

Pasture and Range Evaluation and Recovery

Cattlemen across much of Kansas are in a quandary. As grass managers, they are asking themselves how many cattle will their ranges and pastures support after twenty to thirty months of drought. What steps can be taken to protect the grazing resources while maintaining enough cattle numbers to be financially viable? Will we get enough runoff to fill the ponds?

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have teamed up to lead producers on four "pasture walks" during the first week of April to help graziers evaluate the impacts drought has had on pasture conditions and to plan grazing strategies for the coming season.

Each session will begin at 1:30 PM and will last 2 to 3 hours. A NRCS rangeland management specialist will lead the sessions. The schedule of the pasture walk events is:

April 1-Pottawatomie County with Dennis Schwant as host, located from Blaine, Ks. 2.8 miles east on Hwy 16 and 1.8 miles south on Clear Creek Road with Tim Miller as session leader.

April 2-Reno County with Norman and Cindy Roth as hosts at intersection of Hwy 50 and Avery Road one mile north of Plevna with Dusty Tacha as session leader.

April 3-McPherson County with Roger Koehn as host at 22nd Ave and Smokey Valley Road (4.5 miles east of I-135 on SMV Rd) with Doug Spencer as session leader.

April 4-Coffey County with David and Jan Kraft as hosts at their ranch 2 miles west of Gridley with David as the session leader.

Evaluation of plant composition and vigor will be a focus of each session along with soil moisture conditions as a basis for planning grazing strategies through the 2013 growing season. Alternate forages and condition of livestock water supplies will also be discussed.

As NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist, David Kraft emphasizes to producers that "the beginning of the growing season in early April is one of the critical dates to make stocking adjustments that will maintain or improve your native pastures during the ongoing stress of drought conditions." He advises that participants should be prepared to be in the field for hands-on exercises.

For additional information contact Dale Kirkham at 620/344-0202 (email dalekirkham@msn.com) or Mary Howell at 785-562-8726, the KRC website (kansasruralcenter.org), or the KRC office at 785-873-3431.