

Parks Department Outlines Livestock Use For Wildlife Management

Many people mistakenly believe that when managing for wildlife that livestock production can not coexist.

The reality is that this entire part of Texas was developed under grazing pressure and was grazed prior to European settlers.

Prior to European settlers, most grazing was by herds of buffalo that roamed through the area. The reason for this misconception is that in a lot of instances, landowners will overstock their property with livestock and begin to create competition for food among the wildlife and livestock.

When this occurs, range conditions deteriorate and wildlife populations decline.

There is a fine line between using livestock as a tool and the livestock becoming a detriment to wildlife.

Livestock can be one of the best tools at your disposal.

To ensure that you are using the livestock as a tool you can take a few simple steps.

The first thing you need to determine is what species of wildlife you want to manage for.

If you are managing for deer, you don't want to bring in livestock that is going to eat the same forbs and browse that a deer is going to eat.

This would be direct competition for the same resource.

In this instance, sheep and goats would not be a good livestock choice.

Cattle would be the preferred choice.

Cattle are primarily grazers, and as long as there is sufficient grass, there will not be measurable competition for forbs and browse.

The next thing is to ensure that your stocking rate of the livestock is satisfactory.

All livestock species will begin

to overgraze when their numbers get too high or the amount of food diminishes.

This can cause multiple problems.

If quail are the species you are managing for, too much decline in native grass will remove nesting cover, which will have a negative impact.

Also, when cattle do not have enough grass, they will turn to forbs and to browsing.

This affects all wildlife by making their food less available.

On the flip side, not having enough grazing pressure could have a negative outcome.

In this part of the state where rainfall is adequate most years, areas become rank with vegetation and in some situations may become too thick for certain species.

Third, you want to rotate your livestock on a periodic basis.

Referring back to the buffalo,

when a buffalo herd moved into an area, it would graze very heavily on all of the plants, then the herd would move on to another area and not return for a long time.

This grazing would stimulate new plant growth, it removed excess grass from the ground that restricted the growth of forbs and their hoof action would loosen the soil to allow for better water absorption.

If the buffalo herd would have stayed in one place too long they would have had a negative impact on the ecology.

Today most ranches have a modern "buffalo herd" on their property.

We call them cattle.

The cattle often times are kept in one pasture year-round and allowed to negatively impact the range.

When rotational grazing is implemented on your property, you simulate the conditions that the plant community was developed under.

You graze the area for a short period, which is followed by a long period of rest.

Livestock can be an indispensable tool to your management program.

Managers need to understand the wildlife species needs, then make sure that your livestock choice does not conflict.

The bottom line of using livestock to manage for wildlife is that outstanding results are achievable as long as you take wildlife needs into account.

If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist.



Ross Weishuhn of Columbus and Colby Maertz of Alleyton met local Congressman Lloyd Doggett as part of the Texas Electric Cooperative Government in Action Youth Tour. Ross and Colby toured our Nation's Capitol, met with elected officials, and learned more about the role of electric co-ops and rural electrification. They were selected to participate in the Youth Tour by the San Bernard Electric Cooperative.

NEWSBRIEFS

Continued from front page

Senior citizens dance is July 4

The senior citizen's dance will be held Friday, July 4 from 8 to 11 p.m. at the Eagle Lake Community Center. Rabbs Creek Band will provide the music. For more information call 979-234-2903.

70th Frnka reunion is July 6

The 70th Frnka family reunion will be held Sunday, July 6 at the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center Pavilion, 250 West Fairgrounds Road in La Grange. Registration from 9:30-10:30 a.m. followed by a business meeting, BBQ lunch family auction and drawing, live music, dancing, and entertainment during the event.

Cheerleading mini camp set

The Rice High School cheerleaders will hold a mini cheer camp July 14-17, 9 to 11 a.m. for children ages 3 years to 6th grade. The camps will be held at Eagle Lake Elementary School, Garwood School and Sheridan School. Cost is \$20 for the first child and \$10 for each additional child. Your child will receive a mini camp t-shirt and will be able to cheer at a Rice Raider football scrimmage on Aug. 21.

TAKS exit retesting July 15-18

TAKS Exit Retesting for those students who need to retest will be held Tuesday, July 15-18 at Rice High School. Students who plan on testing should arrive at 8:15 a.m. so that testing can begin at 8:30 a.m. Testing will be administered according to the following schedule: July 15: English/Language Arts; July 16: Mathematics; July 17: Science; July 18: Social Studies. Test will be given to those who had taken the TAKS Exit, but who have not yet met the state standard.

Fair catalogs now available

The Colorado County Fair's Creative Homemaking Department 2008 catalog is available. Catalogs may be picked up at the Silver Barn, Colorado County AgriLife Extension, Silly Stamper in Columbus, Hill Bank and Trust, The Collection and Weimar City Hall in Weimar, First National Bank in Eagle Lake, Sand Creek Drive In at Sandy Creek, Heinsohn's Country Store in Frelsburg, Schulz Grocery in New Ulm, Larry's Super Serve in Garwood, and Nada Grocery in Nada. The

catalog is online at www.columbustexas.org or colorado-co.tamu.edu (newsletter tab). For more information call the Extension office at 979-732-2530 or Homemaking Department chairman Beverly Tuck at 732-7277.

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