

AGRICULTURAL DIVISION RESTRUCTURING: CONSULTATION

Consultation group evolves to better serve today's producers

by Hugh Aljoe / hdaljoe@noble.org



Historically, the Noble Foundation has been known for its consultation program, a one-on-one producer-focused effort that builds genera-

tional relationships as we help them achieve their goals. Consultation is an integral part of accomplishing our organizational goal to advance agriculture by serving producers and offering science-based knowledge and best management practices.

For decades, we have offered an integrated, multidisciplinary consulting approach that provides producers with access to a team of specialists in areas including pasture and range, beef cattle, agricultural economics, soils and crops, and horticulture. We use this team approach because we know that together we can provide better solutions for producers than any one of us could alone. We're not there to manage producers' operations; we're there to help them manage their operations to achieve their agricultural and land management goals. We feel fortunate to have the luxury of spending quality one-on-one time with producers, and it has proven successful.



During the Agricultural Division's recent restructuring process, we identified areas we could expand upon to complement these traditional services and better meet producers' needs. We know these needs change over time, and we want to be flexible enough to adapt to them.

One area in which we are expanding our efforts is producer education. In the 20 years I have been here, we have seen an increase in the number of producers we work with who are

new to agriculture and those with smaller properties. Much of what we do is help producers in the areas they lack experience. Many of these new producers are highly educated and found success in other industries like business, medicine and law. They don't have much agricultural experience, but they do have initiative and want to learn how to be good resource stewards. We want to provide them with resources to succeed.

University Extension services and other organizations do a great job ►

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of education, and we're not trying to reinvent the wheel. We want to add more educational resources that complement these existing services as well as the consultation services we already provide. We will do this by adding an education services program dedicated to providing educational content and learning opportunities. These resources may include online and interactive resources, including videos, in-person demonstrations and curriculum.

Another area we are expanding into is agriculture advocacy. The growing gap between producers and consumers is a challenge agriculture faces today, one that will worsen if we don't do something about it now.

We will develop educational materials and programs that expose the general public to production agriculture and its many positive contributions to society. We also want to provide education and resources to producers on how they can be better advocates for their industry.

As Agricultural Division Director Billy Cook, Ph.D., mentioned in the last *Ag News and Views*, the four new Centers of Excellence were developed to further support producers by concentrating our research and outreach efforts within four specific areas in which we are already heavily involved. In the following issues, each of the center managers will further explain how these centers

support producers and agriculture.

Much of what we do at the Noble Foundation is all about relationships. Each of these expanded efforts will help us continue building and leveraging relationships beyond southern Oklahoma and northern Texas. We have the ability to have great impact on producers here at home and beyond in areas we have extensive knowledge in – forage-based beef cattle production, wildlife, pecans, no-till cropping, etc. We'll always be linked to our home base and pay special attention to those close to home, but why limit ourselves? Our vision is to serve producers in the Southern Great Plains and beyond, today and in the future. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

New *Ag Alert* keeps you informed on pressing ag issues

by Becca McMillan / rlmcmillan@noble.org



If you eat and wear clothes, you are involved in agriculture. And if you are involved in agriculture you understand the profound impact state and national

policies can have on shaping our industry. Often, it's difficult to keep up with policy making because we are busy with our pressing day-to-day activities. We only notice them when they actually impact our daily lives.

To help you stay informed, the Noble Foundation has launched an *Ag Alert*, which will provide brief updates on current agricultural policies. As issues arise, we will send an email alert with a short explanation of the issue and links to more information.

These alerts will be sent to *Ag News and Views* e-newsletter subscribers, and they will also be found in the print edition. Our goal is to keep you up to date on the issues that affect you and to provide the resources you need to learn more and take action, if you choose.

As decisions are made about how agricultural producers will feed and

clothe our nation and world, it is important that agricultural producers' voices are heard in the decision making process. These decisions will impact their livelihoods as well as food choices available to all consumers.

We want *Ag Alert* to be a resource for you as you advocate for agriculture and your life. ■

AG ALERT

Long-awaited BoarBuster™ deliveries begin this month

by Josh Gaskamp / jagaskamp@noble.org



There is an abundance of feral hog traps on the market that landowners and land managers can purchase at their local feed store, farm and ranch store, or

welding shop. Many of these traps are readily available and easily moved from point A to B, but they leave a lot to be desired in terms of effectiveness.

Feral hogs are extremely intelligent. They balk at the sight of panels at ground level, narrow openings to walk through or door thresholds to cross. All of these characteristics are limitations of conventional box and corral traps. The hogs' hesitancy to enter a trap is referred to as trap shyness.

In addition to the feral hog's keen eye for structures designed to entrap them, they learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others. Imagine a sounder (group of feral hogs) of 20 hogs continuously visiting a bait source. After a trap is set, five of the 20 hogs walk inside and trigger the trap. This leaves 15 hogs uncaptured outside of the trap. Those 15 hogs that witnessed the commotion associated with entrapment of their fellow cohorts may now be "educated" to the dangers of traps, leading to more difficulty in trapping these hogs in the future.

Noble Foundation researchers began testing hog traps in 2010 and published results in the July 2011 *Ag News and Views* article, "Using Dropnets to Capture Feral Hogs," and the July 2013 *Ag News and Views* article "BoarBuster™ thinks outside the box trap."

We did not set out with the intent of building a new trap, but just as

experienced trappers continuously modify their techniques to improve trapping success, we built the first BoarBuster to capture trap-shy hogs. The BoarBuster is revolutionary because of its suspended nature and feature that enables users to view live streaming video. Feral hogs can enter the BoarBuster from any direction without crossing a threshold or encountering panels at ground level. The trap informs its users of hog presence at the trap via text or email message, allowing its users to capture those hogs with the touch of a button on a keyboard or smartphone.

Many landowners and land managers across the United States have anxiously awaited the unveiling of the BoarBuster. After years of research and product development to make the BoarBuster effective, safe and user-friendly, that day is here. The BoarBuster system

is being exclusively manufactured and marketed by W-W Livestock Systems in Thomas, Oklahoma. The BoarBuster system is priced at \$5,995, which includes the trap and camera. A monthly fee for cellular service is projected to be \$69 per month. There will be no annual contracts for the cellular service. To purchase a BoarBuster, contact W-W at BoarBuster@pdi.net or 1-800-999-1214. W-W also has more than 1,200 dealers nationwide (locate at www.wmanufacturing.com/locator). Deliveries are expected to begin June 1, 2015.

For more information, including videos of BoarBuster in action, go to www.BoarBuster.com. You can also check them out on Facebook (www.facebook.com/boarbustertap), Twitter (www.twitter.com/boarbustertap) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/thenoblefoundation). ■



2015: Third Quarter Events

Winter Pasture Stocker Seminar

This seminar will cover cool-season forage variety selection, grasshopper and armyworm control, careful use of antibiotics including the most recent information on veterinary feed directives, economic projections for the cattle market, and value of gain this fall. Current and upcoming Noble Foundation research will also be presented.

1-5 p.m.
July 9, 2015
Southern Oklahoma Technology Center
Ardmore, Oklahoma
No Registration Fee



Summer Burn Workshop

Prescribed burning is an effective tool in land resource management, but it must be used in a safe and proper manner. This two-day workshop is designed to introduce participants to the various aspects of burning, demonstrate how to conduct a safe burn and give a hands-on experience in a controlled setting. If weather permits, afternoon demonstration burns will be conducted. Participants are welcome to attend one or both days.

8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
July 21-22, 2015
Marietta High School Cafeteria
Highway 77 South, Marietta, Oklahoma
No Registration Fee
A free lunch will be served.



Pecan Pest Management Workshop

This workshop will educate producers on how to identify pecan insects and diseases, and the proper control method.

9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Aug. 18, 2015
Noble Foundation Kruse Auditorium
No Registration Fee



Integrity Beef Meeting

The Integrity Beef Alliance is a cow/calf program with goals of increasing marketability of ranch-raised calves through increased brand recognition, addition of stacked value-added traits and volume sales of high quality calves. The summer Integrity Beef Alliance membership meeting will allow producers interested in or new to the program to meet seasoned program producers and to learn about program specifics and the protocol for the upcoming year.

5:30-8 p.m.
Aug. 25, 2015
Noble Foundation Pavilion
Registration Fee: \$20 for nonmembers



Fall Cattle Seminar

As fall approaches, beef cattle producers in the Southern Great Plains are preparing to wean calves and developing plans to get cow herds through the winter. This seminar will focus on issues that are key to this process: weaning management, supplementation strategies and marketing considerations based on price outlook.

