



WHEATLAND PROPERTY

Small-acreage improvement team stamps

By Dallas Mount

We introduced readers to the Wheatland property three years ago. We are now ready to retire this property out of the Property Improvement Project – not that we are through making improvements or managing it, but rather we’ve achieved the land-owner’s goals.

The management team wanted to improve the health and productivity of the property through vegetation management. The property had too much bare ground, weeds, and many undesirable plants out-competing the desirable plants. They recommended grazing during the winter initially (a

(Editor’s note: The introductory article to the Wheatland property “Extreme Property Makeover ...” is in the Fall 2009 Barnyards & Backyards issue.)

less-damaging time for the plants to be grazed), additional stock water development spread around the property, and consideration of a grass seeding treatment for the areas with the most bare ground.

Grazing

Following the team’s recommendations, the land was grazed only during winter in 2009 and 2010. This allowed grasses and other plants to have the full growing season without being grazed and to develop healthy roots and reproduce – spreading into the bare ground areas.

Water

A stock water development project was completed in the fall of 2010 (see Summer 2011 issue), and growing season grazing began in 2011 using management intensive grazing (see Fall 2011 issue).

The stock water development concentrates grazing in small areas over a short period of time, allowing plants to recover before being grazed again.

Concentrated grazing is accomplished by installing temporary electric fences to create paddocks that are removed after grazing. This may seem labor intensive, but when properly designed, grazing paddocks can be built in about 15 minutes, and the livestock automatically move to the next grazing paddock. This type of grazing management restricts how choosy livestock can be and results in even grazing and allows plants adequate time to recover and reproduce.

Photographs over time have documented plants re-establishing the disturbed area – confirming that the team was able



PUT OUT TO PASTURE!

‘Done!’ on this property project

to accomplish the goals of reducing bare ground and increasing the population of desired plants through managed grazing.

The landowner also has an economic objective for the property: produce income to support half the monthly payments necessary to purchase the property. This objective has been met by taking in cattle to graze the property the last several years. In 2011, largely due to good precipitation and intensive grazing management, the property has significantly exceeded this goal, and this trend is expected to continue.

No Grass Seeding

One surprise has been that no grass seeding or tillage actions were done. The increase in plant cover has been a result of the natural increase

of plants through managed grazing. A nice benefit of this is the cost savings of not having to seed. Typically, grass seeding starts at \$100 per acre and can quickly escalate. This property is in a wetland area, and the plants have ample access to moisture. If this project had been on an upland, dry site, natural spreading of the plants would have taken much longer without seeding.

Bottom Line

Participating in the property improvement project has been a great experience and having the input from the team has been super, says the landowner. The most beneficial actions have been installation of the stock water pipeline and tanks and the implementation of the management intensive grazing system.

Featured property update

There are many useful videos that show the work conducted on each of the three featured properties – find them by clicking on the YouTube button on the Barnyardsandbackyards.com website.

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