



Playing the cards in your hand

By *Tony Hoch*,
Magazine Coordinator

I always say living in the country in Wyoming is awesome – awesome in a wonderful sense with all of the natural beauty and awesome in a sense of natural adversity. The trick to coexisting with nature here is understanding what resources you have with respect to soil, water, vegetation, and even neighbors – and making the best of the “cards” you have been dealt.



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In this issue, you will learn about using a data-rich Web resource – the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “Web Soil Survey” – to research and understand properties of your soils. This information is fundamental for growing things, siting buildings, planning grazing strategies, and understanding your native plant communities.

If your property has existing stock watering wells, springs, a pond, or a live stream, we also have a very useful article for determining whether this water is really suitable for your barnyard animals or pets. All water quality is not created equal!

The story about a pair of weed warriors in southern Wyoming is a story of new landowners using a variety of measures including “targeted grazing” to solve some very tough weed problems.

“Strange lights in the night” is a light-hearted account of the cycles and the calendar of our agricultural producer neighbors.

Understanding the curious comings and goings of our neighbors can make us better neighbors ourselves.

If you are thinking of reseeding a patch of rangeland to improve grass production and prevent soil erosion, you might also enjoy reading about ways to plant for improved game bird habitat. It’s always a bonus to improve wildlife habitat as you improve your own living space.

The article on growing your own chickens offers advice for getting started in the rewarding hobby of producing your own eggs for fun and maybe even a little profit.

And, finally, there is an excellent photo essay on grafting fruit trees to make yourself even more self-sufficient using the soil and water resources available right outside your backdoor.

As always, we are here to serve our target audience – Wyoming small-acreage land owners and managers. Your feedback counts! Please contact me at (307) 721-0072 or tony.hoch@wy.nacdn.net with questions or suggestions regarding *Barnyards & Backyards* or possible stories for the publication.

Enjoy!

