, Utah

Butch and Jeanie Jensen, Tate Jensen, Jennie Jenson, Jim and Klenell Jensen  
Nominated by the Utah Cattlemen's Association

**Region VII:** Sproul Ranch, Sedan, Kan.

Bill and Peggy Sproul  
Nominated by the Kansas Livestock Association

The ESAP award is sponsored by Dow AgroSciences; USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); the National Cattlemen's Foundation (NCF); and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). Winners are chosen from each of NCBA's seven regions and will compete for the national award, to be presented at the cattle industry's winter meeting in Denver in February 2011.

*Editor's Note: Region IV winner, Rooter Brite is a member of the National GLCI Steering Committee as a producer representing the National Association of Conservation Districts.*

# HOW FORAGE FOLKS UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA

Farmers and others in agriculture are just starting to make the most of social media tools that include Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogging and scheduled chats.

Their reasons are manyfold. Those with livestock spend energy trying to educate the public about responsible farming practices. Many are tweeting, blogging, videotaping and sharing photos to inform themselves or others about production methods, machinery options and what works on their farms. Some even use the Internet tools to market commodities. Here's a glimpse of some of the farmers and industry representatives that are using social media.

Dave Forgey has had a presence on the Internet for quite some time. His dairy's Web site, [www.forgrazed.com](http://www.forgrazed.com), espouses his passion for intensive rotational grazing. He's also maintained and written articles for the Web site of Pro-Grass-Tinators, a group of dedicated graziers ([www.prograsstinators.com](http://www.prograsstinators.com)).

Last fall, the Logansport, IN, grazier delved into social media. He has a following of about 325 people who know him as "grasscow" on Twitter.

Twitter, accessed by computer or phone, allows messages only 140 characters long. Most ag people use it to direct others to news stories or videos or make pithy comments on agriculture, government policy, sports or how the day is going. Their messages may be "retweeted" or passed on to others who choose to "follow" them and receive their tweets.

"I try to keep up on what's going on in the world that's impacting the dairy industry," says Forgey, and Twitter helps him share what he's found. But it took a good friend to convince him to utilize this social medium. In fact, that friend, Jim Hammer, Lafayette, IN, offered to gather and post tweets when Forgey can't. They usually point their followers to online news stories or use ag statistics to make points.

They're careful not to say Forgey's method of dairying is better than the conventional method. "We try to keep an even keel because animal rights activists like to divide and conquer," Forgey explains.

Forgey has also tried his hand at some blogging. He notes that while social media is beneficial to share among others in our industry the real benefit is to get out to people who don't know agriculture.

Other industry experts agree and point out that social media can literally put a face on a farmer. And a personality. Because what consumers relate to are people.

Social media can also offer a business value. Although still in its infancy, using Facebook and Twitter to market hay and other forages or equipment appears to be gaining interest.

## Additional Blogs

**Phil Reid, Purdue University's beef** distance learning coordinator, is the driving force behind [thebeefblog.com](http://thebeefblog.com), a daily blog of intro paragraphs and headlines on all matters beef-related with links to the original stories on the Internet. Reid also is a prolific videographer of instructional "shortcourses" he posts on YouTube and [www.thebeefcenter.com](http://www.thebeefcenter.com). A popular Purdue video of Extension forage specialist Keith Johnson shows how to use a grazing stick. Other forage-related videos show the use of alternative crops as double crops and how to take a forage sample (see [tinyurl.com/Purduevideos](http://tinyurl.com/Purduevideos)).

*— Adapted from From Hay & Forage Grower Magazine, May 2010  
Editor's Note: Dave Forgey is a member of the National GLCI Steering Committee as a producer representing the American Forage & Grassland Council.*

## GLCI Spotlight on the Northeast:

If you are seeking grazing management information or details on upcoming grazing events in the Northeast, be sure to utilize these resources:

**GLCI Gazette** is a free monthly e-newsletter about grazing lands in New York. It is sponsored by the New York State Grazinglands Conservation Initiative. To subscribe simply send an e-mail to [karen.hoffman2@ny.usda.gov](mailto:karen.hoffman2@ny.usda.gov).

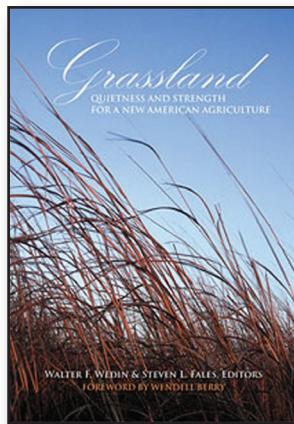
**The Vermont Pasture Network** at [www.uvm.edu/~pasture/](http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/) features many upcoming grazing events and the Northeast Grazing Guide at [www.umaine.edu/grazingguide](http://www.umaine.edu/grazingguide) - also include several links to research results and technical articles from the various Land Grant Universities, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, and much more.



## Fall Business Meeting Convenes in Montana

The National GLCI Steering Committee will hold their annual Fall Business Meeting and Tour Sept. 10-11 in Billings Montana at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The tour will be held on Friday, Sept. 10 and be hosted by the Montana GLCI. Stops will include both a sheep and cattle operation, as well as a wind farm. The business meeting will be held on Saturday, Sept. 11.

# IN PRAISE OF GRASSLAND



*Grassland: Quietness and Strength for a New American Agriculture*, a new book from the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America, takes a look at the many functions of grassland today and examines the benefits grass-based agriculture can provide when grass is treated as an essential resource. It has three main sections:

- “Past Is Prologue” tracks the history of grassland farming, emphasizing some of the philosophical arguments that advocate for grasslands as a vital component of an evolving American society.
- “The Present: Transitions Over 60 Years” aims to give readers the foundation needed to move into the future, including updated information on cropping systems that include perennial grasses and legumes.
- “The Forward Look: Opportunities and Challenges” looks at the role of grass-based agriculture in maintaining the stability of rural communities, including the human health benefits when grasses and legumes are made a primary resource in the food chain.

Published by the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America, it was edited by Walter Wedin, emeritus professor of agronomy at Iowa State University, and Steven Fales, Iowa State agronomist. Wendell Berry, a farmer and author of more than 40 books and essays about culture and agriculture, wrote a forward that stresses the importance of properly educating farmers about the land and the roles of grasslands.

The book can be purchased online for \$80, Item No. B40722 at [www.societystore.org](http://www.societystore.org), by phone at 608-268-4960, or by email: [books@agronomy.org](mailto:books@agronomy.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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(202) 347-0233

National Association of  
Conservation Districts  
(202) 547-6233

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(517) 323-6675

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(303) 771-3500

American Grassland Council  
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American Farm  
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Contact these affiliated organizations: