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Mark Your Calendar: 2025 SD Grassland Coalition Annual Conference

by Briana Rupp

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition invites you to join us for our Annual Conference, a two-day event dedicated to empowering families, strengthening operations, and celebrating the future of grassland stewardship. This year's theme, *"Legacy in the Land: Building Strong Families and Profitable Ranches,"* sets the stage for an experience designed to inspire and equip ranchers, farmers, and community members alike.

The conference will feature nationally recognized keynote speakers who bring practical tools, fresh perspectives, and humor to the challenges and opportunities of agriculture today:

Jolene Brown – The Top Ten Mistakes That Break Up a Family Business

Jolene brings her trademark energy and humor to the serious topic of family business succession. She'll share practical strategies for navigating tough conversations, building trust, and ensuring the farm or ranch legacy thrives for generations.

Burke Teichert – Pathways to Profitability

With decades of ranch management expertise, Burke will highlight proven ways to boost profitability while developing people and improving land health. His insights will help attendees identify opportunities to simplify operations without sacrificing results.

Jerry Doan – Stories of Innovation and Resilience

Jerry weaves together lessons from his own ranching journey, including agri-tourism, soil health, and family involvement. His session will leave you inspired to think outside the box while staying grounded in the values that make agriculture strong.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 3, Oelrichs
Soil Health Workshop

Dec 4-5, Box Elder
Grassland Coalition Annual Conference

2025 Annual Conference Continued...

Dr. Tom Noffsinger – Extended Bonus Session on Low-Stress Livestock Handling

Back by popular demand, Dr. Tom returns after last year's well-received presentation—this time with an extended session. He'll take a deeper dive into low-stress livestock handling, sharing practical techniques that improve animal health, handler safety, and overall efficiency.

In addition to these dynamic keynotes, breakout sessions will dive into practical topics such as rotational grazing, summer calving, small acreage management considerations & opportunities, and tools for effective grazing management. Families will also appreciate special activities for kids and young ranchers, making this a conference where everyone has something to gain.

Why Attend?

By attending, you'll walk away with:

- Fresh ideas to apply directly to your operation
- Tools to strengthen family and business decision-making
- Inspiration from rancher success stories and real-world solutions
- A network of peers, partners, and experts who share your passion for grasslands

The Annual Conference is more than just an event—it's a chance to recharge, reconnect, and gain the tools to make your operation more resilient and your family more united.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Support the Conference Through Sponsorship

December 4-5, 2025

The Annual Conference would not be possible without the support of our valued sponsors. Businesses, organizations, and individuals who sponsor this event not only help strengthen the Coalition's mission, but also gain excellent visibility among producers and landowners across South Dakota.

This year's sponsorship opportunities include booth space at the conference and a variety of advertising options prior to and during the event. It's a powerful way to demonstrate your support for grassland stewardship while connecting with a highly engaged audience. If you're interested in sponsoring the 2025 Annual Conference, visit sdgrass.org or contact Judge Jessop directly for more information.

Grassland Monitoring - Necessary Evil or Worthwhile Adventure?

by Emily Rohrer

“You can’t manage what you haven’t measured.” I’ve heard variations of this quote quite a few times at various events through the years. Apparently, some guy from the business management world is attributed to that saying – but it’s also true in the grassland management world as well.

Measuring specific aspects on your operation – think – grass, plant diversity, infiltration, precipitation – can help when making management decisions. In the cattle/sheep/livestock world, we already do quite a bit of measuring – EPDs, birth weights, weaning weights, etc – but do you know how much each pasture produces on a ‘good year’? How about on a ‘bad year’? Did you pay attention to how much residual height you left after grazing that one pasture last year – or how much soil cover (armor, litter – whatever you want to call it) you have in each of our pastures? How fast can your land infiltration 1 inch of rainwater? How many different flowers are in your pasture? All of these are great and easy things to monitor from year to year to see how things are changing throughout time. Monitoring can help show you the trends on your operation. Monitoring can help you decide which pasture to start your grazing in next year, or which pasture may need a little bit more rest and recovery (did you read [Jenita’s article](#) last month?!)



Dan Conner & Mitch Faulkner, 2018

Monitoring can be as easy as a notebook stuck in each pickup or UTV so you can take notes on pasture in and out dates (or there’s a handy chart on the back page of the Grassland Planner). There are also a few monitoring apps that you can put on your phone as well – GrassSnap from University of Nebraska is great for taking photo points and organizing them. Land PKS is a more in-depth app that can help manage some of your monitoring data as well.

In closing, take the time to go and monitor your pastures – during the grazing season, and after it’s over! Kaylee Wheeler, SDSU Extension Range Specialist recommends to use it as a family outing – load up the wife, the kids, the dog, and go for a pasture walk some evening to see what plants are in bloom, how much the grass is growing, and enjoy your grassland operation.

South Dakota Grasslands Initiative - An Invitation to Join by Laura Kahler

The South Dakota Grasslands Initiative is a partner-driven network working to strengthen communication and collaboration among those who care for—and rely on—the grasslands of our state.

If you're interested in the importance of grasslands for ranching, hunting, rural communities, or the many ecosystem benefits they provide, we invite you to join our community by subscribing at www.sdgrassinitiative.org.

One of the ways we stay connected is through our quarterly partner meetings. Our next virtual call will take place on Monday, October 6 at 1:00 p.m. (CT), and all subscribers will receive an invitation. During this call, you'll have the chance to listen in and learn about collaboration happening with the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative's groups, hear an array of brief updates from partners across the state, and enjoy a producer spotlight featuring Ron Brownotter, a South Dakota rancher who has restored native grasslands for his bison herd.

We'd love for you to join us!

Regenerative Grazing Planning - Part 2

by Dan Rasmussen

Our pastures need recovery after the plants are grazed. Take a look at these grass plants with a cross section of their roots.

