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Grazing Livestock Systems | PGA Golf Management | Integrated Beef Systems |
Grassland Ecology and Management

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Nebraska Grazing Conference Follow-Up

by Daren Redfearn, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Agronomy and Horticulture

Another Nebraska Grazing Conference is in the books. There are two of many highlights worth emphasizing. The first is, that for the first time, a tour was added to the conference agenda on Monday prior to the long-established Tuesday and Wednesday presentations. This year we toured the Choquette Ranch and the Rowe Sanctuary. The tour was very well received by those who attended. The following comment from one of the tour participants accurately summarized the conference goal for including a tour this year.



Ron Hanson addresses conference participants at the Nebraska Grazing Conference.

"The ability to view and hear in field practices significantly improved my understanding of transitional practices for effective grazing."

The second highlight is the number of first-time attendees. This year, there were 14 first-time attendees to the conference. It is important to engage these newcomers, so if you know of an innovative or young rancher who would benefit from attending the Nebraska Conference for the first time, please contact Margo McKendree (mmckendree14@unl.edu) to nominate them for a conference scholarship.

The Nebraska Grazing Conference's strong producer focus makes it unique from other grazing conferences. The registration fees for the Nebraska Grazing Conference are well below the costs for attending other conferences; participants receive two days of research-based

information serving as a timely review for many previous attendees, but that may be new information for many first-time attendees; much of the information is on the front-edge of grazing lands and forage management for the transition area between the Northern Great Plains and Southern Great Plains. (Continued on Page 3)

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Director's Comments

by Dr. Steven S. Waller, Interim Director, Center for Grassland Studies

The Nebraska Difference

Nebraska's native prairies served as the genesis for the field of grassland science and prairie ecology. The beginning of the study of the natural vegetation, the first generation of ecologists, dates back to 1884 when the

botanist Charles E. Bessey was recruited to come to the University of Nebraska.

More grassland scientists, and their students, followed. These pioneers in rangeland ecology, such as **Charles Bessey**, **Fredric Clements**, and **John E.**

Weaver, taught and conducted research at the University of Nebraska. Weaver went on to be recognized as the "Father of Grassland Science". These scholars and their students established the University's role as a leader in prairie ecology.

Today's generation of faculty honor their legacy as they explore the evolution of ecological theory to include ecosystem resilience.

Nebraska's rich grassland heritage is evident today. Rangeland ecosystems still occupy approximately 46 percent of Nebraska's 49.5 million acres. There are four main types of prairie communities found in Nebraska: tallgrass prairie in the east, loess mixed-grass prairie in the central and southern reaches of the state, Sandhills mixed-grass prairie in the north central, and shortgrass prairie in the west and Panhandle. Introduced pastures increase Nebraska's grassland resource to over 60 percent of the state's landmass. These grasslands serve as the basis for a strong cattle industry, vital wildlife habitat, a natural resource for maintaining surface and ground water quality, a source for sports and leisure recreation, and an influence on urban quality of life.

Ultimately, it is the people of the state — the ranchers, land managers, state and federal agencies, organizations, and educational institutions — that steward this remarkable state treasure, ensuring Nebraska's lasting heritage. There is no place like Nebraska to study grasslands. We are the caretakers of the next generation's future.

"Nature is an open book for those who care to read. Each grass covered hillside is a page on which is written the history of the past, condition of the present, and predictions of the future. Some see without understanding, but let us look closely and understandingly, and act wisely, and in time bring our methods of land use and conservation activities into close harmony with the dictates of nature." — John E. Weaver

Nebraska Grazing Conference Follow-up

(Continued from Page 1) It is worth repeating that one of the conference goals is to provide information of interest to those groups interested and invested in grazing lands management. However, it is also important to remember that not all of those groups have similar goals. The following comments outline those differences:

"(It was) very good to learn about managing for birds and other wildlife."

"(This conference) would be great to invite non-ag people to improve public perception."

We are in the very early planning stages for the 2019 conference. The dates for the 2019 Nebraska Grazing Conference are August 12-14 in Kearney. Mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Steffen Siblings Pursue GLS Degrees by Sam and Katie Steffen, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Katie and Sam Steffen

Sam and Katie Steffen grew up in Beatrice, Nebraska. Sam is a freshman and Katie is a sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL); both are pursuing degrees in Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS). While they didn't grow up on a farm, they frequently visited their uncle's dairy farm in Humboldt, Nebraska to help with harvest, chopping silage, and other projects. Because of the experiences they have had on the farm, they both decided to pursue degrees in agriculture.

Sam decided to major in Grazing Livestock Systems with minors in Animal Science and Agricultural Economics. Sam originally heard about the GLS program at an Experience the Power of Red Visit Day where the representatives explained that this degree incorporates animal science, agronomy, and agricultural business classes. He committed to this degree program after viewing the four-year plan because he wanted a

degree that had diverse agricultural classes to allow him to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become a valuable employee. Sam feels this degree will allow him to pursue opportunities in multiple sectors of the agriculture industry, but he would prefer to manage a farm.

Katie came to UNL pursuing a degree in Horticulture because she loves working with plants. When she realized there would be limited opportunities for managing a greenhouse in rural areas of Nebraska, she decided to switch her major to Agronomy. This summer, she had the opportunity to work full-time at her uncle's dairy farm to explore a few career possibilities. Katie really enjoyed working with crops, but also discovered how much she loved working with cattle. This is where a degree in Grazing Livestock Systems came into the picture.

Katie first heard about the Grazing Livestock Systems degree through her younger brother, Sam. Since she still loved working with plants and wanted to learn more about managing cattle, the GLS degree seemed to be a great combination of what she wanted to learn. After meeting with an advisor for the GLS program this fall, doing a little research, and conferring with her family, Katie decided to double-major in Agronomy and Grazing Livestock Systems, tacking on minors in Animal Science, Agricultural Economics, and Horticulture. With these degrees, she hopes to be able to manage a farm someday, whether it is a dairy operation or not. While the process of making this decision was long and unexpected, Katie has relied on her faith through all of it, and is excited for the future.

If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter instead of a print copy, please let us know by emailing mmckendree14@unl.edu. Thank you.

2018 Nebraska Grazing Conference (NGC) Stats at a Glance

Gender:

- 62% ... male; and
- 38% ... female.

Age:

- 33% ... 21-30 years of age;
- 25% ... 31-40 years of age;
- 13% ... 51-60 years of age; and
- 10% ... either 41-50, 61-70, or 71 years of age or over.

Occupation:

- 59% ... farmers/ranchers;
- 17% ... government;
- 12% ... educators;
- 5% ... students and consultants; and
- 1% ... non-profits.

How many NGCs have people previously attended:

- 31% ... 1 time;
- 14% ... 3 times;
- 7% ... 2 and 4 times;
- 5% ... 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 17 times; and
- 1% ... 9, 12, and 14 times.

How people prefer to get information about the NGC:

- 78% ... email; and
- 22% ... mail.

How likely is it that people will make changes because of the program:

