

2016



**SOUTH DAKOTA
GRASSLAND
PLANNER**

Healthy Soils, Healthy Families, Healthy Grasslands



Levi and Crystal Neuharth, Stanley County, SD, rotate cattle through a grazing system that includes 3,000 acres divided into approximately 90 pastures. Monitoring (tracking grass and forb species and growth) helps them manage pastures for forage growth and is a component of their Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract.

Grassland Managers,

When the rain comes, will your soil be ready? Management of grasslands is paramount to the overall health of our soil and water resources. Healthy soil is important for the prairie ecosystem which has incredible biological diversity under the soil surface. A teaspoon of healthy soil can have more biological organisms in it than there are people on the earth.

Recently, conservationists with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Dakota have been studying the effects that management has on soil properties, such as biology and infiltration, and the results are dramatic. Studies show that infiltration is significantly impacted by the management practices being implemented on the land.

Increased infiltration resulting from better management means that the water that falls on an operation will benefit that operation. Changes in management don't have to be drastic to have a positive influence on infiltration and ultimately the health of your natural resources and your bottom line.

We have come a long way in understanding and managing our natural resources. At the start of 2016, many of us are thinking about where we have come from, celebrating our accomplishments, and looking ahead to the upcoming year. As a land manager, you develop goals for your operation that include economics, environment and community. The partners involved with this planner want to help you achieve those goals.

Through this Grassland Planner, the U.S. Department of Agriculture NRCS is working with the South Dakota Grassland Coalition (SDGC) and other partners to improve the health of grassland resources. The NRCS, SDGC & SDSU Extension Service and other entities can assist you to determine and formulate resource protection and enhancement options that fit your operation.

Depending upon the area of expertise and/or need for financial assistance, staff are available through NRCS and SD Conservation Districts, and other partners such as the SD Grassland Coalition & SDSU Extension specialists, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the South Dakota Departments of Agriculture and Game, Fish and Parks, and private organizations, such as Pheasants Forever, Ltd., who may have additional avenues of assistance.

Technical help is available for:

- Soil health
- Water quality and quantity
- Grazing systems
- Fencing
- Monitoring techniques
- Drought management
- Grasses for forage production

Thank you for your part in keeping healthy the environment we all share. Enjoy the Grassland Conservation Planner.

*Jeffrey Zimprich, State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
South Dakota*

*Board of Directors and Members of the
South Dakota Grassland Coalition*



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**
Natural Resources
Conservation Service



Cover photo: Bill Cumbow, Todd County, SD. "Not all the miles of creek look like this picture, some places still need help. When this picture was taken we had good moisture and I just turned the whole cow herd into this pasture. The cow herd rotation has eight pastures with a twice-over rotation. I take photos the same time cattle are moved into new pasture normally. Pictures don't lie much, but lack of rainfall and above normal moisture sure can make grazing plans change. We use a timed graze/rest-rotation system that was organized by Dave Steffen for many years. The results of long range conservation efforts are slow to be seen but are showing up with willow started to grow along the creek after many years of my rotation grazing. The benefit of my rest-rotation system is keeping cattle off the creek through our solar system water sources and it has healed the riparian areas and benefited water quality. My Grandmother told me when she arrived here, willow was in abundance along the creek. Through the years of people leasing this ranch with season long grazing, (which I did also) the willows disappeared. But now, there have been many places sprout up with willows and grass hanging over the creek after many, many years of rotational grazing. I am not done trying to improve this ranch as it takes a long time to see the differences that you want to see. The technical staff at NRCS are a very good resource."

Winter grazing mimics nature

The Bieber Red Angus Ranch in McPherson County, SD, utilizes winter grazing on grasslands and crop residue to reduce feed costs while still maintaining livestock performance.



January

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TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

December 2015

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February 2016

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Mark your calendar for SDSU Extension, NRCS and other conservation partner workshops throughout the year.

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New Year's Day

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Contact your local NRCS for help in developing your conservation plan - the first step to address your resource goals.

