

# NORTH TEXAS FARM & RANCH



# ENTER

May 2024



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### MEGARGEL, TX

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### MEGARGEL, TX

Furnished 3,360sf not including spacious upstairs foamed loft storage. 3 bed 2 bath office, gym, game room, open kitchen & island laundry room. built in storm shelter. 3 car covered drive thru parking. 2,400 sft foamed equipment building & 600 sft cabin with full bath kitchen, laundry room with washer/dryer hookup, pipe cattle pens, head shutte, cattle guards, loafing sheds. Master, his/her walk-in closets. Powered custom blinds, vaulted ceilings. Easy access to covered parking. Heated bath floor dual shower heads, 6x6 shower, drop-in bathtub. Kohler fixtures sealed natural concrete, mood lighting. Kitchen, Viking 48 in side-by-side fridge, 36 in Tuscan Range dual fuel custom soft close cabinets, crown molding, 7x4 island, granite countertops. Foamed all areas of home, equipment building barn, loft. Spacious Gameroom. Custom Crown molding. Fireplace. Lennox Heat pumps. Private gates, custom work stone entrance 3 tanks. Automatic Non freeze waterer. **Bobby Norris- \$2,995,000**



### CLEBURNE, TX

A must see property not even a quarter mile from I-35. Property backs up to a new commercial business park. Huge commercial development potential within the Burleson city limits. A tremendous buy and hold property or get started right away. With rolling terrain and elevations this property is filled with hardwoods as well. Location at its best!! **Bobby Norris - \$1,950,000**



### SPRINGTOWN, TX

This winter view comes to life in the spring. The fence line along the road is filled with plums and mustang grapevines. There are a variety of trees including oak, elm, cedar, Mesquite and mulberry. The open field on the western portion was graded with connecting properties in the 80's giving many years for the soil to have settled, helping prevent heavy washout common with Texas storms and keeping it fairly level. Deer and other wildlife frequent this patch of land, making it a beautiful spot for a home or getaway with large open fields around it... **Bobby Norris- \$159,000**



### GRANDVIEW, TX

Country living! This house and 10 acres in the country has so much potential. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, school district with 2 acreage available. **Bobby Norris- \$410,000**



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## 2998 OLD BONITA RD | NOCONA, TEXAS

Just under 50 acres this property has it all. The 4BD/2BTH home has been recently renovated to include granite countertops, ceramic tile, new vinyl flooring and new Whirlpool appliances. The property included a 5-stall barn with water and electric and a 32X40 shop with electricity.



## 9 CLAY STREET - NOCONA, TEXAS

Sitting right under 2 acres of prime real estate, this location has highway 82 frontage as well as clay street and willow street frontage, which gives the property great access from the 3 main roads. The property includes a feed store of 4,250 sqft, storage buildings and various covered storage buildings. Also included on the property is a 60' and 70' working truck scale.



## TBD COBB HOLLOW RD - NOCONA, TEXAS

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**ON THE COVER**

On the cover are Texas FFA President Isaac Hawkins, Jr.; Area IV; and Texas FFA Vice President Weston Parr, Area V. (Photo courtesy Texas FFA Association)



## letter from the editor

Hello readers, and welcome to the May issue of North Texas Farm & Ranch magazine.

This month we honor those brave men and women who lost their lives in service to our country on May 27, Memorial Day. I hope as we gather with family and friends we take time to reflect on the freedoms we share and the sacrifices of those brave souls. We thank all current duty military personnel and veterans for your service.

As those who already subscribe to the NTFR e-sub know, we have started sending out a news e-letter showcasing the great stories from the magazine and website. Get the NTFR Roundup sent straight to your inbox with the latest from the magazine and agriculture around North Texas by visiting ntfronline.com or scanning the QR code below.

In this month's profile, we bring you the future of agriculture, Texas FFA State President Isaac Hawkins Jr. and Vice President Weston Parr. These two share their journey through FFA and how they are using this year of service to give back to a program that has given them so much. Turn the pages to find out what to expect in the coming months on the ranch, learn more about what to look for when controlling mesquite, discover a new delicious recipe in Lacey's Pantry, and so much more.

To subscribe by mail call 940-872-5922. Make sure to like our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram and Twitter. Wishing you all a very Happy May!

*Dani Blackburn*

Dani Blackburn, Editor  
editor@ntfronline.com



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READ MORE: <https://ntfronline.com/.../nominations-open-for-national-/>



## TWITTER FEED

 NTRF Magazine

Most farmers and ranchers know that agriculture is a dangerous occupation. According to United States Bureau of Statistics, workers involved in agriculture, forestry, and fishing had the highest occupational fatality rate in 2022.

[ntfronline.com/2024/03/farm-a-...](https://ntfronline.com/2024/03/farm-a-...)



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# MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com

When May arrives, we start thinking about weed control. With two years of drought under our belts, grass grazed short and hay stocks depleted, what we do now will influence our forage conditions for the entire year. With 75 percent of our annual warm season forages made by July 15 in North Texas, we need to get the grass growing while the sun shines.

Speaking of the sun shining, the biggest deterrent to growing lots of grass is restricted sunlight, and the biggest sun blockers we have are weeds.

Have you noticed weeds are normally just slightly taller than your grass and are probably blocking 90 percent of the sunlight from reaching the grass itself? So obviously, we need to improve conditions, so sunlight reaches the plants we want to grow.

With grass extremely short, more sunlight is hitting the soil surface now, which in turn results in more weed seed germinating. With the moisture we have received, we expect an abundance of weeds this year.

Weed control in pastures will normally double the forage production per acre. Of all the dollars we spend, the biggest bang for the buck comes from controlling weeds, followed by fertilizer in the case of introduced grass, like coastal bermudagrass.

With this in mind, we want to apply an herbicide as early in the season as we can while also making sure we get the target weeds causing us the most problems.

Woolly croton, also known as dove weed and goat weed, is one of the later germinating weeds along with cockleburs.

Finding the perfect time to spray and deciding what to use may involve working with your



Of all the dollars we spend, the biggest bang for the buck comes from controlling weeds, followed by fertilizer in the case of introduced grass like coastal bermudagrass. (Photo courtesy Rayford Pullen)

county agent and herbicide supplier. On our place, we normally like to spray around May 10 since we use a herbicide with very little residual activity.

Some herbicides can have a month or so of residual activity and as such can be applied earlier, if you are surrounded by susceptible crops, such as cotton, roses, and grapes.

As more homes sprout up in your neighborhood, it is imperative to be mindful of your surroundings. Just keep in mind that weed control will influence your forage production more than any other management practice.

Bulls are turned out, calves are worked and we are making plans to either bale hay or purchase it. If you still have cows that have not

calved, they need to be identified and tested to make sure they are still going to calve.

With the market as good as it has been, I am not nearly as critical of these late calving cows as I normally am as I still expect them to raise at least a 400-pound calf by this fall.

The perfect world we like to discuss is most times easier to talk about than actually do. By this same line of thinking, I am also more inclined to leave my bulls out longer than I normally do to make sure I get as many bred as I can. Those calves have been worth so much and I can worry about bunching them back up when prices are not as good now as they have been of late.

I am still excited to watch the little calves just take off and run across the pasture playing, many times with the momma in tight pursuit.

I am also wondering how a cow is appointed to be the babysitter while the other mommas graze. I feel quite certain someone has received some sort of grant to study this, but I have not been privy to the results. Anyway, I continue to wonder how that cow is selected.

One final thought, something we are doing this year is feeding a loose, free-choice mineral with Insect Growth Regulator in it to help with our horn fly problem.

If you do not know how to determine if the flies you have are horn flies or not, just take a look at them on the cows. The horn flies always are looking at the ground. If they also bite, you probably have stable flies, and if they just constantly annoy you, then you are probably dealing with plain old house flies.

It's a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. 

