



GRASSROOTS

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Excellence in Range Management Tour

Last fall at the Society for Range Management annual meeting a local Jones County producer was recognized for their outstanding conservation efforts. Valburg Limited Partnership was presented with the Area III “Excellence in Range Management” award.

The nomination for this award was submitted by the Jones County Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office and is awarded to producers that show outstanding conservation efforts. On July 26, 2012, the Valburg’s will host a tour of their place to visit and show attendees the conservation practices they have implemented and the benefits they have seen. Jim Faulstich, Vice Chairman of the SD Grassland Coalition, will speak on his mineral program and winter grazing practices he follows on his place. The day will begin with registration at 9 a.m. and will conclude about 2:00 p.m. The public is welcome to attend and a meal will be served at noon.

This award is given to each of the four designated geographic areas of the state. Area III covers a sixteen county region of central South Dakota that runs from the North Dakota boarder to the Nebraska border. The nomination for this award is judged in four different areas: Community Involvement, Land Management, Livestock Management and Innovative Practices.

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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Implementing conservation practices just doesn't happen overnight it evolves with time. Conservation practices on the Valburg ranch began over forty years ago in 1966 when William (BJ) working with the Jones County NRCS and the Jones County Conservation District to provide him technical assistance to implement the first conservation practices on this place. Now son Barry, as Valburg Limited Partnership, continues to take part in conservation programs aimed at treating resource concerns. Through the use of different Farm Bill programs, Valburg Limited Partnership has installed pipelines, watering facilities, and added cross fences to help with grazing distribution. Working closely with the Jones County NRCS office a rotational grazing plan has been developed for Valburg's to follow to insure even grazing through all the pastures. Tate Lantz, Area Resource Conservationist, commented on an occasion he was at Valburg's "The Valburg's are very conscientious about how they manage their grass and I was impressed by the variety and diversity of the different grasses on their place."

There is no cost to attend but for meal planning purposes please contact the Jones County Conservation office at 669-2404 ext. 3 by July 13th if you plan on attending.

This tour is sponsored by the SD Society for Range Management, SD Grassland Coalition, Jones County Conservation District, Jones County NRSC, South Central RC&D, Dakota Prairie Bank and First Fidelity Bank-Murdo Branch.

"Bugging" Weeds

By: Garnett Perman

Biological controls are proving to be a boon to landowners with problem patches of those nastiest of weeds, Canada thistle and leafy spurge. Less toxic and much less expensive than chemical, they efficiently control the spread of these noxious weeds if given time to work.

Pat Guptill, a Quinn area rancher, has used three kinds of insects to control Canada thistle since the NRCS did a study on his land in 1998. "It's been a very effective tool, but you have to manage it," said Guptill. In some areas, the bugs have totally eradicated the thistle patches.

The gall fly and stem miner don't kill the thistles, but they weaken the plant to the point where disease and competition from other plants diminish it. The seed head weevil also won't kill the plant, but keeps it from releasing seed.

Guptill gets bugs through his local conservation district and the NRCS. He's released them in both the spring and fall, and they've spread to the point where Guptill can't find a thistle patch that doesn't have bugs. The gall flies are the hardest to establish because they need water. Gathering them is easy, just cut the galls out and scatter them in a new patch. Guptill also mows his thistle patches and also employs a much larger kind of bio control. Mob grazing helps control not just thistles, but other weeds. His cattle eagerly eat Canada thistle when the buds turn red. "They just clean it up," he said. "Bio controls may not be the answer in farm ground, but it works in rangeland," said Guptill.

Luke Perman of Lowry started planting flea beetles in leafy spurge patches in 2007, and is pleased with the results. "The progress is kind of slow, but so is spraying," he said. In the past, he collected beetles from a ranch near Frederick, but will collect from his own land this year. Collection must be done during a narrow window of time in late June, preferably on a warm, humid, windless day. The beetles are easy to collect with a fine mesh net. He recommends talking to the Extension Service, BLM or Forest Service to find flea beetles in your area.