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If your operation needs improvements on your grazing lands, consider applying for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Signup is continuous.

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Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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Winter rotational grazing

Monty and Bobbi Jo Williams, Pennington County, SD, rotate their cattle in the winter to benefit their pastures. "I use my best pasture for winter grazing because that's when the cows need it the most and it helps to reduce my feed costs." New in 2015, the Williams incorporated cover crops as supplemental forage and to improve cropland soil structure.



February

SUNDAY

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TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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Groundhog Day

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Lincoln's Birthday

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Valentine's Day

Presidents' Day
Washington's Birthday

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Conservation easements can keep working lands in production while protecting the grassland resource. Contact NRCS or USFWS for options and payment rates.

January 2016

March 2016

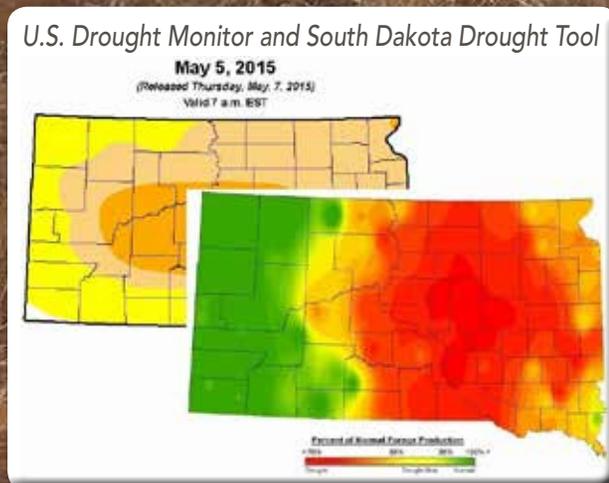
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Drought planning, monitoring, and stocking rates



Jim Faulstich, Hyde County, SD, considers monitoring, stocking rates, and drought planning as key elements of his conservation plan. His long-range planning includes stockpiling grassland forage for drought readiness and profitability. He leaves warm-season dominated pasture for summer grazing which boosts cattle performance.



Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch
resources available from the National
Drought Mitigation Center
[http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/
Overview.aspx](http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/Overview.aspx)

March

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SATURDAY

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Male sage grouse begin attending leks to perform courtship strutting displays.

Based on rainfall amounts received last fall and precipitation forecast for this spring, determine if grass production will be close to normal or reduced this spring. Develop and/or revise action items within your drought contingency plan as needed. Find the NRCS SD Drought Tool at www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov.

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Daylight Savings Time Begins

National Agriculture Day

St. Patrick's Day

20 21 22 ☽ 23 24 25 26

First Day of Spring

Good Friday

Review last year's grazing records. Document adjustments and/or changes for this year's grazing plan.

27 28 29 30 ☾ 31

Easter

Inventory fences, water systems; perform repairs.

February 2016							April 2016						
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Burning as a management option

Dave Steffen, Gregory County, SD, has used controlled burns to reduce bluegrass and brome invasion on his grassland. The result has been an increase of diversity of warm season native grasses while reducing the stand of cool season invaders on the burned rangelands. His efforts have resulted in more available high quality forage for grazing livestock while improving soil health. This May 7, 2011 burn showed tremendous response of native species at the time of the regrowth photo taken August 29, 2011.



April

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March 2016

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April Fools' Day

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Finalize grazing plans for this growing season.

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Assess growth of introduced cool-season pasture. Continue to use hay, grains or silage forages if spring pasture growth is less than 3-leaf stage.

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Mallard and pintail ducks begin nesting

Do you have a Drought Plan?

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Average nest initiation for prairie grouse in central SD

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Earth Day

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Take advantage of early-growing species (e.g., bluegrass) in order to manage species composition. Plan and complete spring weed control. Spot spraying may be necessary.