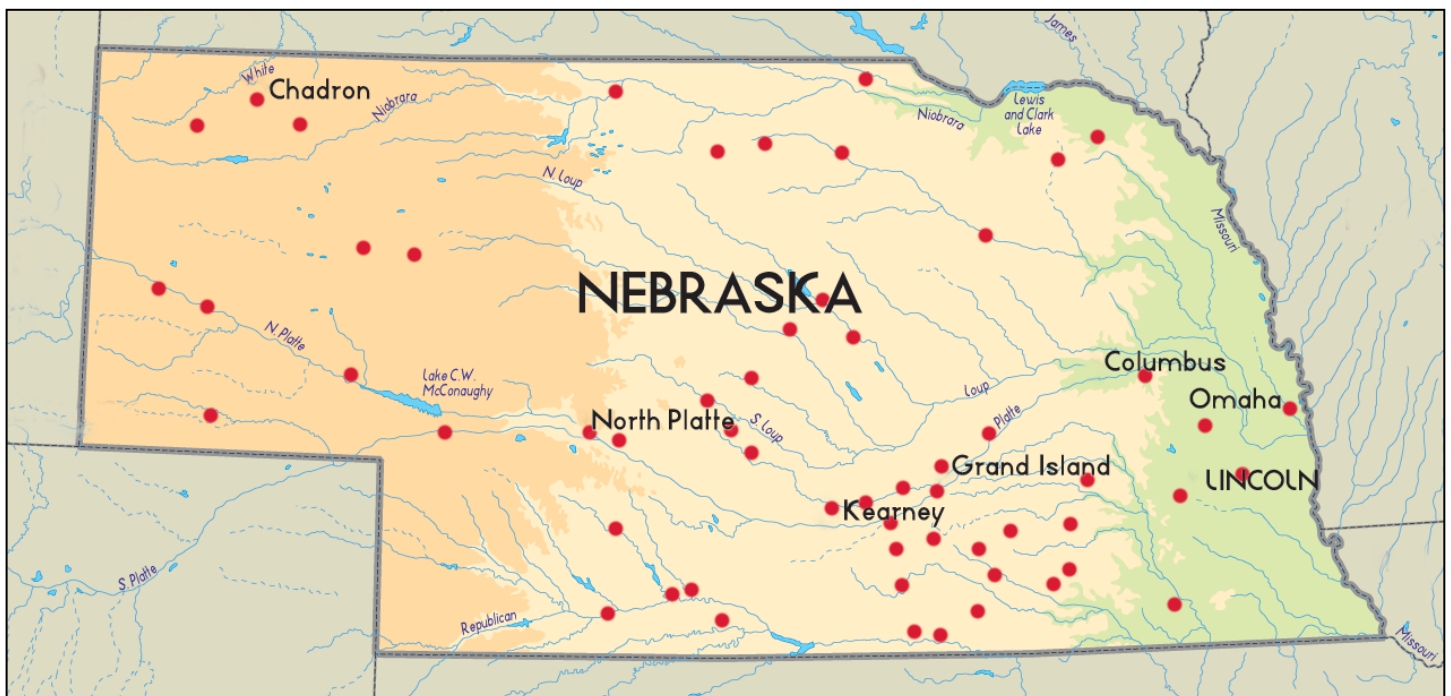
- 56% ... likely;
- 34% ... very likely; and
- 9% ... not likely.

States represented other than Nebraska:

- California;
- Colorado;
- Idaho;
- Iowa;
- Kansas;
- Michigan;
- Minnesota;
- Montana;
- Wisconsin; and
- Wyoming.

Top three topics of interest for future conferences:

- Strategies for Winter Grazing;
- Grazing Systems, Rangeland, and Pastureland Soil Health; and
- Plant Identification.



Participants of the 2018 NGC came from across Nebraska.

UNL PGA Golf Management: Faculty, Staff, and Students Leave Footprints Across the Globe in 2018

by Bradley Goetsch, Instruction Coordinator, PGA Golf Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Students visit with Steve North in St. Andrews, Scotland.

This has been a big year for the PGA Golf Management program in terms of having a global impact. Through internship visits, research conferences and education abroad experiences, people tied to the program have made (and will make) personal appearances in several US states, Canada, England, Scotland, Spain, France, and China. These personal interactions have proven to be vital in spreading awareness of the program across the planet and elevating the status of the program, the Center for Grassland Studies, CASNR, and UNL.

With students spread across the US as well as in the UK (London) on internships from January through December, a large focus has been placed on visiting those students to ensure that their experiences are as meaningful and beneficial as they can be. **Scott Holly**, PGA Golf Management Internship Coordinator, has traveled across Nebraska, the US and has a trip planned to

visit interns in London, England. The students interning in the UK have been afforded opportunities to travel to Spain as well as the Ryder Cup in Paris, France!

Brad Goetsch, PGA Golf Management Instruction Coordinator, was able to be part of the World Scientific Congress of Golf, held in Abbotsford, BC, Canada. The congress meets every two years, internationally to discuss the latest research that impacts the golf industry. Groundbreaking research was presented as well as ideas and opportunities seeded for future research projects within the program involving students through UCARE.

