

Opinion

What Use
Are Those
Old Barns
Anyway?BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

My parents' ranch is big enough to include three original homesteads, upon which there are still two old barns standing. One is still used well and often.



Its large sliding doors open into various rooms, one used as my dad's shop, one as a tack and feed room, one where the sheep are shorn and wool stored, and another for the replacement

heifers. There is a set of stairs leading up to a huge hay mow where a pair of barn owls calls home but I can easily imagine as a favorite locale for country dances back in the day. My parents have recently re-roofed it with tin and touched up the red paint with white trim.

The other one is, well, standing. It's been hit by a couple tornadoes through the years, and while repairs were made to the also red exterior, the structure has been twisted on its foundation. In time, it'll render itself unusable and will have to be razed for safety reasons. Until then, it makes a nice home for a couple cats and miscellaneous farm equipment, and a place to get out of the rain.

On the smaller farm where my husband and I live, we don't have any original barns. Even our house, originally built as homesteader's house, has been renovated so many times that it no longer resembles any style older than the '90s — that's 1990s — from the inside; on the outside, you might guess it to be from the 1960s. But if you sit on the couch and look up at the ceiling in the family room, you can see in the ceiling where the house was expanded. And some of the original woodwork is included in the windows and door frame. And while our barns aren't original, they look the part. They're styled as an old barn, and colored the traditional red with white trim, and even are adorned with antique weather vanes. But their tin siding and cement floors give them away.

Old, iconic barns with the cupolas and peaked roofs are disappearing rapidly from the country landscape. Sometimes, it's to make way for more corn in a field, but often, it's because they're such a headache to try to keep maintained. Like an old house, there are just too many holes to patch to keep it efficient and safe.

But the new, steel Quonsets just seem so sterile. There is something to be said about our heritage and nostalgia and genealogy and knowing our roots. Farming is a business, of course, but it's also a lifestyle. And when we keep a link to our pioneer past, it gives our choice to continue in this business more meaning, more muscle. It's not just about money, about making a living, but about continuing a legacy of hard work and faith and all those parts of character development we hear about so often: honesty, patience, perseverance, dedication, and so on. Imagining what life was like back then helps us to be appreciative of what our ancestors did for us, as well as what conveniences we have now, and the memory — whether real or conjured — helps link us to the sweat and tears that have always come with this profession.

Remember that the next time you see an old barn still standing, whether being used or left to wear.



After a warm winter that fostered early pasture growth, the recent lack of rain is hindering those same pastures. This could lead to other problems and forage issues.

PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

With Lack Of Rain, Early Pastures Are Drying Up

Specialist: Start Looking For Forage Reserves

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

During one of the mildest winters on record, the Yankton area started seeing spring temperatures in January. Pastures greened up months ahead of schedule, and by the end of March, some producers likened their pasture growth to that of early June.

While there was some concern early on about opening the gate too early to grazing livestock, for the most part, producers had high hopes for this year's grazing season. But because the growing season began so early, plants have been pulling moisture out of the soil at a faster rate than is typical for the first half of the growing season.

"As grass grows, it's using moisture," said Bruce Anderson, Extension forage specialist with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "And the grass will continue to tap that moisture."

While the Yankton area's soil moisture profile continues to hold up well, according to the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center, much of the surrounding area, especially down into Nebraska, is abnormally dry.

Even though this spring has brought some rain, its coverage has been spotty and often accompanied by damaging hail and wind. What precipitation has fallen has not been enough to counter the lack of moisture this past winter.

The result: Today's pastures cannot stretch to next fall.

"Sometimes, it's hard to face reality. Let's be honest, it's dry and pastures are short," Anderson said. "Even if it rains, will your pastures grow enough to meet your needs?"

Cool-season grasses, such as brome and bluegrass, have already been growing for more than three months, so even though it's June, these grasses are reacting as if it's the end of July, Anderson said. These grasses will soon be entering dormancy, due to the summer heat, and will stay that way through to the fall, no matter how much rain or fertilizer they receive.

"What you have standing in the pasture right now needs to support your cattle at least until September," Anderson said. "If it can't, you need to obtain more feed or remove some animals. That's reality."

For pastures that have warm-season grasses, the only real hope is in the weather forecast, he said. These grasses do most of their growing in late June and July, but that means that rain needs to come in the next few weeks. But, because the soil moisture profile is already dry, any rain would improve total pasture production to an average year's expectations.

Some producers, out of desperation, may try to

plant additional pasture. But Anderson warns producers not kid themselves: "Don't expect that planting something into dry soil will help. Nothing grows without water. Accept reality and act accordingly."

What will help producers is reducing stocking rate — lowering the number of animals in an area of pasture — or supplementing with hay, Anderson said.

There is another challenge coming, however, that many producers will have to deal with: early maturation of plants. Because grasses are so much ahead of their usual growth calendar, Anderson said they will be seeding out sooner also. He expects grasses to start seeding out — therefore, indicating the end to the grazing season — a month ahead of schedule. Not grazing a pasture isn't a way of holding back forage; in actuality, this will lead to grasses seeding out sooner.