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Arbor Day
Passover Ends

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Reaping rewards of past management

Cammack Ranch in Meade County, SD, provides quality habitat through their voluntary conservation efforts on their sustainable family operation. "Our belief is that the health of range and the vitality of the wildlife population is a barometer of how well you'll do in the ranching business. The effects of our conservation efforts, or lack thereof, will be evident 100 years from now. A person can pass all the regulations you want, but if the conservation ethic is not instilled in the land managers or owners, it isn't going to matter how many regulations you have."



Willow plantings

May

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WEDNESDAY

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May Day

Graze before boot stage/seed set for better forage quality then rotate for plant recovery.

Use your infiltration kit to test your soil.

Begin primary nesting season for Farm Bill programs.

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Mother's Day

Is there a delay in green-up of native grasses? Make adjustments to turn-out dates accordingly.

International Migrating Bird Day

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Peak nest initiation for pheasants in eastern SD.

Watch for grass tetany.

Armed Forces Day

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Place salt and mineral away from water resources to provide for better range utilization.



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Peak of white-tailed deer fawn births in eastern SD.

Memorial Day

Watch for details of the SD Grassland Coalitions Annual Bird Tour.

April 2016

June 2016

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Learning opportunities

The Leopold Conservation Award tour at the Jorgensen Land and Cattle Partnership, Ideal, SD, included the NRCS Rainfall Simulator with soil samples from the Jorgensen's pastures and fields.

June



SD Grassland Coalition Annual Bird Tour

SUNDAY

MONDAY

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		Remember to enter information in your Record for Livestock Grazing.	Peak of prairie grouse hatch.																																																																																																																			
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	Peak of mule deer fawn births in western SD.	Got a Drought Plan?			Begin to seed summer annual forages.																																																																																																																	
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	Check water sources frequently.	Flag Day	United Nation Observation: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought	Peak of pheasant hatch.																																																																																																																		
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Father's Day	First Day of Summer		Watch grazing heights and rest periods carefully!																																																																																																																			
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Move animals based on plant height NOT calendar dates!																																																																																																																						

Plan for grazing cover crops on cropland to rest pastures



As a diversified operation in Spink, Faulk, and Hand Counties, Holly and J.P. Heber are communicating closely with landlords on balancing the economics of renting land with their stewardship practices. They plant cover crops for supplemental forage that will also improve the health of the cropland soils.

July

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WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

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June 2016

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August 2016

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- Graze annuals at 18-24" height
- Watch pasture for weeds & invasives
- Remember to enter information in your Record for Livestock Grazing.

- Evaluate shade/ water needs and plan for next year.
- Slow rotation and lengthen recovery periods.

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Independence Day

If drought conditions occurred last spring and continue now, forage production will be reduced. Action items for herd management and adjustments to the grazing plan may need to be implemented.

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Check water sources frequently for condition, i.e., sediment or algae can reduce an animal's water intake.

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Field check growth before turning into warm-season grass pastures.

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Thistles are best controlled at boot stage.

Grazing cover crops on cropland and resting grasslands

In 2015, the Jorgensens installed over 20 miles of new fence around their cropland acres so they could incorporate cover crops to their crop rotation as livestock forage to relieve pressure on their grasslands.

Jorgensen Land & Cattle Partnership: Cody, Greg, Bryan and Nick Jorgenson, Tripp County, SD



August

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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Remember to enter details in your Record for Livestock Grazing.

Contact the SD Grassland Coalition about the South Dakota Grazing School.

End primary nesting season for Farm Bill programs.

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Start planning for native seed harvest.

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Continue to implement Drought Contingency Plan action items as needed.

Consider cover crops as alternative forage; plant into small grain stubble.

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July 2015

September 2016

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Managing rangeland in a diverse environment

Chance Davis' Grandfather started ranching in western Butte County 115 years ago. There have been unique challenges to effectively manage and improve the long-term health of rangelands here, such as reoccurring drought, wildfire, intermingled public and private land ownership, careful management of streams and waterways, and a variety of wildlife issues such as the greater sage-grouse. Western South Dakota ranchers such as Chance Davis have learned to consistently adapt their management practices based on ever-changing environmental conditions, while still balancing the needs of the multiple resources they care for.



