



Grassroots

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Meeting Cow Requirements While Winter Grazing

by Kaylee Wheeler and Julie Walker

Can cows meet their nutrient requirements while winter grazing?

The need to feed hay is not eliminated through winter grazing, especially during times of inclement weather and as spring cows advance in pregnancy. However, winter grazing can be used to reduce the amount of supplementation required via hay or other feeds. After weaning, the average nutrient requirements of a cow are about 50% total digestible nutrients (abbreviated as TDN) and 7% crude protein (abbreviated as CP). Typically, at the start of grazing, dormant grasses contain less than 6% CP. Protein is generally the most-limiting nutrient during winter grazing, but energy is also important for combating winter conditions and increasing body condition score. A spring cow's nutrient requirements will increase throughout the winter as they advance into late gestation. As a result, cows should be provided with adequate protein, energy, and mineral supplementation throughout the winter grazing season in order to meet their nutritional requirements.

Assessing cow nutrient requirements.

In order to provide adequate nutrition to the cow herd, it is essential to assess nutrient requirements. An easy way to accomplish this is to evaluate the herd for body condition scores (abbreviated as BCS). For most spring calving herds, fall and winter grazing occurs after the calf has been weaned. As a result, cows will be at their lowest nutritional requirements of the production cycle. Therefore, this period between weaning and late gestation is the most-economical time to increase cow conditions if needed. Current BCS of the herd will determine what feeding, supplementing, and management strategies should occur. Ideally cows would be in a BCS of 5 at the time of calving. However, nutrient requirements for heifers and younger cows are higher than for mature cows because they are still growing. As a result, younger cows may require more supplementation and ideally should be in a BCS of 6 at the time of calving.

One strategy is separating cows into groups based on their BCS. By managing the groups separately, supplementation can be provided according to the nutrient needs of each group. For example, one group could be made up of thinner cows (< 4 BCS) and young cows in order to provide more supplementation to achieve a higher energy and protein diet. In contrast, cows in a higher body condition (> 6 BCS) can be grouped together because they have more body reserves and are more resilient to low-quality diets. This group will require less supplementation and will be able to occasionally 'rough it' if necessary. However, caution should be used

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Winter Grazing Continued by Kaylee Wheeler and Julie Walker



Cows grazing winter pasture in Nebraska
(Photo by S. Smart).

with this strategy by not allowing cows to lose too much condition prior to the calving season. Ultimately, winter grazing management should revolve around utilizing winter pastures as a feed resource, while ensuring cows will be in proper condition at the time of calving.

Does winter grazing impact cold stress in cows?

When temperatures are below their lower critical temperature, cows are forced to increase heat production to maintain their body temperature. In order to produce more heat, cows are forced to mobilize energy via body stores or diet intake. Thin cows are less resilient to cold stress conditions, because they have less body stores available to produce heat and provide insulation from the cold. In order for thinner cows to

not pull from body stores and lose condition, energy intake must increase.

The only way to get more energy from dormant forage is for cows to eat more of it. However, cow diets are limited by their rumen capacity. When forage quality is low, it is likely that the cow won't be able to consume enough forage to get the energy they need. In this case, they are physically limited by intake. As a consequence, cows will have to mobilize energy from their body stores and risk losing body condition. To prevent losses in cow performance and condition, producers should provide supplemental energy to cows prior to and during cold stress events. By doing this, cows are able to increase both their energy intake and digestion of low-quality forage. However, too much energy can cause digestive issues. For this reason, supplemental energy in the form of high-quality forage (for example, alfalfa) is a good strategy for shorter-term cold stress events. In the event of long-term cold events or extreme weather conditions, further management considerations may be required, and diet density should increase. Contact SDSU Beef Specialists to further discuss diet considerations.

Will cow nutrient requirements change throughout the winter?

Cow nutrient requirements change throughout the year as they enter different stages of gestation and lactation. The greatest nutrient requirements occur after calving and during peak lactation, while the lowest nutrient requirements occur after weaning, when lactation is stopped. For spring calving cows, weaning typically occurs near the time that grasses go dormant for the winter. As a result, it is advantageous to utilize dormant grasses for spring calving cows during this period of lower nutrient requirements. However, as cows advance through pregnancy and get ready to calve again, their nutrient requirements are steadily increasing. Therefore, it is a good strategy to utilize winter grazing early on when nutrient requirements are lower.