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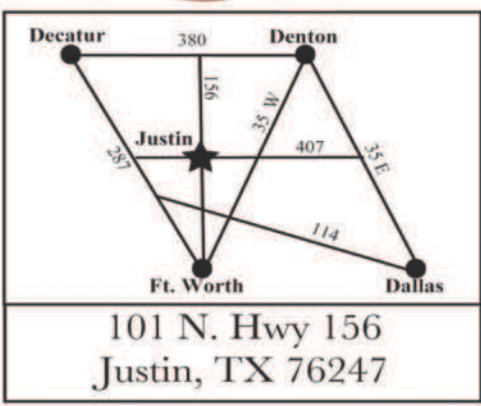
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# AG *elsewhere* MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK



It's that time of year again - branding season! 

# AG *elsewhere* WYOMING

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY TRESSA LAWRENCE



As the days get longer and the grass gets greener, branding season and heading to summer pasture is on the agenda here in northeast Wyoming. 



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**245.30 ACRES | WILBARGER COUNTY**



**MILLER RANCH**

**\$4,500/Ac**

This is a terrific hunting property located 15 minutes south of Vernon and approximately 1 mile west of the famous 550k acre Waggoner Ranch. The land offers outstanding whitetail deer hunting. The terrain is level to rolling mesquite pasture, with 114 acres of farmland. Surface water consist of two stock ponds. There is an insulated heated and cooled storage container with an attached carport and a 40 x 60 barn. Deer blinds and feeders are negotiable.

**102 ACRES | ARCHER COUNTY**



**WOLF FARM**

**\$5,940/Ac**

Located southwest of Windthorst on the corner of FM 2581 and Bridwell Ranch Rd, in Windthorst School District. It consists of 55 acres of cultivation, 47 acres Bermuda grass. The boundary is fenced, interior is cross fenced, three stock ponds, largest being 2 acres. Water and electricity appear available. This is an ideal tract for year around livestock grazing, large homesite or with the ample amount of frontage and availability of utilities it could be sub-divided into smaller tracts.

**254.20 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY**



**ALEXANDER RANCH**

**\$4,200/Ac**

Nice all around property located 15 minutes from Wichita Falls. Ideal for running cattle, hunting, or building a home. Moderate mesquite coverage, above average grasses, rolling topography with tremendous views, 2 seasonal creeks, 3 stock ponds, completely fenced and cross fenced, livestock pens, electricity available, water available. Light oil production isolated to the southeast corner, minerals are negotiable with an acceptable contract.

**119.39 ACRES | CLAY COUNTY**

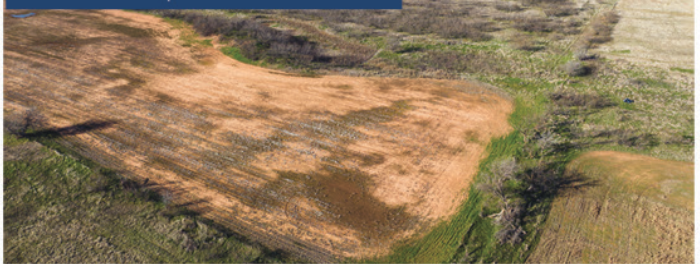


**BRIXEY RANCH**

**\$4,900/Ac**

Located southwest corner of Brixey and Whitaker Rd. 2,820' frontage on Brixey Rd, 1,600' Whitaker Rd. This would be a great tract to subdivide. Open pasture with scattered mesquites, rolling topo, impressive views, one stock pond, livestock barn, corrals, electricity is available, one water well. There are two pumpjacks on the property, but do not appear to be active. The seller may consider sub-dividing on a case by case basis, owner finance available. Contact Listing Agent Jon Moss - 940-867-6743.

**300.14 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY**



**EDSEL FARM**

**\$3,950/Ac**

The Edsel Farm is located less than a half mile north of US HWY 287. Excellent access with frontage on Huntington, Kiel and Wellington Lane. The land consists of 300.139 total acres, 165 acres is tillable farmland, balance being moderate to heavily wooded native pasture. There are partial cross fences, boundary is fenced in average condition. Surface water consist of three ponds, seasonal creek and East Fork Pond Creek, partial floodplain. Electricity and water appear available along Hunting and Kiel.