The beetles don't totally eradicate the spurge patches, but they help control the spread. Over the course of four years, spurge colonies on the ranch have decreased in size. One patch initially covered 70 acres. Perman spreads the beetles around the patch and uses chemical to control the edges. "The bugs are not a quick fix, but more effective and they don't destroy other forbs," he said. The beetles are hardy as his initial batch of flea beetles survived an unintentional aerial spraying.

The beetles are native to Eastern Europe, as is leafy spurge. Perman noted that in Europe, leafy spurge isn't the problem it is here because the beetles are a built in control. "One hundred years from now, I hope we have enough bugs that we don't have to spray anymore," he said.

Questions can be directed to Guptill at 605-386-2323, or Perman at 605-649-6468. Ellen Reddick of St. Onge is also a Grassland Coalition mentor for biological controls. She can be reached at 605-642-3272.

Research Reveals that Grass-Fed Beef is Better for People and the Environment

This article originally appeared in the May 2012 Food Market electronic newsletter at <http://www.foodmarket.com/newsemail.asp?key=866817>.

Feeding cattle on grass throughout their lifecycle is the most environmentally sustainable way to rear beef, according to new research for the National Trust.

One of the biggest global challenges is how to increase food security whilst reducing the environmental impacts of food production. Livestock - such as cattle and sheep - produce high levels of methane as part of the process of digesting grass. This has led to suggestions that intensive production methods - where cattle are fed largely on cereals, producing less methane - should be preferred over more traditional grass fed livestock farming.

However, in a report issued today, research at 10 Trust farms shows that while the carbon footprint of grass-fed and conventional farms were comparable, the carbon sequestration contribution of well-managed grass pasture on the less intensive systems reduced net emissions by up to 94 per cent, even resulting in a carbon 'net gain' in upland areas. The farms that had recently converted to organic status showed even greater gains. Rob Macklin, National Agriculture and Food Adviser at the National Trust, said: "The results are contrary to recent thinking that livestock farming methods must intensify further in order to lessen carbon emissions to feed an ever-increasing world population." "Maximizing carbon efficiency alone is too simplistic. Many less intensive livestock systems would be classed 'inefficient' on the carbon emission scale, yet are much less reliant on artificial inputs and tend to have less impacts on water quality, loss of soil organic matter and reduced biodiversity. "We believe that optimized beef production - deliberately accommodating less than maximum output in order to secure stronger and broader ecosystem protection

- is the best sustainable use for the grasslands in our care.

"The debate about climate change and food often calls for a reduction of meat consumption and a more plant based diet, but this often overlooks the fact that many grasslands are unsuitable for continuous arable cropping. "Grasslands support a range of ecosystems services including water resources, biodiversity and carbon capture and storage. Grazing livestock not only contributes to their maintenance but also turns grass into human-edible food." Other recent research found that the health benefits of beef (and lamb) are greater when animals are fed totally on grass - their natural food. Omega 3 fatty acids - recognized as essential to good physical and mental health - are higher in meat from grass and the levels of saturated fat are a third of grain fed beef.

Patrick Begg, Rural Enterprises Director at the National Trust, said: "This research is incredibly timely. Policy makers across Europe and in the UK have to tackle the issue of carbon-efficient food production right now. The debate is all about bringing broader public benefits to the fore alongside food production and this research demonstrates how extensive, grass-fed beef should be at the heart of discussions.

"We need to find new market mechanisms which reward optimized rather than maximized beef production and as bodies like the Government's Ecosystem Markets Task Force gather their thoughts we think this research demonstrates an area which is due some real focus. Current Common Agricultural Policy reform discussions can also benefit from understanding what this research is telling us and, as the reform drives towards even stronger 'greening' of the payments farmers receive, we think management that delivers quality, grass-fed beef should be encouraged even more through agri-environment measures.

"We'll be taking the findings forward with our tenants, policy makers and the industry to explore how we can develop a market advantage which supports a stronger grass-fed beef sector".



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Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
Rangeland Health Training	July 17-20	Belle Fourche, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Tri-State Grazing Conference	Aug 21-22	Hankinson, ND	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
SD Grazing School	Sep 10-14	Chamberlain, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Leopold Award Tour	Sept 20	Raymond, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
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