

Bressner Pasture History

Dale Lanham, Woodson County Extension Agent

The KSU Bressner Range Unit includes two adjacent half-sections of native grass near Yates Center, KS. The KSU Foundation received this land through the Willie J. Bressner estate in 1988. This property was donated without restrictions, however Mr. Bressner requested that it be utilized as an experimental project to study the preservation and use of native grasses.

The past seven year's research project has been focused on "patch-burn" vs. full-burn pastures each spring and subsequent cattle performance and plant composition changes. Stocker cattle graze each year from late April until August 15th. Native grass patch-burn treatments are implemented on 1/3 of each pasture each year. Within each patch-burn pasture, the east 1/3 of the pasture was burned in year one, the middle 1/3 of the pasture was burned in year two and the final 1/3 burned in year three. Year four the burn cycle was repeated through 2012 when the cycle began again. As you read this report, you will see we will only be reporting 6 years of research on the east pastures; due to lack of water in the east pastures, cattle were co-mingled from mid-June until August 15th in 2011.

"Patch burning" has created some very unique challenges when it comes time to burn in the spring. A straight path was mowed on the perimeter of the patches that were to be burned in an attempt to have a straight fire line to compare burn versus non-burned patches within the pasture. A significant amount of water and man power are required properly complete the burn each spring. Practical "patch burning" for ranchers would utilize natural barriers instead of focusing on burning in a straight line!

Bressner Range Unit has utilized several outstanding cooperators to furnish cattle for the research on this pasture. This is a bid process for 235 head of steers weighing between 500-600 pounds. The past seven years of cattle owners were:

- 2012-Phillip Collins
- 2011-Eric Karmann
- 2010-Eric Karmann
- 2009-Michael Old
- 2008-Michael Old
- 2007-Ronnie Reynolds
- 2006-Ronnie Reynolds

Without their cooperation and cattle utilization, this research would not be possible. Thank you cooperators!!

Year 2011 was the start of the worst drought in recent history. Ponds "known" to have ample water were discovered to have ample mud. The east pond on the Bressner Pasture was one of these ponds. A back-hoe drained some good water into a couple of holes in an attempt to keep the cattle in the correct pastures, but it became apparent after losing one steer in the mud, that it was not going to solve the water problems. The cattle were allowed enter the center pastures that had access to several good springs in the creek which has. On the north end of the creek there was no water running but 100 feet or so into the Bressner property there were springs that kept water moving very slowly. Therefore the east pasture data for 2011 will not be included.

However, with that happening, it did allow for the opportunity to expand and complete a new and better watering system for the far east pastures. Shortly after the cattle were removed in 2011, the pond dam was cut, and the mud was removed in the early spring. During the cleanout process, it was discovered there had actually been two ponds in that location, that is now combined into one large pond. Changing the pond dam and surrounding area made it necessary to replace the electric fence between pasture 4 and 8. The pond was fenced off adding a limited water access to pasture 4 and a water tank into pasture 8.

Thank you for attending the 2012 Bressner Pasture Field Day. As the patch-burn project comes to a close, we look forward to the next project. If you have an important issue that you feel is important to the future of native grass prairies, please talk to any of the committee members that will be deciding the next project. Committee members: Dave Kehler, Extension Agent Butler Co; Jeff Davidson, Water Quality Specialist; Warren Bell, retired Water Quality Specialist; Gary Kilgore, retired Crops & Soils Specialist; Dr. Frank Brazle, retired Southeast Livestock Specialist; Dr. Dale Kirkham, Kansas Rural Center; Dr. Doug Shoup, Southeast Agronomist; Altis Ferree, Woodson County Rancher; Lauren Pringle, Woodson County Rancher; Mike Collinge Greenwood County Rancher; Harvey Raaf, Coffey County Rancher and Dale Lanham, Woodson County Extension Agent.

A huge thank you goes to the group that helps weigh, ear tag and burn pastures are: Mike Holder, Chase County Agent; Dave Kehler, Butler County Agent; Darren Hibdon, Franklin County Agent; Rod Schaub, Osage County Agent; Darl Henson, Coffey County Agent; Jim Mengarelli, Crawford County Agent; Jeff Davidson, former Greenwood County Extension Agent, Warren Bell, former Coffey County Agent, Keith Martin, Labette County Agent, Dave McNett, Woodson County Noxious Weed Department, Yates Center Rural Fire Department, Woodson County Road & Bridge Dept.; Eldon Lanham, Linn County Rancher and Scot Lanham, Linn County Rancher. Without their dedication and involvement, the Bressner Range Unit would be just another pasture in Woodson County and not the Research Pasture that it is known by.