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- Highway 79 Homesite - 23.93 Acres - Archer County - \$9,750/Acre
- Thornberry Lots - 4.5 Acres - Wichita Co - \$45,000
- Thornberry Homesite - 2.14 Acres - Clay Co - \$27,500
- Decker Farms - 5.03 Acres - Archer Co - \$75,000
- 171 Homesite - 4.28 Acre - Clay Co - \$40,000
- Maag Tract 3 - 19.45 Acres - Archer Co - \$8,483/Acre

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# Land Market Report


## MARCH LAND SALES

By Jared Groce

Rural land sales are continuing on a steady pace for early spring, with prices holding very strong with the sell-to-list price ratios remaining very high, even on properties that have been on the market for a longer than usual time period. The total number of transactions are picking up once again as the spring selling season kicks off, and the average acreage continues to decrease.

Larger acreage properties seem to be in higher demand than smaller properties currently, with many buyers simply parking cash in real estate to hedge against inflation. Interest rates seem to have settled down and most experts agree that rates will be reduced by the fed this year. Some lenders have programs in place that allow the buyer to reduce their rates without having to go through a full refinance ordeal.

Get your fertilizer out there, and be nice to the turkeys who will be nesting before long in your tall grass areas and brushy areas, by leaving these areas alone until the first part of June. It is also still a good time to plant trees before it gets too hot - just be sure to water them frequently!

Thanks for reading, and remember - the best time to plant a tree or buy land was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. 

COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
COLLIN	CELINA	19.17	\$ 39,115.00	\$ 750,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	100.00%	5
COLLIN	FARMERSVILLE	26.89	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 1,613,340.00	\$ 1,613,340.00	100.00%	71
COLLIN	JOSEPHINE	38.4	\$ 61,377.00	\$ 1,891,652.00	\$ 2,356,859.00	124.60%	23
COLLIN	ANNA	27.81	\$ 100,698.00	\$ 2,800,000.00	\$ 2,800,000.00	100.00%	367
COLLIN	BLUE RIDGE	50	\$ 30,157.00	\$ 1,700,000.00	\$ 1,507,871.00	88.70%	13
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>32.45</b>	<b>\$ 58,269.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,750,998.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,805,614.00</b>	<b>102.70%</b>	<b>100</b>
COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
COOKE	FORESTBURG	13.6	\$ 14,500.00	\$ 197,200.00	\$ 197,200.00	100.00%	13
COOKE	ERA	14.06	\$ 28,441.00	\$ 399,999.00	\$ 2,399,999.00	100.00%	62
COOKE	VALLEY VIEW	10	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 450,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	88.90%	282
COOKE	COLLINSVILLE	11	\$ 41,273.00	\$ 454,000.00	\$ 454,000.00	100.00%	20
COOKE	VALLEY VIEW	64.9	\$ 17,965.00	\$ 1,165,974.00	\$ 1,165,974.00	100.00%	91
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>22.71</b>	<b>\$ 28,436.00</b>	<b>\$ 533,435.00</b>	<b>\$ 523,435.00</b>	<b>97.80%</b>	<b>94</b>
COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
DENTON	PONDER	10	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	100.00%	27
DENTON	JUSTIN	76.75	\$ 25,007.00	\$ 1,625,000.00	\$ 1,919,250.00	118.10%	174
DENTON	CELINA	32.12	\$ 207,036.00	\$ 6,950,000.00	\$ 6,650,000.00	95.70%	80
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>39.62</b>	<b>\$ 90,681.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,991,667.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,989,750.00</b>	<b>104.60%</b>	<b>94</b>
COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
GRAYSON	WHITESBORO	11	\$ 29,545.00	\$ 330,000.00	\$ 325,000.00	98.50%	243
GRAYSON	GUNTER	12.65	\$ 31,633.00	\$ 430,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	93.00%	323
GRAYSON	WHITESBORO	17.57	\$ 25,618.00	\$ 526,990.00	\$ 450,000.00	85.40%	311
GRAYSON	BELLS	24.07	\$ 18,947.00	\$ 540,000.00	\$ 456,000.00	84.40%	110
GRAYSON	BELLS	40.92	\$ 23,460.00	\$ 977,000.00	\$ 960,000.00	98.30%	12
GRAYSON	SHERMAN	39.94	\$ 31,297.00	\$ 1,250,000.00	\$ 1,250,011.00	100.00%	471
GRAYSON	COLLINSVILLE	30.89	\$ 48,987.00	\$ 1,637,170.00	\$ 1,513,218.00	92.40%	100
GRAYSON	HOWE	61.51	\$ 59,015.00	\$ 3,965,000.00	\$ 3,630,000.00	91.60%	287
GRAYSON	WHITEWRIGHT	200.51	\$ 26,300.00	\$ 5,273,360.00	\$ 5,273,360.00	100.00%	571
GRAYSON	HOWE	61.16	\$ 58,668.00	\$ 3,600,000.00	\$ 3,588,000.00	99.70%	1829
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>50.02</b>	<b>\$ 35,347.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,852,952.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,784,559.00</b>	<b>94.30%</b>	<b>426</b>
COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
MONTAGUE	SAINT JO	13.5	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 198,450.00	\$ 189,000.00	95.20%	487
MONTAGUE	BOWIE	12.46	\$ 16,051.00	\$ 225,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	88.90%	335
MONTAGUE	NOCONA	34.56	\$ 8,261.00	\$ 301,875.00	\$ 285,528.00	94.60%	324
MONTAGUE	NOCONA	45	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 357,750.00	\$ 315,000.00	88.10%	659
MONTAGUE	NOCONA	58.75	\$ 6,750.00	\$ 440,625.00	\$ 396,562.00	90.00%	754
MONTAGUE	BOWIE	121.5	\$ 7,942.00	\$ 1,397,250.00	\$ 965,000.00	69.10%	132
MONTAGUE	FORESTBURG	150.06	\$ 11,929.00	\$ 1,899,750.00	\$ 1,790,000.00	94.20%	44
MONTAGUE	SAINT JO	25	\$ 17,500.00	\$ 437,500.00	\$ 437,500.00	100.00%	14
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>\$ 11,179.00</b>	<b>\$ 657,275.00</b>	<b>\$ 572,324.00</b>	<b>90.00%</b>	<b>344</b>
COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
WISE	SUNSET	12.52	\$ 12,141.00	\$ 148,500.00	\$ 152,000.00	102.40%	76
WISE	BRIDGEPORT	10.89	\$ 18,356.00	\$ 199,900.00	\$ 199,900.00	100.00%	101
WISE	DECATUR	11	\$ 23,634.00	\$ 291,765.00	\$ 260,000.00	89.10%	379
WISE	ALVORD	21.2	\$ 15,047.00	\$ 319,000.00	\$ 319,000.00	100.00%	134
WISE	DECATUR	12.47	\$ 25,982.00	\$ 324,000.00	\$ 324,000.00	100.00%	398
WISE	ALVORD	74.96	\$ 12,673.00	\$ 1,040,000.00	\$ 950,000.00	91.30%	138
	<b>AVG</b>	<b>23.84</b>	<b>\$ 17,972.00</b>	<b>\$ 387,194.00</b>	<b>\$ 367,483.00</b>	<b>97.10%</b>	<b>204</b>

# Mammals and Avian Influenza

By Barry Whitworth, DVM

At the writing of this article, High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has been detected in more than 83 million domestic poultry in the United States. The outbreak includes commercial and backyard flocks.

Most people are aware that poultry may succumb to Avian Influenza but may not know that other animals can be infected with the virus. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a variety of mammals have been infected with Avian Influenza H5N1 in the U.S.