Regardless of grazing strategy, it is critical that producers provide proper supplementation to allow cows to meet nutrient requirements throughout the winter grazing season.

This article was reprinted from SDSU Extension www.extension.sdstate.edu

The 2024 Annual SDGC Meeting: A New Chapter for South Dakota Grasslands - by Bri Rupp

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition (SDGC) is thrilled to announce an exciting shift in the format of our Annual Meeting. This year, our gathering will take place on December 5, 2024, at the Holiday Inn Downtown Rapid City and will set the stage for our transition to a conference style event. In 2025, this shift will expand to a two-day conference, promising even more opportunities for learning, growth, and connection among grassland advocates and professionals in the agriculture industry.

This year's event centers around the theme, "**Managing South Dakota's Grasslands for Profitability and The Next Generation.**" Our lineup includes three outstanding speakers: Clay Conry, Natalie Kovarik, and Dr. Tom Noffsinger. From strategies for boosting profitability to insights into preparing the next generation of grassland managers, this meeting is designed to provide tangible value to all participants.



Clay Conry
Working Cows Podcast Host



Natalie Kovarik
Cattle Rancher & Agriculture Advocate



Dr. Tom Noffsinger
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

In addition to the two keynotes, the event will feature **breakout sessions** where attendees can engage directly with experts, ask questions, and explore solutions tailored to their unique challenges. We will end the day with a social hour to give our members an opportunity to visit with speakers, board members, and

Why Attend?

This year's Annual Meeting offers a unique blend of education, networking, and inspiration. Here are some of the key benefits attendees can expect:

- **Valuable Learning** – With a diverse range of sessions, this year's event will equip you with practical knowledge to improve your operation's profitability while enhancing land stewardship practices.
- **Networking Opportunities** – Connect with like-minded individuals, industry experts, and thought leaders who share your passion for regenerative grassland management.
- **A Vision for the Future** – Gain knowledge and inspiration; and discover innovative ways to prepare your operation for a successful future.

We invite everyone invested in the future of South Dakota's grasslands to join us for this pivotal event. Together, we'll lay the groundwork for more sustainable, profitable, and forward-thinking management practices that will shape the future of our state's grasslands. Learn more and register at www.sdgrass.org.

Giving Back, Helping Youth Learn About Grasslands by Lynn Betts



Students climb Pasque Hill, the namesake for Jeff Zimprich's educational farm near Sioux Falls.

More than 50 years ago, youngster Jeff Zimprich would peer through the window of his Minnehaha County farm house, itching to climb the hill that filled his view. Every time he hiked up it, he marveled at the view in all directions; each spring, he basked in the blooming pasque flowers at the top. It was a favorite childhood memory.

Jeff left home after high school and went on to have a distinguished 40-year career in conservation across Montana, Iowa and South Dakota, including serving eight years as state conservationist of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in South Dakota.

Now he's come full circle, having returned in 2020 with his wife Kim to the rolling, 157-acre small family farm. His parents, Joe and Carol, bought the diverse farm that lies two miles south of Brandon, within 6 miles of downtown Sioux Falls, more than 55 years ago. Jeff not only returned home, he brought a passion to share everything he's learned about caring for the land, grasses, and other natural resources with new generations.

"I really liked my job, but with this farm so close to a population center, there was this calling that just kept drawing me to do something to help educate young people and the non-farm public," Jeff says. "I'm in a good position to show them what they can do at home and to help them realize that we're all responsible to care for our natural resources."

Inviting one and all to the regenerative farm

Jeff and Kim are sharing their passion and knowledge by continuing to make their whole farm—especially their grasslands—healthier. And just as importantly to Jeff, they're inviting those who otherwise can't experience farm or ranch life to their little piece of the world to learn first-hand about resource care.

Currently in a family trust managed by Jeff and his two sisters, the diverse farm includes cropland, grassland, woodland, and riparian areas. Jeff and Kim have named the farm Pasque Hill on Beaver Creek, a descriptive title that honors the hill he hiked up as a child and features the small creek that flows through the farm.

"We hosted 65 groups with a total of about 1,600 people last year," Jeff says. "Groups have included a wide range of classes, from Brandon Daycare to Garretson Grade School to Brandon Valley Intermediate School, to Advanced Placement (AP) environmental science classes from Roosevelt High School in Sioux Falls to Sioux Metro Area Social Homeschoolers."

