

Resourcefulness



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Cattlemen's Association Banquet Set For Tabor

TABOR — Gordy Pratt — the original fabulous ONE GUY — will be the guest entertainment for the Dakota Southern Cattlemen's Association Annual Banquet to be held on Saturday, March 28, at the Beseda Hall, Tabor. Pratt, called the "Victor Borge of the guitar," has been writing and performing his brand of stand-up musical comedy since 1990. Pratt appeared on ABC's "Good Morning America" and shared the stage with Kenny Chesney, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, The Beach Boys, and many more. He brings laughter to music and music to laughter.

The social begins at 6:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., a prime rib meal catered by Jack Sieben will be served.

Scholarship, cattle feeder of the year, and business of the year recipients will be recognized.

Tickets are available from any of the following directors: Keith Dvoracek, Chad Cooper, Bryan Nagel, Todd Bietz, Steve Sutura or Daryl Thomas. Tickets must be purchased by March 23. No ticket sales at the door.

Anyone interested may attend.

Conservation Stewardship Program Seeks Applications From Agricultural Landowners

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Natural resources don't have to take a back seat to agricultural profitability, and an increasing number of farmers and ranchers are developing an interest in balancing business with environmental conservation.

One incentive program of interest to these agricultural landowners is the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS has recently announced the deadline extension for new CSP sign-ups through March 13, providing an additional two weeks to apply for the next round of funding of approximately \$100 million. The deadline for CSP contract renewals is March 31.

"This will provide greater opportunities for conservation stewards to voluntarily do even more to improve water, air and soil quality and enhance wildlife habitat on their operations," said Jason Weller, NRCS Chief at the USDA in Washington, D.C.

Funding should allow for an additional 7.7 million U.S. acres to be enrolled this year, which does not include the 12.2 million acres covered by 9,300 contracts set to expire at the end of March if not renewed. The renewal process is option but is non-competitive, so the funding is guaranteed for renewing contracts that meet program requirements.

CSP helps participating producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and to adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. In return, participants earn payments through the program for conservation performance. The payment amounts vary accordingly: The higher the performance, the higher the payment.

Each CSP contract lasts for five years,

during which time there are two types of CSP payments. Participants receive both an annual fall payment for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices, as well as supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation.

The goal of CSP is to improve the condition of natural resources on the farm, particularly soil quality, water quality and quantity, air quality, habitat quality and energy conservation. Qualifying conservation activities include a wide range of practices, such as cover crops, intensive rotational grazing, wildlife-friendly fencing and others.

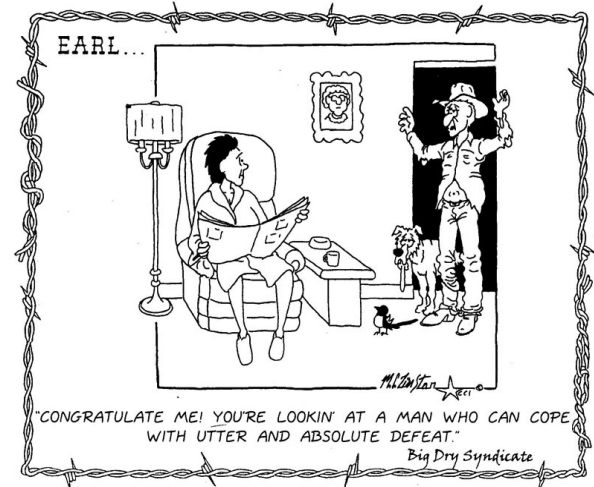
CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size or types of enterprises, who own or control land. Eligible acreage includes private and Tribal agricultural land, including cropland, grassland, pastureland and rangeland. Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations or tribes that the stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns. As part of the application process, the applicants must agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the five-year contract.

CSP applicants are able to renew their contract if their initial contract was fulfilled and if they agree to achieve additional conservation objectives.

"CSP producers are established conservation leaders who work hard at enhancing natural resources on private lands," Weller said.

CSP is the USDA's largest conservation program by acreage. Nearly 70 million acres have been enrolled in the program since its launch in 2009. In Nebraska, since the program's inception, there have been 2,300 contracts covering 5.1 million acres. In South Dakota, during this same time frame, there have been 2,100 contracts covering 5.2 million acres.

Visit your local NRCS office for more information.



March Is A Telling Month For Cattle Ranchers

BROOKINGS — The month of March signals two seemingly very different events, basketball playoffs and for many South Dakota ranchers, the peak of calving season.

"On the surface they may not have much in common, but they both represent the end point of a lot of time, energy and resources," said Warren Rusche, SDSU Extension Cow/Calf Field Specialist.

Rusche takes this analogy one step further. "The goal of a basketball team is to make a deep run in the playoffs and the goal of a rancher is to save as many calves as possible," he said.

