



# GRASSROOTS

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## **Annual Meeting Reminder!!**

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition will be having its annual meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from 10:00am to 3:00pm central, at the AmericInn in Chamberlain. This year the key note speaker will be Jim Gerrish of May, ID. Jim will be presenting on topics including “Planning for Low-Labor Operations”, “Planning for Successful Winter Grazing”, and “Ranching without Iron & Oil”. There is no cost to attend this meeting if you are an SDGC member but there is a \$20 charge to all non-members. A meal will be served at the event as well. Please RSVP to Judge Jessop at [jljessop@kennebectelephone.com](mailto:jljessop@kennebectelephone.com) or at (605) 280-0127 if you plan on attending.

A business meeting will follow lunch where there are some items of importance. First of all, Lavern Koch, Dan Rasmussen, and Larry Wagner are the three board members whose terms are up this year. Also on the agenda for this meeting is a discussion about a resolution that was passed by the board in October regarding conversion of native grass to crop production. The motion that was passed in regards to this resolution reads: “Faulstich moved that the SDGC support a Farm Bill Provision that will eliminate all federal subsidy supports, including commodity payments and crop insurance, on new cropland acres put into production by breaking grasslands with no cropping history. Second by Wagner. **MOTION CARRIED.** SDGC 2011-42”. The board will discuss this at the meeting.

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>

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## Winter Grazing Part 1

By: Garnet Perman

With winter inching closer, many of you may be thinking about cutting costs and saving time by trying winter grazing. There's bound to be a system that will work for your operation. Grassland Coalition members listed as mentors for winter grazing are Dallas Anderson, Jim Faulstich, Pat Guptill, Dan Rasmussen and Larry Wagner. Each has their own unique system which will be covered in this newsletter and continued next month.

Dan Rasmussen and Blake Lehman's 33 Ranch is located 20 miles from the Nebraska border near Belvedere and consists of rugged hills with a mix of warm season and cool season grasses. The 33 Ranch has no crop residue so rely completely on native grasses for winter grazing, which has been part of the program for almost a 100 years now. With an eye toward low cost production, Rasmussen's goals for winter grazing include better herd health, buying as little feed as possible and trying to balance nutritional needs with the grass they have. Twenty years ago, they supplemented with cake and fed hay only when the snow got too deep. Through the years, several changes have helped maximize the benefits of their winter grazing program.

Genetics is part of their winter grazing success. Moderate frame, easy fleshing cattle with below average milk work well for their situation.

Calving later was a key change. May calving means the cows don't have need such a high condition score in March. Calves are weaned in small groups December thru February, giving them a longer grazing season also. "Every time we put them in a corral for very long, some of the calves get sick, so we've gone to giving them as much pasture as we can," Rasmussen said.

The grazing rotation utilizes the warm season grasses in the summer, usually large numbers

for a short time. They let the cool season grasses mature for winter grazing and during winter rotate into a new pasture approximately once a month, giving the cows a little flush of protein as they start into a new pasture. Pastures are rotated based on protection and water availability. Most pastures have uke tire tanks supplied with rural water.

Dan and Blake switched from cake to a mineral supplement about a dozen years ago. Dan worked with a range nutritionist for several years to develop a custom mineral program that varies with the season.

Rasmussen emphasized the importance of monitoring the herd closely. "Lactating cows can lose condition quickly during bad winter weather," he said. Good protection is essential when the weather turns cold and snowy. The 33 ranch is blessed with heavily timbered draws and badland canyons. They always keep hay on hand for weather emergencies, which was put to use last winter.

Rasmussen can be reached at 605-344-2250.

Dallas Anderson's place near Eureka is just about as close to the North Dakota border as Rasmussen's is to Nebraska. He's tried several different ideas through the years. In 1974 he tried bale grazing in the winter with small round bales. He kept a horse with the cows to dig the hay out of the snow. However, making all those square bales was too labor intensive to continue. He tried it again about 20 years later with big round bales, sectioning off the grazing area to spread the manure around. He still utilizes the technique on both hay, farm ground and pastures. He sets the bales out in corridors, separated by electric fence. The cattle are moved every 1-3 days on standing forage and 3-5 days when bale grazing. "Once cattle are used to moving it goes easy," he said.

He figures he gets two uses from the bales, one for feed and the other depositing nutrients. He likes to put the bales on poorer ground to help build up the soil. He unrolls some bales as well

as leaving whole ones. By starting the tractor once a week instead of every day, the savings he realizes in time, fuel, and wear on tear on equipment and himself is substantial.

Anderson feels that good quality, palatable feed is important in a winter grazing program. In the past few years, he's also utilized his farm ground, first by grazing corn stalks which he supplements with a bale about once a week. He then goes to cover crops, a forage sorghum/radish/turnip mixture that stays green late into the year. "I've had cows out until February on that," he said. He also rotates through his least grazed summer pastures in the winter.

His cattle have to walk to water, but he finds they often don't come in for several days when there is snow because they get what they need from the moisture they take in with grazing.

Anderson also uses a custom mineral supplement and some mineral salt.

Anderson's land is rolling hills with no natural trees, so he has windbreak and some tree belts for protection. He's also used bales in the shape of a V behind a hill. "If I was younger, I'd make portable windbreaks or put in small plantings of trees in pastures and fields," he said.

Anderson's phone number is 605-437-2285.  
Continued next month...

## **JIM GERRISH WORKSHOP SERIES**



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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, SDSU Box 2170, Brookings SD 57007, [kyle.schell@sdstate.edu](mailto:kyle.schell@sdstate.edu), (605) 688-6623