A typical day for a grade school class is to visit four stops, or stations, with specific messages. Students learn all about grasslands and all that they provide, the soil is alive, there are five

Giving Back Continued Page 6

The Great Land Swap: Part II by Garnet Perman

Bien Ranch, operated by Neil and Muriel Bien was homesteaded by Neil's grandparents in 1888. Neil's brothers Lyle and Boyd operate on adjacent properties. The ranch consists of 8,200 acres of rolling hills and pot-holes in South Dakota's Prairie Coteau region near Veblen. Much of it is still in native grass. Neil and his brothers are the third generation to farm and ranch in this area. Their transition to the next generation involves a skip in that Neil's grandson, Nate, is the next generation to take a turn at stewarding the Bien land.

Neil and Muriel have two sons, Matt and Lance. Matt is a physician and Lance a pharmacist. Lance operates Bien Pharmacy in nearby Milbank. Between them they have six children. Nate is Lance's son and the only one of his generation to pursue a career in agriculture. He spent much of his childhood on Grandpa Niel's ranch as well as his maternal grandparents' farm. By the time he graduated from high school he knew that he wanted farming and ranching in his future. He spent eight summers working for a local farmer as well as helping out at both grandparents' places. Nate attended SDSU graduating with a double major in Agronomy and Precision Ag in 2021. He's learned about managing livestock and grassland from his grandfather who is happy to share the wisdom gained from 65 years of experience and proud to pass it to another generation.

The conservation ethic practiced by all generations of the Bien family focuses on the long-term benefits of good stewardship rather than short term gain. Nate noted that he doesn't really know how to answer when people ask about his conservation plans. "I just plan to keep up the good work Neil has done," he said. Bien Ranch practiced soil health principles long before soil health became a buzzword. Keeping grass productive with managed grazing and protecting sloughs have been multi-generational practices. Their stewardship earned the ranch the 2022 South Dakota Aldo Leopold Award.

Neil and Muriel's goal is to keep the ranch together as a workable unit. They have updated wills and estate plans periodically as life and family situations have changed. A biology teacher for 38 years, Neil required his students to read Leopold's book, "The Sand County Almanac" and has been intentional about teaching all his grandchildren how the ranch's particular ecosystem works. They all enjoy coming to the ranch to help and have fun. Good family relationships have been key to their planning process.

The current transition and succession plan is quite simple. A revocable trust currently owned by Neil and Muriel was established earlier this year. Upon their deaths the trust becomes irrevocable with Matt and Lance as trustees. Neil chose the trust option because it simplifies things for his sons as the trust doesn't have to go through probate. Over time Nate will eventually inherit some land and also have the opportunity to purchase land from the trust.

In order to generate cash flow now, Nate works several part time jobs that include chopping hay for the dairy at Veblen, working at the Sisseton sale barn and helping local farmers in addition to managing the ranch's cow herd. He has already purchased some land from his Great Uncle Lyle and rents the rest of his land. The family dynamic of a 20 something being the manager and older generations being advisors and helpers is unique. The older generation's ability to relinquish control, adapt to change and be encouraging rather than critical is a big part of what makes the current arrangement work.

Nate and his wife, Katie are new parents. Six week old Milo Bien isn't old enough to learn how to manage grass yet, but he will certainly experience that part of the family legacy. The rest of the family is excited about the possibility of yet another generation taking their turn at managing Bien Ranch.

Garnet Perman is a freelance writer and ranches with her husband, Lyle, near Lowry, SD.

Giving Back Continued by Lynn Betts



Eyes get big when kids discover the soil is alive, volunteer educator Mary Lou Lacey says.

If the visiting group is small, Jeff handles the education session himself. For larger classes, he and Kim get invaluable volunteer help from many partners. The core group has been retired conservationist Mary Lou Lacey, as well as Catharine Beale from Pheasants Forever and Jared Hohn and Jamie Risse from Presentation Sisters. He also gets some support from a grant the South Dakota Grassland Coalition received from the South Dakota USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Jeff is busily building fence, putting in livestock water, and intending to bring grazing animals back to the farm, all the while explaining improvements to visitors. “With better organization and partnerships, we might be able reach more groups next year,” he says.