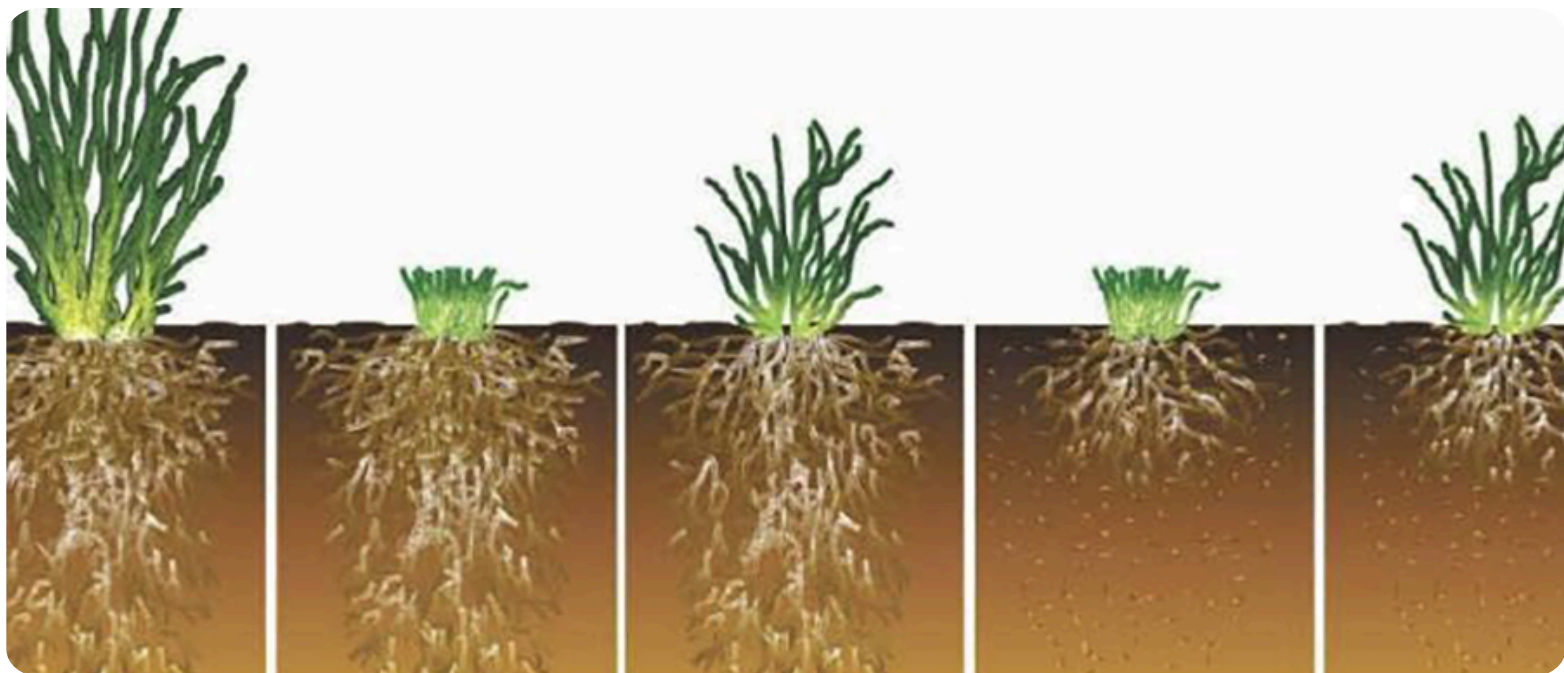


Image courtesy of John King, Regenerative Agriculture Specialist, Stipa Native Grasses Association of Australia



Regenerative Grazing Planning - Part 2 Continued...

The first picture is of a grass plant that is ungrazed with fully recovered roots.

The second picture is of the same grass plant after a short duration graze. Notice the roots are almost unchanged.

The third picture is of the plant growing/recovering with strong roots.

The fourth picture shows what happens to the roots after re-grazing before full recovery. The roots are now weak. This plant is now less competitive with its neighbors and will be slow growing.

Notice there is a difference between rest and recovery. Recovery includes growing days sufficient for the plant to mature. Rest can be during the winter dormant months when there is no growth therefore no recovery.

We as ranchers are used to managing what we can see on the surface. However, the plants factory is underground. Therefore we need to understand what is happening in the part of our land we normally cannot see, beneath the surface.

HOW A ROTATIONAL GRAZING PLAN CAN IMPROVE SOIL

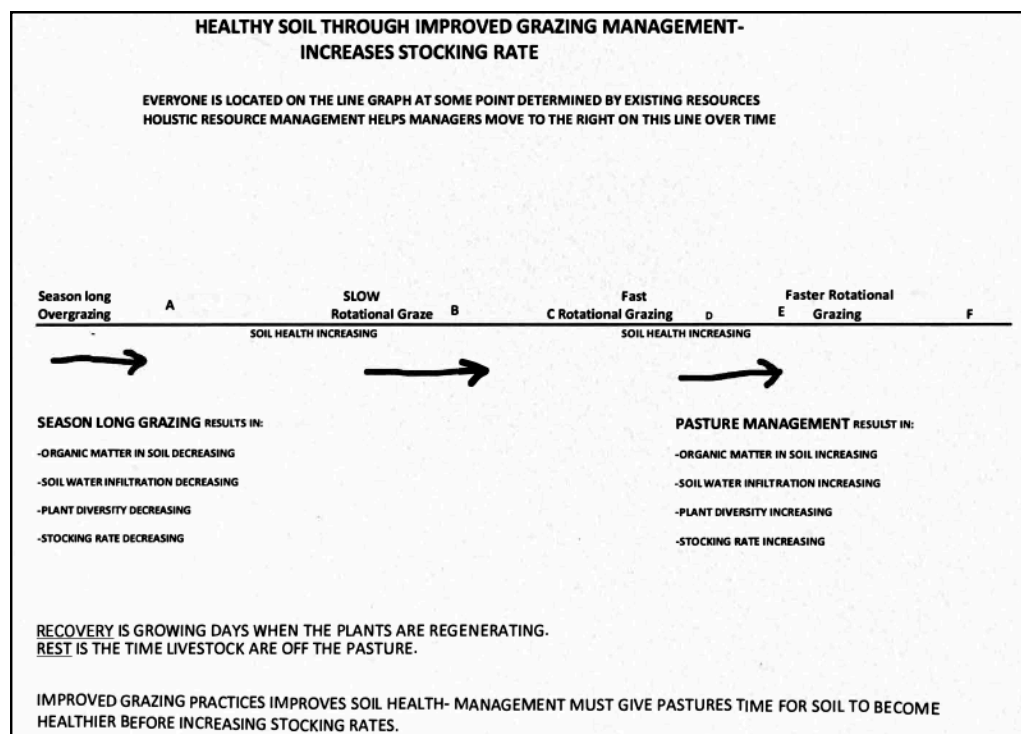
The following line graph shows how a rotational grazing plan will improve soil health. Everyone is located on the line at some point. The left side represents season long grazing.