Preparation, Rusche said is the key component for success in both fields. "For a rancher, success during calving is critical. More than 60 percent of calves that are born and die before weaning are either born dead or are lost within the first 24 hours of birth," said Rusche quoting data from the USDA National Animal Health Monitoring System. "Calving difficulty is the most significant cause of death."

PREPARATION = SUCCESS

"Being well prepared for the start of calving season can make a tremendous difference in successfully getting live calves on the ground," Rusche said.

He explained that it is a lot easier to get all the necessary supplies on hand and in place ahead of time, rather than scrambling in the dark when the first heifer needs some help.

To ensure timeliness of preparation, he suggested cattle producers review gestation tables as well as breeding and turn-out dates to predict when the first calves will be expected.

"However, some cows don't read the book," Rusche said. "It's not at all uncommon for genetic lines that have been selected for easier calving and lower birth weights to show a tendency for shorter gestation as well." In those cases, he said it would be prudent to be ready a week to 10 days earlier than what the gestation table suggests.

Ensuring that everyone on the team understands the game plan and their role is also important. "Going over the plan for calving season with the en-

tire team is a good idea to make sure that everyone is on the same page, even if the plan hasn't changed and even if the team is only one person," Rusche said.

He added that factors such as when to provide assistance and knowing when to call your veterinarian can impact not only this year's production, but future calf crops as well. Rusche referenced research from the Ft. Keogh Research Station in Miles City, Mont., which showed that heifers which were assisted later during labor had a 19 percent reduced pregnancy rate compared to heifers that were helped within a half hour.

Even in cows, the research demonstrated a 9 percent improvement in pregnancy rates by assisting earlier.

"Given the value of bred females this year, being prepared to assist early will help increase the odds of getting cattle bred back in a timely manner and lower the losses from premature culling," Rusche said.

Reviewing the actual procedures of delivering calves can also be useful, even if a producer has years of experience.

Below are some general recommendations from Dr. Russ Daly, SDSU Extension Veterinarian and Associate Professor, and State Public Health Veterinarian:

Take a short pause after the chest of the calf is delivered before pulling again. This mimics what happens in a normal delivery. When the calf takes its first breath it begins to transition away from oxygen from the umbilical cord to oxygen from the air.

A slight rotation (45 degrees) often allows the hips to pass more easily.

Use a piece of straw or vigorous rubbing to encourage the calf to breathe. One might think that picking up the calf with his head down would help get fluid out of his breathing passages, but actually that creates increased pressure on the lungs making it more difficult to breathe.

Call for assistance if one can't determine how to correct the problem or if 30 minutes of assistance have gone by without significant progress.

For more calving tips and insight, visit iGrow.org.

Commentary

Stewardship And Farm Profitability

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Conservation stewardship — it's something I think the vast majority of farmers and ranchers already do. I think most of us know that the healthier we keep our natural resources, the more sustainable and the more profitability in the long-term our agricultural activities will be.

But I also think that when it comes to making more money, especially in the short-term, the temptation is to curtail the conservation stewardship a bit. We think, well, we can always make it up later.

The problem is, once we give into the temptation of valuing short-term profitability over long-term sustainability, it's a lot harder to fight temptation the next time we're faced with that decision.

Another problem is, imbalance between priority on agricultural profitability and conservation stewardship is rarely a sudden problem with severe consequences; its more often an insidious problem that slowly builds up to a severe problem that is a lot more difficult and expensive to fix than it would have been to prevent.

Take grazing for example. On my acreage, we do rotational grazing. The previous owners did continuous grazing on one large paddock of pasture. The result was a lot of less-than-desir-



Rita BRHEL

able plant species and an overall overgrazing of the few patches of quality grasses. So, when my husband and I bought the

acreage, within six months, we had it fenced off to smaller paddocks and involved in intensive rotational, multi-species grazing.

The result was splendid: After a few years, the less desirable species were at a minimum and most of the paddocks were covered in lush, desirable grass species. After another year of above-normal precipitation, it seemed that the pastures had recovered.

Then, we got a little cocky. We started increasing our stocking rate, thinking

we were growing enough grass to grow more pounds of marketable animals. But then the 2012 drought hit, and we learned the hard way that sustainability is not the same as short-term gains.

We had stocked the pasture for a bumper-moisture year, not a normal year and definitely not a drought year. We wanted to take advantage of the extra grass but didn't take into consideration that we hadn't been grazing recovered pastures long enough to know what the paddocks' abilities were during a normal year. We wanted to get more money in the short term, even if it did marginalize the conservation stewardship, because we thought we could just make it up later.

And we were wrong. We had to sell all of our livestock at the end of 2012, because we ran out of grass part way through the summer.

Our pastures are recovering. They're getting back to

where they were, though one of the paddocks isn't recovering nearly as well as before. I know now that when our pastures do get back to where they were before 2012, I'm going to be a lot more careful with how I manage it moving forward. That's one mistake I wish I hadn't learned the hard way.

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