1-5 p.m.
Aug. 25, 2015
Southern Oklahoma Technology Center
Ardmore, Oklahoma
No Registration Fee



For more information or to register, visit www.noble.org/agevents or call Maggie Scott at 580.224.6375. Preregistration is requested.

Early brush control lessens future problems

by Corey Moffet, Ph.D. / camoffet@noble.org



Rangelands with their varied ecological sites and plant diversity are typically managed for multiple uses such as providing forage for grazing cattle,

habitat for wildlife and clean water to name a few. Sustainable rangeland management is rooted in maintaining vegetation composition, cover and production. Across the globe, a common challenge on rangelands is maintaining vegetation within a desirable mix of herbaceous and woody plants; a change in this mix toward woody plants has been striking in the last 150 years. A number of drivers, including climate, grazing, browsing, fire, atmospheric carbon dioxide and nitrogen deposition, have been proposed as drivers of this change. What exactly constitutes a desirable mix of herbaceous and woody plants for you and your rangelands is a question that is beyond the scope of this

article. More often than not, if you are managing rangelands on the Southern Great Plains, woody plants are encroaching.

There is a tendency to ignore the brush encroachment until the point in time when the woody stand has become a serious problem. At first, there are just a few scattered woody plants and it's hard to see any harm they are causing. Then, those plants grow larger and new plants establish until, like the fabled frog in boiling water, the effects of steady encroachment are clear. Often, the herbaceous plants are weakened as woody plants outcompete them for light and water. Since the transformation has been so gradual, stocking rates were likely never adjusted to account for the lost herbaceous production, and the remaining grazeable acres have been overgrazed. However, waiting until this point in time will require expensive reclamation treatments.

A better, more economical approach is to 1) recognize early on

the risk these woody species pose to rob you of valuable forage and the biotic integrity of your rangelands and 2) attack the brush while it is most vulnerable and before any harm is suffered. Juvenile brush plants are typically less costly to kill than are mature brush plants. For example, fire alone is very effective at controlling Eastern Red-cedar that is less than 6 feet tall, but once it has reached a height of 20 feet, the likelihood of controlling these trees with a single fire is significantly reduced and mechanical treatment is often necessary. If the density of the brush species is less than about 250 plants per acre, individual plant treatment with an efficacious herbicide is a good economical option. Individual plant treatments allow you to specifically control the undesirable brush species without injuring important forb species that often accompany broadcast treatments. When it comes to brush problems, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. ■



Tips, tricks save cattle producers time and energy

by Deke Alkire, Ph.D. / doalkire@noble.org



I have always enjoyed reading tips and tricks in various publications, and I have picked up many useful time- and labor-saving ideas. However, it is not as common to find tips specifically for cattle producers. A few of my favorites are listed below.

Four-Wheeler Cattle Guard

Most people do not like to open and shut gates. This has led to countless escaped animals, arguments and reprimands. Cattle guards are common along pasture roads that are frequently traveled, but they can be expensive. There are places where it would be handy to cross a fence but a full-size cattle guard is not justifiable. For cattle producers who use a four-wheeler, a smaller version of a cattle guard is a good idea. These only need to support the weight of your four-wheeler, so they can be constructed for much less than a full-size version. Elevating the tire path helps prevent cows from jumping across it.

This is a picture of Noble Foundation cooperator Jan Lee's design, but there are many others online. Search for four-wheeler cattle guards.

Electric Cattle Guard

If you already have an electric fence nearby, another option is an electric cattle guard. These are inexpensive and easy to build. Devlon Ford wrote a great article in the July 2013 *Ag News and Views* describing how to build one: "Electric cattle guard saves time."

Automatic Gate Opener

Another option is an automatic gate opener. While not cheap, it could pay for itself in time savings when used in high traffic areas. They are very effective when used in conjunction with a cattle guard at main entry points on the ranch. When used alone, they don't work as well in areas where cattle might crowd the gate or near feeding areas. There are many different versions available, and some have an optional electronic lock that can be added. More expensive versions have a camera that alerts your phone with a picture of who is at the gate and the ability to open and close the gate from your phone or at a scheduled time.