September

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TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

August 2016

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Remember to enter details in your Record for Livestock Grazing.

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Labor Day

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Continue to implement Drought Contingency Plan action items as needed.

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Plan winter feed supply.

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Target pastures dominated by cool-season invasive species if green-up occurs in order to reduce pressure on native grasses.

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First Day of Autumn

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125th Annual Convention
SD Stockgrowers and SD Cattlewomen
Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center, Rapid City, SD

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Evaluate calf marketing program.

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Monitoring, assessing, and using results

Doug Sieck of Walworth County uses management intensive grazing on grasslands and strip grazes cropland to improve soil health attributes such as rainfall infiltration into the soil, which has been demonstrated by the South Dakota Rainfall Simulator. Doug is also the Chair of the newly formed South Dakota Soil Health Coalition.



October

SUNDAY

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TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

September 2016

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November 2016

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Allow animals to graze alternative forage sources, such as cover crops or cornstalks, to allow a rest period for pastures.

Try strip grazing the stalks to reduce trampling.

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Conduct annual soil tests on fertilized pasture.

Enjoy the results of your management! Plan an outing with a child for pheasant, grouse, deer or duck hunting and introduce them to what conservation looks like!

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Columbus Day
Native American Day

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If your operation needs improvements on your grazing lands, consider applying for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Technical assistance is free and financial assistance sign up is continuous.

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24/31

Halloween

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Remember to enter details in your Record for Livestock Grazing.

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Continue to implement Drought Contingency Plan action items as needed.

Conservation and family ranch transitioning

The Blair Brothers' recent purchase of the historic Two-Top Ranch in Butte County has allowed them to launch a massive improvement effort to improve grazing management throughout the operation while ensuring habitat for both the greater sage-grouse and the next generation of the ranch's managers. The Blair's approach to conservation is similar to the general theme of their family's business, that if you aren't moving forward you are moving backwards. Nationwide, NRCS works with clients to benefit rangeland health and sage grouse habitat through the Sage Grouse Initiative of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

November



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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			Prepare water systems and equipment for freezing temperatures!			

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Light Savings Time Ends						Veteran's Day	

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		Evaluate end of year pasture use					

20	☾	21	22	23	24	25	26
					Thanksgiving		

27	28	☉	29	30	<p><i>October 2016</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr><th>SU</th><th>MO</th><th>TU</th><th>WE</th><th>TH</th><th>FR</th><th>SA</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td></tr> <tr><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						<p><i>December 2016</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr><th>SU</th><th>MO</th><th>TU</th><th>WE</th><th>TH</th><th>FR</th><th>SA</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td></tr> </table>		SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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<p>68th Annual SDCA Convention and Trade Show November 29-December 1 at the Watertown Ramkota</p> <p>Do you have your 2017 pastures figured out?</p>																																																																																																				



*Winter grazing of crop
aftermath rests grasslands
and benefits the health of
the soil and livestock*

December

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

November 2015

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

January 2016

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Test forages and hay before feeding; results can improve winter feeding efficiency. Separate animals by nutritional needs: lactating or gestating stock need your BEST forages.

1
68th Annual SDCA Convention and Trade Show November 29-December 1 at the Watertown Ramkota

2

3

4

5
World Soil Day

6

7
☾
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
Check pastures and the SD Drought Tool for 2017 forage production forecast.

8

9

10

11

12

13
☉

14
Monitor body condition score trends of your herds.

15

16

17

18

19

20
☾

21
First Day of Winter

22

23

24
Hanukkah Begins
Christmas Eve

25
Christmas Day

26
Kwanzaa Begins

27
Did you remember to take a vacation this year? Plan for next year!

28
●

29

30

31
Near Year's Eve

GRASSLAND PLANNING



Regularly scheduled business meetings throughout the seasons are key for the Jorgensens and many ag producers.

