



"SOMETIMES I LIKE THE GENTLY FALLIN' SNOW. IT COVERS SOME OF OUR HUMAN MISTAKES AND SOFTENS UP THE LOOKS OF EVERYTHING... EXCEPT FOR YOUR MOTION ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE outhouse."
Big Dry Syndicate

SD Corn Yield Winners Announced

Ideal growing conditions were widespread in 2015 and that is reflected in the results of an annual corn yield contest sponsored by the South Dakota Corn Growers Association. The highest yields topped 288 bushels per acre in the South Dakota competition that was held in conjunction with the National Corn Yield Contest. Winning entries came from a wide geographic area, stretching from Elk Point to Chamberlain to Groton. Nationally, the winning yield was a record 532 bushels per acre on a farm near Charles City, Va. Here's a list of South Dakota winners, including seed brand, hybrid and yield.

NON-IRRIGATED

1. Scott McKee, Hawarden, Iowa (farm in SD) — Pioneer, P1197AMXT, 288.31
2. Dean Bosse, Elk Point — Pioneer, P1197AM, 276.99
3. Ronald Johnson, Alcester — Pioneer, P1197AM, 269.21

NO-TILL/STRIP-TILL NON-IRRIGATED

1. Scott Biskeborn, Chamberlain — Dekalb, DKC51-20RIB, 276.29
2. Scott Biskeborn, Chamberlain — Dekalb, DKC46-20RIB, 270.71
3. Travis Swisher Groton — Dekalb, DKC46-36RIB, 242.39

IRRIGATED

1. Kory Standy, Platte — Dekalb, DKC62-97RIB, 281.50
2. Steve Breeding, Chamberlain — Dekalb, DKC62-97RIB, 280.34
3. Bob Creasey, Geddes — Pioneer, P1197AMXT, 266.59

NO-TILL/STRIP TILL IRRIGATED

1. Joey Waldner, Huron — Pioneer, P0533AM1, 288.62
2. Bennett Waldner, Huron — Pioneer, P1197AMXT, 284.96
3. Randy Svendsen Yankton — Dekalb, DKC62-98RIB, 280.06

S.D. 4-H Adds Miniature Heifer Division

BROOKINGS — The State 4-H Beef Committee added a Miniature Heifer division to the 4-H breeding beef show for the 2016 State Fair.

"In recent years, interest in miniature cattle has been gaining across the nation and in South Dakota. With the increasing popularity, South Dakota youth are looking for opportunities to exhibit their miniature cattle, however there are not many show options available," explained John Madison, SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor and a member of the State 4-H Beef Committee.

To qualify for this division, heifers must meet the standard requirements for all 4-H breeding heifers and be registered in accordance to the rules and regulations of a national miniature cattle breed association.

All breeds of miniature heifers will be shown together in 2016. If there are five or more heifers of a certain breed, the committee will separate them into their own division for future shows.

If you have any questions, contact the State 4-H Office at State 4-H Office at 605-688-4167 or the 4-H Beef Committee chairs; John Madison, john.madison@sdstate.edu 605-353-8436 or Audra Scheel audra.scheel@sdstate.edu or 605-796-4380.

Advantages, Opportunities Found In Targeted Grazing

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Goats are not known for picky eating. They love to munch on plants typically thought of as downright unpalatable, from cedar trees to brush to thistles.

This is why — more so than cattle or horses, or even sheep — grazing goats has the potential for a unique side venture, beyond simply a summertime forage option. Goat producers across the country now offer targeted grazing services.

"It is the application of a specific kind of livestock at a determined season, duration and intensity to accomplish defined vegetation or landscape goals," said Elizabeth Reynolds, who previously owned and operated Green Goats, a targeted grazing business, before taking her current position as the sheep and goat herd manager and animal science lecturer at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

She recently led an online training on targeted grazing, hosted by the Littleton, Colo.-based Society for Range Management's Targeted Grazing Committee.

What distinguishes targeted grazing from a general grazing service is the very specific objectives detailed in the contracts between landowners and the livestock manager, Reynolds said.

"Depending on for who you're working for or where you're doing these projects, they can be very specific," she added.

