

## Joe Farmer grazing narrative

Our ranch has been utilizing a managed grazing system since 2001. We are applying for Carbon Credits for 2003 through 2010 as per the National Farmers Union/CCX rangeland practice. We started with 8 pastures and have since increased it to 11 pastures with a 2 herd rotational system. The older cow/calf herd rotates through six of the pastures and our first and second calf heifer herd rotates through the other 5. We have 150 cows with an average weight of 1250 pounds. Calving begins in mid to late March. Our grazing season runs from early May to late October or about 5.5 months. Total acres in the grazing systems are about 1040 acres. We follow a seasonal use change for the pastures by starting with different pastures units each year and checking our grazing records to ensure season of use change. The pastures are grazed at least twice per year with some pastures receiving three grazing treatments. We adjust recovery time for each pasture based upon growing conditions. Recovery periods range between 45 and 90 days. Utilization levels are monitored with NRCS and average between 40 and 60 percent on the desirable species. We have attached the grazing plan for 2007 which is typical of our grazing plan since 2003.

2006 was an extremely dry year with less than half of the normal rainfall for our ranch, which caused the pastures to reach a degraded status. Burleigh County was designated a disaster county 2006 and 2002.

We have a drought management plan in place to prevent overgrazing. This includes shortening the grazing period for each pasture unit. We have some tame hay lands and some crop land that will be added to utilize aftermath grazing by use of electric fencing. Water is available for this grazing, but not as centrally located as the normal pastures. We stock our pastures so that on a typical year there will be surplus grass to allow for extra grass to be available in years of a drought. In dry years the pasture units that have lower quality soils are grazed less days in each cycle to prevent over grazing. In a drought year we can sell cull cows in mid summer, either weaning the calves and putting them on feed or selling them with the cows. Another option is weaning all of the calves early and either selling them or back grounding them and leaving the cows on pasture. This lowers the nutritional needs of the bred cows and relieves grazing pressure on the pasture from those cows. It also relieves grazing pressure from the calves since at this time in the grazing season they are consuming considerable forage.

If a sustained drought occurs, we have several options. We can introduce feed such as a creep ration, which on normal years, we do not need to use. In a sustained drought, we can plant some of the cropland that is available for grazing to forage crops for supplemental grazing. We also normally carry over hay and other crop residue so that if we need to take the cows out of the pasture early we have feed available.

Future plans include converting 150 acres of CRP that is close to the farmstead into 3 additional pasture units. The additional CRP pasture will provide early season grazing and allow us to increase the herd size to 180 cows. Each of the new cool season pastures will be grazed by the entire herd and rotated through in the spring and later in the season with a planned recovery period of 30 to 45 days between grazing events. Other future plans also involve planting cover crops that could be used for grazing as well as to improve soil health.

We work closely with the NRCS office in Burleigh County in developing a managed grazing program for our cow herd. We continue to utilize EQIP funding to improve water location for more uniform grazing and additional fencing to increase the number of pasture units. We are in the CSP program and have a grazing plan on file e for the CSP program with the NRCS.