

Livestock and Natural Resources

Reflecting the other day about how my job has changed through the years. Not just the office equipment or the reliance on computers, that story makes me feel prehistoric! Can you believe when I first started working, we didn't have copy machines? We sort of burnt it on some onion skin paper, wowsa!

Nowadays, people want information immediately. We are such an impatient society. With all the technology, you would think calling people, you can immediate contact, but it is still a challenge.

Big meetings and events are also becoming harder to pull off, people are just too busy these days!

Trying to find all the magic ingredients to make that work, seems to be a mystery.

I was able to take in a tour in Shawnee county about the invasive Old World Bluestem grasses. They had an amazing showing of people interested in finding out more about Caucasian Bluestem. The Yellow Bluestem, seems to only be in western Kansas. The other troublesome grasses are Broomsedge Bluestem and Silver Bluestem.

Cattle will eat the Caucasian Bluestem when it is young and in the vegetative state. Once it starts heading out, then cattle will not eat it and it gets rank. Patches of the grass are lighter green in color, as it gets rank then it falls down and gets matted.

We viewed a road ditch that is a solid stand, they are researching at Ft Hays what the allopathic properties this grass has. This response will only let it spread and won't allow other plants to compete.

They believe this grass has spread, by bringing in mulch hay from other areas to use in ditches.

Broomsedge Bluestem is quite prevalent in Meadowlark District, it has a distinguishing orangish brown color in the fall. Most accounts of treatment are to take a soil test and apply the recommended amounts of phosphorus. One producer reported after two years of additional phosphorus, he eliminated the Broomsedge Bluestem in his hay field.

Silver bluestem is used primarily for grazing. Cattle graze it a few weeks in the spring, but little after the seed heads form. It can be grazed some during the winter if livestock are fed a protein supplement. Goats relish the seed heads when

seed is in the dough stage. This grass is usually not seeded nor managed to control erosion on critical areas, but established itself readily on denuded soils and overgrazed ranges.