The most common reasons landowners or agencies seek out targeted grazing is to reduce wildfire risk, manage invasive plant species, improve wildlife habitat and maintain riparian areas.

While gigs involving wildland management are more common, increasingly clients seek out targeted grazing services to improve appearances of grounds or to create access into areas with overgrown vegetation, Reynolds said.

A few examples of these jobs by Green Goats included using goat grazing to mow grass surrounding a golf course so golfers can find their balls easier, clearing brush on college campuses so police officers have a clearer line of sight, and cutting down vegetation around a dam to better monitor for rodent activity.

Unlike wildland manage-



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Sheep can be used for target grazing weeds in order to improve a pasture for cattle.

ment, clients with these miscellaneous-type jobs are less likely to already by knowledgeable about land management and livestock managers need to be able to both identify risks and communicate to clients when their expectations need to be adjusted, Reynolds said.

"They just want the plants to go away," she added. "You need to balance the project objective with the site terrain and ecosystem sensitivity. So if someone tells you they want the plants gone to the dirt, you'll have to let them know that's something that's not very desirable."

No matter the type of job, livestock managers involved in targeted grazing must possess a great deal of expertise in reaching precise project objectives, not simply general grazing knowledge.

For example, in a targeted grazing gig with the goal of wildfire management, the project objective could range anywhere from creating 100 feet of defensible space from all dwellings to reducing grass biomass to less than 500 pounds per acre to removing ladder fuels to creating canopy gaps of more than 18 inches between shrubs to trampling brush to less than 60 inches to removing tree leaves from limbs up to 60 inches.

"These objectives are usually based on very specific state or local fire regulations," Reynolds said, and the fire department plays a critical role in the targeted grazing plan.

Therefore, as part of the planning, the livestock manager must be able to identify the targeted plant species, she said, including their role as a wildfire fuel but also if there is a toxicity risk to his livestock, if there

are any palatability issues and if supplementation might be needed as some targeted plants don't offer much nutrition. In addition, the livestock manager should have a good working knowledge for wildfire behavior and seasonality in the region. He should be able to identify potential risks of the grazing pressure to soil surfaces, water quality, wildlife habitats, and sensitive animal and plant species, as well as how to communicate this to his clients and how to adjust the targeted grazing plans accordingly.

Lastly, the livestock manager needs to be an expert in calculating an appropriate stock density to attain the targeted grazing goals with his herd customized for the gig according to species, age, production stage, weight, horns or polled, and — importantly — previous exposure to the targeted plant species in that the animals will actually graze the targeted plants, Reynolds said.

In regards to species, goats are most often used in targeted grazing, but so can sheep, cattle and even pigs. However, each species has its own grazing patterns, which need to be taken into consideration.

Additionally, the knowledge base of the livestock manager changes according to the specific project objectives, Reynolds said.

Controlling invasive plant species is very different from lowering wildfire risk. Possible objectives may include reducing seeding potential by 50 percent, defoliating more than 70 percent of the targeted plant species, or grazing when 25 percent of the targeted plants are at the bolting stage.

Possible objectives of improving wildlife habitat may include reducing non-native plant biomass relative to native plant species, using mob grazing to create access to a heavily overgrown area, or stimulate regrowth of plant species with high nutritional values for certain wildlife species.

Possible objectives of maintaining riparian areas — referring to creeks, rivers, lakes or any other natural or man-made waterway — may include clearing vegetation encroaching into a dry water channel, reducing biomass in a dry flood plain, or increasing access for tree crews to remove downed trees.

As with targeted grazing for wildfire prevention, the livestock manager would need to be able to accurately intersect his knowledge about general grazing and the targeted plant species with a solid research-backed understanding of managing invasive plant species, wildlife habitat or riparian areas, as necessary, Reynolds said.

Some livestock producers may feel that it may be easier to specialize in one type of targeted grazing category, but she explained that many jobs are blend of the wider goals. For example, invasive plant species management is often a secondary goal within wildlife habitat or riparian management, and wildlife habitat and riparian management often go hand-in-hand.