The list of more than 200 mammals includes bears, foxes, skunks, coyotes, etc. Even marine animals such as dolphins and seals have been found with the virus. Current Avian Influenza H5N1 infections in poultry, mammals, and livestock in the U.S. can be found at the Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza website at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections>.

Recently, ruminants have been diagnosed with Avian Influenza H5N1 in the U.S. The World Organization for Animal Health reported that neonatal goats displaying neurological clinical signs and death were positive for Avian Influenza.

The farm was located in Stevens County Minnesota. The poultry on the farm had recently been depopulated due to HPAI H5N1. According to AVMA News, 10 goats died that ranged in age from five to nine days old. Five of the goat kids tested positive for the virus.

The strain of Avian Influenza found in the goats was very similar to the previous HPAI H5N1 strain found in the chickens and ducks. How the goat kids were infected is still under investigation. However,



Direct contact with chickens is not the only way to be exposed to the pathogens they carry. (Courtesy photo)

the goats and poultry shared the same area and water source.

Over the past several weeks, veterinarians and dairymen have been reporting unusual illnesses in dairy cattle in Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas.

According to AVMA News and

other reports, the illness appeared in approximately 10 percent of the herd. The USDA reported that the illness had a rapid onset and tended to be in older lactating cattle. Clinical signs noticed were a decrease in appetite and milk production.

Cows had thick yellow colostrum-like milk. Some cattle had abnormal feces and fevers.

Some respiratory signs were noticed. According to veterinarians involved in treating the cattle, the most helpful treatment was intravenous and oral fluids. Most

cattle recovered in two to three weeks.

After a variety of test were performed on the cattle with the illness described above, no clear cause of the disease was found. This initiated the USDA, Food and Drug Administration, and Center for Disease Control and Prevention to begin a disease investigation. On March 25, they reported that HPAI H5N1 had been found in the dairy cattle in Kansas, and Texas. Since this initial announcement, sick cattle in New Mexico, Idaho, Michigan, and Ohio were confirmed with the virus and other states were awaiting test results. Whether a correlation exists between the HPAI H5N1 diagnosis and illness in the dairy cattle is still to be determined.

HPAI H5N1 causes severe clinical signs in domestic poultry and normally results in high mortality rates.

At the writing of this article, clinical signs in cattle have been mild and no cattle have died. For this reason, several groups have proposed that HPAI H5N1 should not be used to reference the disease in cattle. The adoption of Influenza A Virus-Bovine (IAV-B) or Bovine Influenza A Virus has been proposed. IAV-B will be used in the remainder of this article as the name of the virus.

Prevention of IAV-B and/or other foreign animal diseases relies heavily on biosecurity. Livestock producers should have a proper biosecurity protocol in place.

One key to biosecurity is to try to prevent contact with wildlife. While this can be difficult, keeping wild birds away from feeding and watering areas should be a priority. For more information on biosecurity, livestock producers should visit The Center for Food Security and Public Health at <https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/>.

The finding of IAV-B in dairy cattle has no impact on the safety of U.S. milk and dairy products. Milk from all sick dairy cattle is

discarded and pasteurization kills most bacteria, viruses such as IVA-B, and other pathogens.

On April 1, 2024, the CDC reported a positive human case of Avian Influenza H5N1. The person had been close contact with dairy cattle thought to be infected with IAV-B.

The patient has conjunctivitis and is recovering. This human infection does not change the CDC's assessment of H5N1 virus human health risk. The risk continues to be low. However, individuals that deal with animals or birds suspected of having Avian Influenza virus should wear proper protective equipment.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Further testing will be required to understand the role that HPAI H5N1 virus played or did not play in the above situations. In the meantime, livestock producers who have questions about sick animals should contact their veterinarian. Also, livestock producers should be protecting their livestock with a good biosecurity plan.


Livestock producers wanting additional information on IAV-B in ruminants should contact their veterinarian and/or their county extension agent.

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# Noble Learning:

## How to Help Your Ranch and Pastures Recover After a Wildfire

By Marilyn Cummins

As devastating as wildfires can be, affected ranchers may find unexpected opportunities as the healing begins, Noble regenerative ranching advisors say.