BRUCE ANDERSON

Anderson recommends rotational grazing over continuous grazing to prevent overgrazing, which is echoed by Ron Lemenager, Extension beef specialist with Purdue University: "If cows are continuous-grazing, they are going to always go for the lush, young plant. Continuous-grazing will reduce root growth and root reserves of that plant, and the regrowth is going to be significantly retarded. Rotational grazing gives these plants an opportunity to rest and grow again. But obviously, rain is going to play a big role in that," Lemenager said.

He advises that producers should start now looking for forage reserves. And producers can start supplementing pastures now with hay. It's important to continue to provide high-quality forages and all the dry matter that cows can consume in a 24-hour period to not affect calf growth and to allow cows to breed back.

"When the nutrient supply becomes limiting for these cows, not only will milk production go down but reproductive performance will also go down," Lemenager said. "These are things we have to be most concerned about in our management strategies, and how we think through this challenge is going to be important."

To reduce pressure on the cows, producers might want to consider creep-feeding — offering grain to still-nursing calves — or even early weaning, Lemenager said. If pastures continue drying up, and these other strategies do not seem to work, and especially if reserves are getting low or are expensive to find, he said the next option is to cull part of the herd.

Lemenager said it's a good time of the year to sell cattle, because seasonally, fewer cattle are going to market.

"Cattle prices are strong right now," he said. "Producers can either wean calves early or they can try selling cow-calf pairs."

"Sometimes, it's hard to face reality. Let's be honest, it's dry and pastures are short. Even if it rains, will your pastures grow enough to meet your needs?"

Training Video Helps Producers Sample Hay

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension recently releases a new training video to help producers correctly sample hay to get a clear picture of its nutritional value.

The video, "Forage Sampling Method," is useful for livestock producers who feed hay for those who market the forage.

"Many producers would say quality hay is green in color, free of mold and weeds, has a high portion of leaves and it was put up without rain on it. Although these are all good indicators of high quality hay, they don't tell producers anything about the nutritional content of the forage," said Julie Walker, SDSU Extension Beef Specialist. "Sampling hay is essential to understanding its true quality."

The video is available on iGrow's YouTube Channel <http://www.youtube.com/sdsuigrow>. It is hosted by Warren Rausche, SDSU Extension Cow/Calif Field Specialist and Tracey Renelt, SDSU Extension Dairy Field Specialist.

S.D. Ag Xchange 'In The Field' Conference Set

BROOKINGS — While planning for most educational conferences involves power point slides and sound checks; preparation for the In The Field Conference began early this spring with field prep, planting and fertility treatments.

Held in Pierre June 28-29 during South Dakota's newest farm show, South Dakota Ag Xchange, the In The Field Conference is one-of-a-kind. It connects growers with state and national experts, in test plots designed to show the most pressing issues concerning South Dakota's farmers and ranchers.

"A big part of crop yield is how the plant gets started. AgXchange will take producers to the field and show them the management issues that involve planting and emergence that lead to stand establishment," said Greg Geisler, CEO of VerticalXchange. "One of the critical differences between AgXchange and other farm shows is that we are specifically focusing on management opportunities early in the growing year. Other shows focus on harvest when, frankly, it's too late for management practices to make a difference. Producers will be able to see crops in earlier stages of development at this show."

In The Field Conference is co-sponsored by SDSU Extension. "We surveyed more than 500 South Dakota agriculture producers to discover what information they felt would benefit their operations and strengthen their bottom line. We then worked closely with SDSU to discover the best SDSU Extension staff and national industry experts," Geisler said.

As part of its new cost recovery model, SDSU Extension will provide many speakers at the event, and will receive a portion of the conference pass revenue to offset speaker costs.

For information on exhibiting or attending the In The Field Conference registration, visit www.sdagxchange.com, or call 952-736-9360.

This event is co-sponsored by The South Dakota Department of Tourism the Matching Dollar Challenge, The Farm Forum, WNAX Radio and KELOLAND TV.

Website Helps Avoid Pesticide Drift Problems

PIERRE — A new online mapping tool is available for agricultural producers in South Dakota who grow crops and livestock that are particularly sensitive to pesticide drift, such as organic production areas and vineyards.

The tool is intended for commercial producers of those crops and to inform pesticide applicators of sensitive areas. The website is not intended for homeowners.

Apiary sites are included on the site through the Apiary Program. Apiary owners do not need to register on the website.

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) has developed the South Dakota Sensitive Site Registry, which can be used to help prevent adverse drift effects during pesticide or fertilizer operations.

The South Dakota Sensitive Site Registry allows producers of crops that are sensitive to pesticides to register and enter their contact information, include their field data, and identify the crop on an online map. The site can be accessed through SDDA Office of Agricultural Services webpage, sdda.sd.gov/Ag_Services/.

Licensed commercial pesticide applicators are encouraged to register their service areas. Certified private pesticide applicators are encouraged to register their production areas if, after looking at the map, they discover a sensitive site close enough to their production areas that drift may be a concern.

KYNT
AM 1450
MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY
Monday, June 25
7:40 am - Yankton City Manager (Al Viereck)
8:15 am - Yankton Baseball Assn. (James Grotenhuis)
Tuesday, June 26
7:40 am - The Center (Tammy Matuska, Christy Hauer)
8:15 am - Hy-Vee Dietician (Rachel Pinos)
8:45 am - Dakota Territorial Museum (Crystal Nelson)

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