The best strategy is for the livestock manager to work closely as a team with the client, and to be willing to broaden his knowledge base of a particular situation as needed.

Commentary

Attacking Farm Chores With A Song In Your Heart

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondents

I strive to be an eternal optimist. I believe that anything goes better when I think confidently. I like to try to reframe seemingly poor outcomes into a silver lining.

This can be hard to do, though, on a farm. It's difficult to think positively about calves with scours or dismal crop prices, particularly when paired with equally dismal yields. Even in these situations, the circumstances can get the best of me.

Justin Isherwood, a fifth-generation farmer in Central Wisconsin and author of five books, recently wrote a post for *Wisconsin Life* about a skill passed down by his grandfather in how to at least cope with the less romantic parts of farm life, which — for him — constituted the vast majority of farm chores:

"It is amazing the number of farm chores that are either gross, creepy, lonely or really boring. Ninety-nine percent



Rita BRHEL

of farm chores qualify under one of these general categories with even odds of all four at once," he wrote at <http://www.wisconsinlife.org/story/>

farmer-explains-why-you-should-sing-cows.

I can think of some really lowly farm chores that, as a kid, seemed to fit into many of these categories:

- Cleaning out the chicken coops — This two-times-a-year chore was perhaps the most dreaded for me. Turns out, it was also unpleasant for my sisters, to a point where my youngest sister nicknamed the resulting cough from breathing in the dust as Chicken Poop Lung (CPL) after the similarly named Coal Mine

Dust Lung, which of course is much worse and a real medical condition. This, however, did not excuse us from the chore. Whether poultry dusty does actually affect the lungs or not, the solution is simple: wear a face mask or bandanna over the nose and mouth.

- Refilling pigeon loft waterers — The actual chore, which consists of retrieving pigeon waterers and refilling them with a garden hose, is not that big of a deal. But as a kid, the funnel spider that made its home at the corner of the door frame leading into the loft was a big deal. I got into the habit of blowing into the web's funnel to make the spider retreat, hopefully long enough for me to get the waterer out of the loft, refilled and back into the loft before the spider made its appearance again. Usually this plan worked, but forever scarred into my memory is the time when it backfired: Instead of

retreating when I blew into the funnel, the spider leaped forward onto my shirt. I ran screaming out of the loft and rotated like a top, dancing around and swatting my shirt. I don't know how long the spider was actually able to cling to me, but it was long gone after my several-minute fit. Interestingly, my mom — who was washing dishes behind the window directly in front of the pigeon loft — never mentioned the incident to me. Maybe she thought it was normal...

- Waiting for the livestock water tanks to fill — The family farm now sports automatic water tanks, but back when I was a kid, one of my chores was filling the water tanks for the sheep and cattle. There was nothing automatic about it. They were filled by a hose, while I went around checking salt and mineral feeders, feeding the ewes and checking for lambs. It was important to

my dad that we did not let the waterers overflow, particularly in the winter when the waterfall had a risk of freezing into a sheet of ice. But it could take what seemed like eons to fill each tank. Once the other chores were done, all that could while away the time was imagination. It was definitely a lesson in boredom management, which has become very useful as an adult.

- Anything to do with crossing an electric fence — Only my oldest child has had the distinct displeasure of finding out what happens when you touch a live wire on an electric livestock fence. But, as I like to joke with my husband, I touched the electric fence while growing up on the farm enough times to count as electroshock therapy! It seemed that nearly every day, I inadvertently touched the fence. I had a knack for spacing out that detail, I guess, although in time,

I became hyperfocused on it at times. My husband just commented a few weeks ago about how I raise my knees much higher than I actually need to, to step over a three-strand fence. I guess I never outgrew that healthy respect, or obvious anxiety, for getting shocked.

That's just a few of my less-desirable chores, and how I tried to cope with them. What Justin suggested in his post was to sing. His grandfather taught him that dairy cows actually stand longer for milkers who sing to them. And, as Justin attested, it seems that feed grinders, silo fillers, hay balers and other farm equipment works better when sung to, too — or more likely, singing just helps put us in a better mood to better cope with the gross, the creepy, the lonely or the really boring parts of farm life.

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