No ranch family wants to go through the devastation of a wildfire. Whether a localized fire or a giant one like the recent Smokehouse Creek Fire in Texas, wildfires can exact a high toll in lost infrastructure, lost animals and the loss of forage needed for those which remain. There are, however, opportunities and even potential bright spots to consider when beginning the recovery process after such a fire, according to ranch advisors at Noble Research Institute. Three of them recently discussed their thoughts and recommendations for livestock and pasture management, infrastructure repair and even new enterprise directions after a wildfire.

### Grass will grow back with moisture and time.

“Food for cattle is the thing that’s going to be first and foremost on producers’ minds right after a fire,” says Josh Gaskamp, Noble regenerative ranching advisor and manager. While the first instinct might be to plant new forage crops, he says “that forage is resilient. It’s evolved with fire. If their land was dominated by perennial warm-season plants, it will come back.”

What he would recommend planting to get quick growth and food for grazing livestock would be a different functional group,



After a fire, grass will grow back with moisture and time. (Photo courtesy Noble Research Institute)

like cool-season annuals, such as small grains, as well as legumes like vetch and clover. And, when “weeds” start coming up on their own, “don’t spray ‘em, use ‘em,” he says. Plants like broomweed and ragweed are “extremely palatable for cattle following a wildfire, and those first leaves are very nutritious.” Such strategies “will buy some time for the perennial warm-season grasses to come back into production. The seed is there,” Gaskamp says. “They’re going to come back from a wildfire just like they would from prescribed fire. Obviously, yes, they need moisture, and they need time to recover.”

Allowing that time for grass to

recover is essential, says Travis Jones, Noble regenerative ranching advisor.

“At this time of year, if (ranchers) had only part of their ranch burn, they’re going to want to utilize the other part of the ranch to feed cattle so they can give enough recovery time to the burned area,” he says. “We want that burned area to get to phase two growth before grazing it, ideally.

“If fresh growth is all they’ve got, they’re going to have to utilize phase-one grass. But if so, they need to be intentional about it and just take the top bite and move on.”

Gaskamp agrees about rotating cattle quickly between paddocks

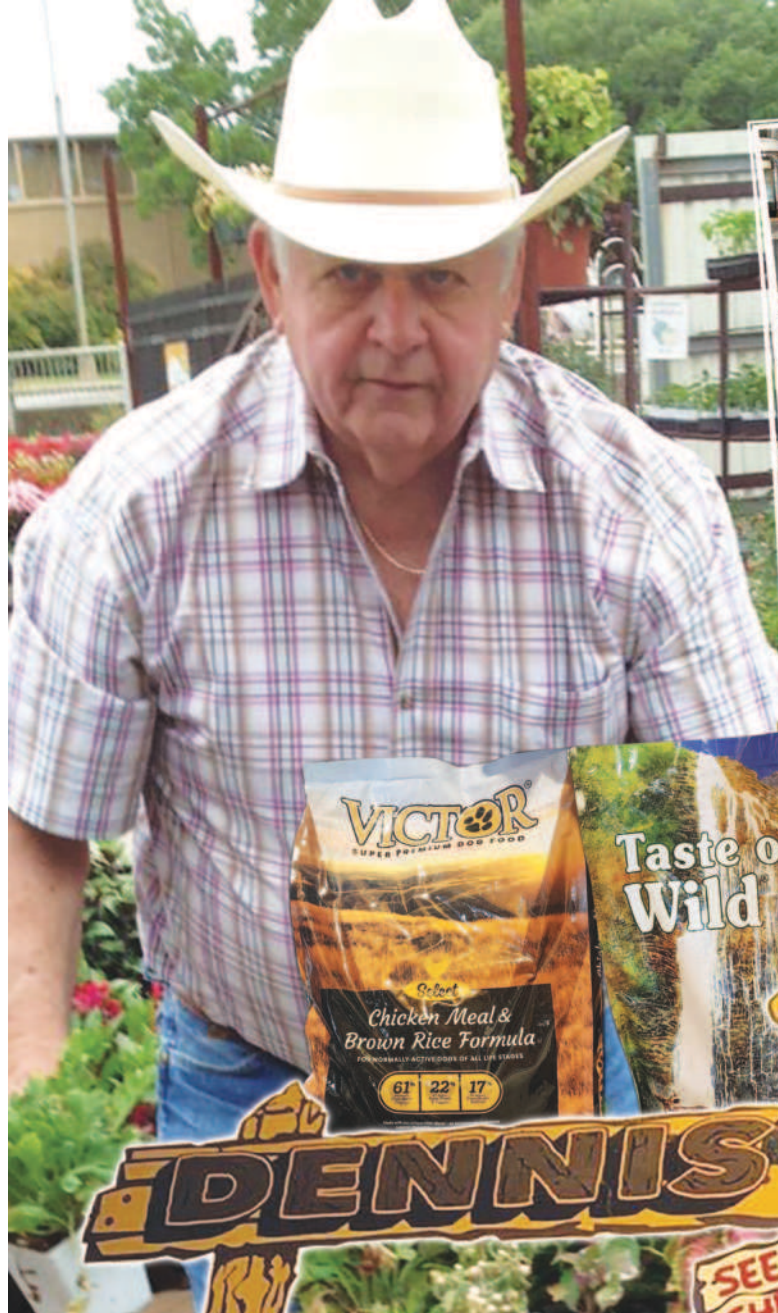
when grazing new growth “to provide the most recovery possible for our forages, especially going into the spring as they’re just getting started.”