Syringe-Holster Cooler

This is an improvement on the "I drilled some holes in a cooler" design. To my knowledge, it was invented by Robert Wells, Ph.D., and works well to keep repeated syringes readily accessible and prevent uncapped needles from puncturing the contents of your cooler. Used properly, it keeps vaccines cool between uses and protects them from sunlight. It also keeps co-



workers safe because syringes always go back in their holster instead of lying on a table or tailgate.

Wire Ties

Baling wire is likely one of the most-used remedies for cattle producers. It can be used to fix just about anything. Wire ties are similar but faster. They are pre-cut with a loop at each end that allows for quick twisting when used with the proper tool. These ties are used mostly to wire rebar together but can be used the same as baling wire. They are inexpensive, available in lengths from 5 to 24 inches, and even come galvanized if desired.

Orange Construction Fence

This makes a great temporary fence. It is lightweight, highly visible, and easy to install and remove. Attach it to existing fences, trailers or t-posts with baling wire, wire ties or tarp straps to keep tension on it. Calm cattle will respect it as long as they are not crowded into it. I have seen it used successfully to move cattle across county roads, but you should follow local laws regarding this use. ■



Techniques conserve water resources

by Jim Johnson / jjjohnson@noble.org



In April 2014, I wrote about some issues facing our water resources. In this article, I will address a few ways to better steward our water resources.

On any landscape, there are opportunities to reduce the amount of water evaporated from the soil. One option for grazers is to leave the grazed stubble a little taller so it shades the soil a little more. For instance, if you normally graze to a 4-inch stubble height, try grazing to a 5-inch stubble height. You may give up a small amount of production, but you will gain a little more shade on the soil surface. Increasing shade on the soil surface reduces the temperature of the soil on a hot, sunny day, and in turn, reduces the amount of water lost to evaporation from the soil. The same holds true when mowing the lawn or cutting hay. Raising the cutting height by a small amount will allow your yard or hay meadow to evaporate less water and redirect that water to growing grass.

The design of a pond to supply livestock water can also conserve water. A deeper pond with a smaller surface area is better than a shallow pond with a larger surface area. The bigger the surface area, regardless of the depth, the more evaporation can occur from the pond. For example, if the surface of a pond loses 1 inch of water over the course of three summer days, you would lose 1 acre-inch of water from a pond with 1 surface acre; you would lose 2 acre-inches of water from a pond with 2 surface acres. If the 1-acre pond is 20



feet deep and the 2-acre pond is 10 feet deep, they have the same storage capacity. However, the deeper pond with the smaller surface area will lose less water to evaporation.

Plants growing in soils with adequate fertility are more water efficient and make more forage or crop per inch of water used. Grazers and crop farmers should both maintain soil nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and pH at adequate levels.

Another way crop farmers can reduce evaporative losses from soil is by reducing tillage and leaving more crop residue to cover the soil. Again, the shading of the soil surface by crop residue reduces the temperature of the soil surface, which again reduces the amount of water lost due to evaporation.

Farmers with irrigation can more efficiently use the water they apply by irrigating less frequently but with larger irrigation amounts that allow

water to soak more deeply into the soil. In the Southern Great Plains, it is possible to lose one-quarter of an inch of water from each irrigation application to evaporation of the water droplets before they reach the ground. This means that if only one-half of an inch of water is applied at a time, one-half of the total application is lost. If two one-half inch applications are made in an attempt to apply one inch of water, only one-half inch of the total gets used and the other half inch is lost. However, if 1 inch is applied in a single application and one-quarter of an inch is lost, then three-quarters of the inch applied are used.

These are just a few ways that we in agriculture can make more efficient use of the water we have. Hopefully, these techniques and others will allow us to make the most efficient use of our water resulting in better stewardship of our resources. ■

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EVENTS

Winter Pasture Stocker Seminar

Time: 1-5 p.m.

Date: July 9, 2015

Location: Southern Okla. Tech. Center, 2610 Sam Noble Pkwy, Ardmore, Oklahoma
No Registration Fee

Summer Burn Workshop

Time: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Date: July 21-22, 2015

Location: Marietta High School Cafeteria, Highway 77 South, Marietta, Oklahoma
No Registration Fee

Rescheduled: Basic AG Livestock Management Field Day

Time: 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Date: June 23, 2015

Location: Noble Foundation McMillan Road Farm
No Registration Fee

For more information or to register, please visit www.noble.org/agevents or call Maggie Scott at 580.224.6375. Preregistration is requested.

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