Education abroad has become a major part of the program in recent years. August of 2018 saw the second set of students travel to Scotland to study the golf industry in the "Home of Golf." Two nights were spent in Edinburgh where students had the opportunity to take in the Fringe Festival and then the focus moved to St. Andrews where it's all about golf and the golf industry. Steve North, Director of Instruction, St. Andrews Links Trust led a round-table type discussion about the industry and the operation at St. Andrews. All students were able to experience the Old Course as well, though it did take spending at least one night outside (three people spent two nights under the stars) to get a tee time, that is how difficult it is.

Upcoming on the education abroad front is a new possible opportunity in China. This will contrast nicely with Scotland as China is home to one of the youngest golf economies. PGA Golf Management will partner with HRTM on a joint venture focused on the exploding tourism industry in the ancient country.



Liz Husmann

The Center for Grassland Studies Welcomes Liz Husmann

The Center is excited to welcome its newest staff member, **Liz (Elizabeth) Husmann**. Born and (mostly) raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, Liz Husmann has called the University of Nebraska-Lincoln an academic and professional home for the last seven years. Most recently, Liz worked in the IANR Vice Chancellor's office where she provided administrative support. As the Administrative Office Associate within the Center, Liz is excited about finding ways to synthesize her background in English and art in the activities of the Center. Liz's main responsibilities will be maintaining the Center's website, branding and marketing, social media, and day-to-day operations of the Center.

Process of Land Stewardship: Producer Reflections on the 2018 Nebraska Grazing Conference

by Liz Husmann, Administrative Office Associate, Center for Grassland Studies



Homer Buell reviews key points from the 2018 Nebraska Grazing Conference.

Homer Buell, of Shovel Dot Ranch, opened his reflections on the three day Nebraska Grazing Conference by talking about the role of Nebraskan farmers and ranchers. “We’re land stewards. If we own land, if we manage land, that’s what we are. We care for the land,” explained Buell. “When I introduce myself, I should say that I’m a land steward, because that is the primary thing that I do.” Buell went on to break down the process of being a good land steward, summarizing the common themes of the conference into a series of steps:

- **Establish a baseline.** Take the time to assess and monitor the land. Buell said that he took up to three years establishing the baseline for his pastures, and encouraged the use of tools and software to help with the process.
- **Set goals and objectives.** Be they attracting butterflies or exploring alternative forages, establish goals and set objectives before moving forward with a plan.
- **Develop a (written) plan.** Buell used a metaphor of an airplane pilot who had no idea when to take off, what speed to fly, or where the plane was going to illustrate the importance of having a plan for managing farms and ranches. It seems like common sense, but Buell pointed out that many producers don’t plan things out as well as they could or should. One major aspect of planning that was brought up over and over again during the conference was the critical importance of creating a ranch succession plan. Buell shared his personal experience of when he and his brother created a succession plan, some 30 years ago. He counts it as the most important step they’ve taken and said that even during the course of this conference he was reminded of more things he needs to do to prepare the next generation.
- **Monitor.** “We’re all extremely busy,” Buell explained, “and I think a lot of monitoring doesn’t happen because we feel like we just don’t have the time.” Buell’s advice? Keep it simple. There are many different options, so he encouraged attendees to figure out what works best for them. Once a plan is in motion, it’s important to know what effects it’s having on the land.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Whether it’s sitting down and discussing the expectations of family members for a ranch succession plan, or hammering out goals and objectives with a team, communication is key throughout this entire process.
- **Think holistically and sustainably.** While managing for grasses and cattle, it’s important not to forget about the other wildlife and to find ways to be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. Buell emphasized a holistic approach to thinking about land management that is ultimately better for everyone and everything.

Buell concluded his reflections by contemplating the term “community,” and what that means as a land steward. He explained that he used to think of community primarily in terms of people, but has since expanded the definition to include the land as well. He read an excerpt from *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold where Leopold discusses his concept of “land ethics”:

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Buell encouraged the conference attendees to think about their farms and ranches that way.

“Our communities will be better for it,” he said, “and we will be better for it.”