Oh, and about those pasque flowers. They’ve mostly disappeared over time, but Jeff is confident that prescribed fire and managed grazing will bring South Dakota’s state flower back to the top of the hill. In the meantime, it’s another educational opportunity for him, asking visitors to help solve the case of the missing flowers.

Jeff Zimprich recently became an SDGC board member. Lynn Betts consults part time for SDGC. Visit Pasque Hill on Beaver Creek on Facebook, or learn more online at www.wheregoodthingsgrow.org

principles of healthy soils, and that pollinators and birds are part of the diversity of healthy grasslands. “When you show people the soil is alive, it makes an impression,” Jeff says. “And kids’ eyes get big when you show them some native grasses have roots that can go 15 feet deep.” Pre- and post-tests Jeff gives to students show significant increases in knowledge after the education sessions at the farm.

Pasque Hill on Beaver Creek hosted a bird watching tour last year, as well as other adult group events. Dakota News Now has done five stories covering educational events at the farm, and the Brandon Valley newspaper has also covered activities there.



Jeff says students are amazed when he shows them some prairie plant roots can go as deep as 15 feet.



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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management
Annual Section Meeting and Pasture Walk by Sandy Smart

The SD Section of SRM held its annual meeting on Wednesday October 23, 2024 in Faith, SD. The day started off with a tour of last year’s Excellence in Range Management Award winner Brett and Shannon Carmichael’s Wedge Tent Ranch. Over 50 people were in attendance for the tour. Bart shared his management philosophy and showcased improvements he has made to his pastures, including seeing increases in plant diversity. Brett highlighted winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), a low growing and highly palatable shrub, which he has seen more and more of over the years since he implemented intensive grazing management. The tour capped off with a climb atop Wedge Tent butte with a beautiful view of the operation.

The business meeting started at 4 pm and we discussed a number of topics. The SD SRM finances are doing well with market gains in investments last year. A new scholarship was created in honor of Mitch Faulkner and will be available to students pursuing range management degrees or programs at universities in Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The Youth Endowment Committee will manage the scholarship. Elections for officer and board of director positions were held. Ryan Knutson was elected 2nd Vice-President and Andrea Westlake was elected to the board of directors. The group thanked outgoing President Tyler Swan and board member Jessica Michalski for their service. Krista Ehlert moved up to President and Logan Vandermark moved up to First Vice-President. The High School Youth Forum delegate Karlee Kammerer presented her talk to the group. She will be attending the SRM International Meeting in Spokane, WA February 9-13, 2025. Finally, the SD SRM Crazy Auction raised \$2,336 for student scholarships.



Shannon and Brett Carmichael accepting the Excellence in Rangeland Management Award (photo by S. Smart).

This year’s Excellence in Range Management Award winners included Darwin Peckham from Bristol, SD representing Area I, Adam and Jacque Roth from Highmore, SD representing Area II, Corey Tart from Plankinton, SD representing Area II, and TJ Gabriel from Midland, SD representing Area IV.



Pictured left is Caleb, Adam and Jacque Roth; middle picture is TJ and Jeanine Gabriel; and right picture is Marshall, Mason, Darwin, and Dennis Peckham. Krista Ehlert, President of SD SRM, is also pictured giving awards. (photos by S. Smart).



Top hand winners included Hans Stephenson from Rapid City, SD for his work to promote and educate others in riparian and stream health in the Black Hills. He has taken a leadership role, spear-heading volunteers and rallying other organizations in the Silver Creek Riparian Restoration Project. Bringing in outside partners that advocate and contribute to the goals of healthy riparian areas and rangelands and recognizing them for their contributions to such effort is contributing to success of SRM and our partners. The other top hand winners included Rodd Voss, Heidi Reints, and Tom Hausmann for their efforts in working to create new prescribed burn associations in South Dakota to combat eastern redcedar encroachment on grasslands.

Rod Voss and Heidi Reints receiving the Top Hand Award from the SD Section of SRM President Krista Ehlert (Photo by S. Smart).



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Calendar of Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact Person	Phone/email/website
SDGC Annual Meeting	Dec 5	Rapid City	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
SD Cattlemen's Meeting and Leopold Presentation	Dec 10-11	Pierre	Cattlemen's website	www.sdcattlemen.org

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Sandy Smart, SDSU Box 2207D, 114 Berg Hall, Brookings, SD 57007, alexander.smart@sdstate.edu, (605) 688-4940