As you move to the right with shorter grazing time in each pasture recovery time is longer thus increasing

1. Organic matter
2. Increasing soil water infiltration
3. Increasing plant diversity
4. Over time increasing production leading to higher stocking rates.

Understand as you move to the right on this line with your management, new problems with need solving. Water distribution, possible fencing, changes in labor demands and financing these changes. Combining herds is one of the easiest ways to increase recovery time in a grazing plan.

Attending a Holistic Resource Management school is a way to learn how to make these adjustments with fewer mistakes.



Regenerative Grazing Planning - Part 2 Continued...

ADVANTAGES OF A ROTATIONAL GRAZING PLAN



The advantages of a rotational grazing plan will include:

- Healthier soil.
- Increased drought recovery. Healthy soil holds more water than unhealthy soil. Healthy roots result in plants growing faster after a dormant period during drought.
- Increased plant diversity.
- Higher plant populations leading to increased stocking rates.

Setting up a grazing plan that focuses on adequate recovery will make your pastures healthy and over time increase stocking rate. Every grazing plan has the potential for improvement.

Attending a grazing school is a great way to learn how to fine tune your grazing plan. The Grassland Coalition puts on three grazing schools in South Dakota each summer. After attending a school you are eligible for the Grazing School Follow-up Program. A consultant will come to your ranch and help you implement the things learned at the school.

Dan is a third-generation cattle rancher living on his family ranch in south central South Dakota. Dan served as a past board member of the Grassland Coalition and is currently the Grazing School Follow-up Ranch Consulting coordinator for the Coalition.

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R N E R

- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management

SD Society for Range Management Hosts Pasture Walk and Annual Meeting

by Kaylee Wheeler

The South Dakota section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) is hosting their annual meeting on Thursday September 25th, 2025 in Fort Pierre, SD.

The day will begin with a tour of last year's Area II Excellence in Range Management Award winners, Adam and Jacquie Roth of Highmore, SD. This award is designed to highlight outstanding rangeland managers across the state of South Dakota. A tour of the Roth Ranch will take place from 12:30 to 3:00 pm (CT) and is free for participants to attend.

The SD SRM business meeting will begin at 4:30 pm (CT) at Drifter's Bar & Grill in Fort Pierre, SD. Discussion of the group's activities from the past year, scholarships for youth, endowment funds, and officer/board member elections will take place at this time.

Supper begins at 6:00 pm (CT) and will feature a presentation from the South Dakota high school youth forum delegate. Katelyn Gebhart, of Meadow, SD won first place in the annual Rangeland and Soil Days speaking contest. Gebhart will represent South Dakota at the National Society for Range Management meeting on Feb. 7–11, 2026, in Monterey, California. She will participate and compete among other high school students from across the nation in the High School Youth Forum.

Following supper, the crazy auction and social time begins at 7:00 pm (CT). The crazy auction is used to raise funds for student scholarships. Participants are encouraged to bring items for auctioning off among each other.

Additional Information:

You DO NOT have to be a SD SRM member to attend this event. However, registration and RSVP is required for supper: <https://www.sdrangelands.com/annual-meeting.html>

Directions to the Roth Ranch:

From Highmore, SD – Head north on SD-47 for 9.5 miles. Roth Ranch sign is on the right side of the road.

From Seneca, SD – Head east on US-212 for 3 miles. Then turn right onto SD-47 for 27.7 miles. Roth Ranch sign is on the left side of the road.

Questions? Contact:

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A SPECIAL NOTE TO OUR VALUED MEMBERS

Your support helps keep this work moving forward. The future of South Dakota's grasslands, ranches, and rural communities depends on continued care, collaboration, and commitment—and we're grateful to have you with us on that journey. We welcome your feedback and invite you to reach out anytime—whether you're looking for more information, want to suggest a topic, or just have ideas to share. And as always, we encourage you to stay involved, spread the word, and help others connect with our work.