Dr. Jason Rowntree Presentation by Ron Bolze, Coordinator, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition



Dr. Jason Rowntree

Jason Rowntree will present, "Grazing Research and Cattle Management through a Holistic Lens," on Thursday, November 15 in the Great Plains Room of the Nebraska East Union at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln East Campus. Doors open at 4:30 p.m., the presentation begins at 5:00 p.m., dinner is at 6:30 p.m., the talk continues at 7:30 p.m. before concluding at 9:00 p.m. This presentation marks one of the eight traveling road shows jointly hosted by Nebraska Extension and the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition.

Rowntree's presentation will address changes from a conventional cow-calf research facility to a lower input grazing and grass finishing operation; impacts of grazing management on the land; impacts of grass finishing strategies on cattle, forage, and carcass performance; changes in industry attitudes towards beef grass finishing; and future considerations and direction of grazing management and the market place.

Rowntree is an associate professor in Animal Science at Michigan State University. He is also faculty coordinator for Lake City and UPREC AgBioResearch and Extension Centers, where he addresses economic, environmental, and social complexity in agriculture. He is an affiliate of the Center for Regional Food Systems, past chair of the Grassfed Exchange, scientific advisor and an accredited Holistic Management Educator for the Savory Institute, and advisor for Standard Soil.

To make reservations to attend this presentation, call the Center for Grassland Studies at (402) 472-4101 by November 9. A \$15 fee, payable at the door, covers the cost of the dinner provided at the event. For more information about the event, contact **Ron Bolze**, Coordinator, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, 402 321 0067 (cell) or ron@nebraskagrazinglands.org.

Katie Cumming Receives NACTA Award

Katie Cumming, Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS) Graduate Student in the Center for Grassland Studies, received the North American College and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Graduate Student Teaching Award of Merit for 2018. Katie was among 22 individuals from across the country to receive the award.

NACTA is a professional society that focuses on the scholarship of teaching and learning agriculture and related disciplines at the postsecondary level. The purpose of the Graduate Student Teaching Award is to recognize and reward NACTA graduate student members who are involved in classroom instruction who excel as teachers in the agricultural disciplines.

Katie was recognized at the Distinguished Fellowship Luncheon on October 15, hosted by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the Agricultural Research Division.



Katie Cumming

2018-2019 GLS Officers Selected

The 2018-2019 Grazing Livestock Systems Club officers include: **Alexa Johnson**, President (Grazing Livestock Systems/Animal Science, Edgar, NE); **Emily Gill**, Vice President/Secretary (Animal Science/Grazing Livestock Systems, Gurley, NE); **Colten Bergt**, Treasurer (Grazing Livestock Systems, Amherst, NE); and **Jessilyn Sayers**, Senior Chair Event Planning and Recruitment (Animal Science, Clarkson, NE).

Alexa said, "We were excited to see over 19 people representing all class levels attend our first meeting. Speakers, producer seminars, social activities, t-shirt design and sales, and field trips are part of this year's club activities."

To learn more about the GLS Club, contact **Katie Cumming** at kcumming@huskers.unl.edu, or call (402) 472-4101.



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2018 Leu Lecturer: Chuck West, Texas Tech University



Dr. Chuck West

Chuck West, Program Director and Thornton Distinguished Chair of Plant and Soil Science at Texas Tech University, is this Center for Grassland Studies' 2018 Distinguished Leu Lecture speaker. Dr. West will deliver a presentation entitled "Role of Forage Crops and Grazing in the Water-Limited Texas High Plains" on November 12 between 3:00—4:00 p.m. in the Nebraska East Union at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's East Campus. The lecture is open to the public.

West will provide an overview of how the decline in groundwater output from the Ogallala Aquifer affects cropping systems in the Texas High Plains. In addition, he will review recent work on integrating grazing systems into a cotton system, and provide an analysis of the water footprint of beef stocker systems as affected by the inclusion of alfalfa in a predominant grass system. Dr. West offers his vision of the opportunities and risks of forages in the High Plains region.

Dr. West received his bachelor of science and master's degree in agronomy from the University of Minnesota–St. Paul, and his doctorate in crop production/physiology from Iowa State University. West also directs and coordinates the Texas Coalition for Sustainable Integrated Systems Research and the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation. West served as faculty for the University of Arkansas, was a Fulbright Research Fellow conducting research on tall fescue drought tolerance at INRA in Montpellier, France, and is a current fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society of America.