

# K-State: Altering stocking strategy could boost beef production

HAYS—A Kansas State University researcher has found that producers who put more cattle than recommended on grassland early in the grazing season can boost beef production on a land area basis if the heaviest of those cattle are removed partway through the season.

"It sounds a little surprising," said Keith Harmony, who is an assistant professor of range science at K-State's Agricultural Research Center at Hays. "The key is having a slightly greater stocking density while the grass is immature and actively growing, and then removing the heaviest animals during the last half of the grazing season."

Ongoing research has shown that a modified intensive early-stocking

system using 1.6 times the normal recommended stocking density early in the season, followed by removing the heaviest animals in the last half of the grazing season, increased beef production 25 percent on a land area basis compared to continuous season-long stocking, Harmony said.

"This practice uses high-quality, early-season forage similar to intensive early double stocking practiced in eastern Kansas, but also capitalizes on the grazing animal's ability to select plants and plant parts with greater nutritional value later in the season, which commonly happens with season-long stocking," he said.

The system provides financial

flexibility and could mitigate the effects of market volatility by allowing producers to market animals at two different periods through the year.

Harmony said that the net return over five years was approximately \$13 per acre more with the modified stocking system than with the continuous season-long stocking system.

The ongoing study is also evaluating changes in the vegetative composition under the modified stocking strategy to monitor the long-term sustainability of the practice, he said. "Animal gain data is very positive, but the study just hasn't been performed enough years yet for us to know exactly how

the modified stocking strategy will affect the plant community."

**Cattle Stocking Rates**

The number of cattle that producers can turn out on grassland in Kansas is largely dependent on weather and range conditions and the weight of the animal to start with, but there are guidelines that producers can follow to best ensure the health of the animal and the health of the grazing land itself, said Kansas State University agronomist Walt Fick.

Fick, who is a range management

specialist with K-State Research and Extension recommends the following rates in Kansas for 550-pound steers (starting weight) put on grass for 150 days (full season):

- Flint Hills/eastern Kansas - 4 acres per steer.
- Central Kansas - 5.3 - 5.5 acres per steer.
- High Plains/western Kansas - 6.4 acres per steer.

"These rates, of course, should be adjusted for drought and other weather anomalies," Fick said, "but they're a starting point."

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.

## State explores development near reservoirs

LAWRENCE (AP)—For a state rich in reservoirs, Kansas has little to offer residents whose dreams for retirement or recreation include a home with a water view.

Now, several state agencies are taking part in a study by the Kansas Water Office on whether and how to promote residential and commercial development near at least some of Kansas' 26 federal reservoirs.

The study follows on last year's failed proposal by a development group to build a reservoir south of Wichita to compete with northern Oklahoma's Grand Lake.

Although the state rejected the

proposal as too expensive for the potential benefits it offered, the effort made clear the size of the unmet demand for in-state lakefront property, said Tracy Streeter, director of the Kansas Water Office.

"It screamed out at us," he said. "The developers were right on track about that."

Each year, a significant number of retirement-age Kansans leave the

state in pursuit of homes on or near water, said Joe Harkins, director of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' Office of Natural Resource Policy and a former Kansas Water Office director.

"When you look at all the people in Wichita or Kansas City who have homes at either Grand Lake or Lake of the Ozarks, it's pretty clear that we're not as competitive as we should be," Harkins said.

## NEW DOCTOR OPENS PRACTICE IN RAWLINS COUNTY



Dr. Gail Girouard, Family Practitioner, recently joined the Staff of the **RAWLINS CLINIC/Atwood**, and will also serve as Medical Director for the **RAWLINS CLINIC/Herndon** and **RAWLINS CLINIC/McDonald**.

Dr. Girouard received her Master of Science Degree (with honors), and her Doctor of Medicine from Creighton University in Omaha. She specializes in Family Medicine and Women's Health, and has most recently served as a Family Practitioner in the community of Schuyler, Nebraska

Dr. Girouard looks forward to serving the citizens of Rawlins County and surrounding communities. She selected Northwest Kansas as a practice location because of her great love for clean air and great opportunities for outdoor exercise.

For additional information about Dr. Girouard's office hours or to make an appointment, please call (785)626-3241.

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