Photo Credits

Merv Coleman
Crystal Neuharth
Colette Kessler
Mitch Faulkner
Jorgensen Land & Cattle Partnership
Blair Brothers Ranch
Joe Blastick
Lindley Howard, Bieber Red Angus Ranch
Carol Faulstich
Nick Jorgensen
Bill Cumbow
Kindra Gordon
Cammack Ranch
Pete Bauman
Dave Steffen

Many resources are available to help you to determine and formulate resource protection and enhancement options that fit your operation. Technical help is available for:

- Soil Health
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Grazing Systems
- Fencing
- Monitoring Techniques
- Drought Management
- Grasses for Forage Production

Depending upon the area of expertise and/or need for financial assistance, staff are available through the following conservation partners:



USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
www.nrcs.usda.gov
South Dakota State Office
(605) 352-1200

South Dakota
Grassland Coalition
www.sdgrass.org

South Dakota
Conservation Districts
www.sdconservation.org
(605) 895-4099

South Dakota
State University (SDSU)
Extension Service
<http://igrow.org>
(605) 394-2236

SD Department of
Agriculture
<http://sdda.sd.gov/>
(605) 773-3375

South Dakota Soil Health Coalition
www.sdsoilhealth.org
sdsoilhealth@gmail.com

South Dakota Game,
Fish and Parks
<http://gfp.sd.gov/>
(605) 773-3658

U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service, Brookings
www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pfw/sd
(605) 697-2500

Pheasants Forever
<https://pheasantsforever.org>
(605) 651-2716

Ducks Unlimited
www.ducks.org/south-dakota/
(605) 881-3379

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
202 S. Black Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59715
Phone: (406) 582-0236

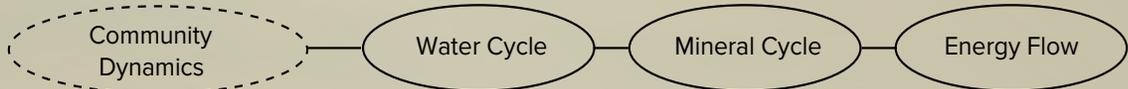
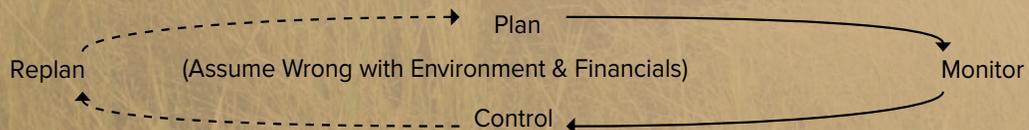
**The SD Grassland Coalition sponsors
Holistic Management workshops**

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Holistic Management

Savory FRAMEWORK FOR HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT

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Whole Under Management	Decision Makers	Resource Base	Money					
Holistic Context	Statement of Purpose							
	Quality of Life							
	Forms of Production							
	Future Resource Base							
Ecosystem Processes								
Conventional Decision Making	Objectives	Goals	Vision Mission					
Tools	Human Creativity	[Technology Fire Rest Grazing Animal Impact Living Organisms]	Money & Labor					
One or More Factors	Past Experience	Expert Opinion	Research Results	Expediency	Compromise	Cultural Norms	Cost, Etc.	
Testing Questions Objectives & Actions	Cause & Effect	Weak Link • Social • Biological • Financial	Marginal Reaction	Gross Profit Analysis	Energy/Money Source Pattern of Use	Sustainability	Gut Check	
Management Guidelines	Learning & Practice	Organization & Leadership	Marketing	Time	Stock Density & Herd Effect	Cropping	Burning	Population Management
Processes Unique to Holistic Management	Holistic Financial Planning	Holistic Planned Grazing	Holistic Land Planning	Holistic Ecological Monitoring				
Feedback Loop								

*“The landscape of any farm is the
owner’s portrait of himself.”*

– Aldo Leopold