### Use hay strategically and carefully.

If burned pastures and fencing make grazing impractical or impossible at first, feeding hay is often the first option. Gaskamp says to be strategic and careful when doing so.

If buying hay to get through the first few months, “don’t just buy the cheapest hay you can find,” he says. “Find some hay that comes from a reputable source,” or else you may be spreading and seed-

**Continued on page 22**



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ing invasive, problem species out over your pasture. With donated hay of unknown origin, “mitigate that risk by feeding hay on poorer soil you’re trying to improve or in a ‘sacrifice area’ where you can control the future of that area.”

Hay also comes into play as a roughage supplement, as cattle grazing new growth after a fire may start to have loose manure due to high protein levels. Alternatively, Gaskamp says, if cattle are grazing older forage on an area spared by the fire, they may need a protein supplement.

“It’s very specific to each rancher,” he says. “Pay attention to the animal’s condition, manure scores, things like that, to determine what the livestock are missing” in their diet.

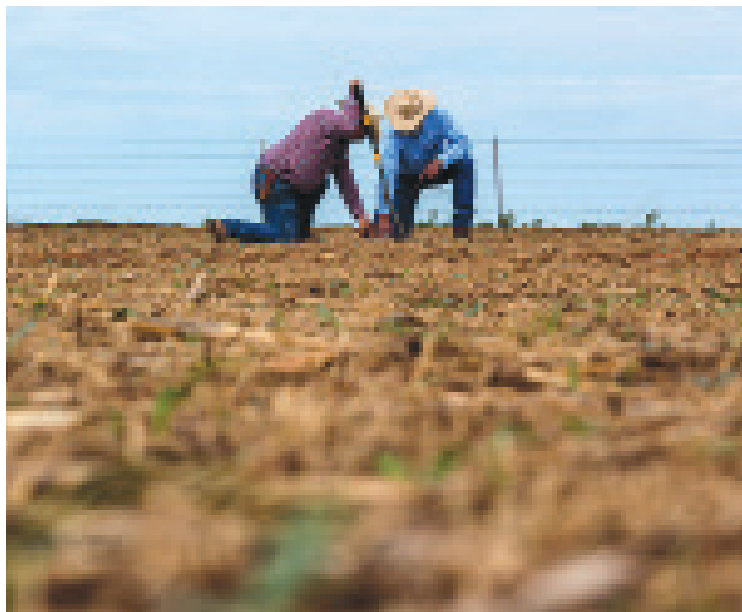
**Take the opportunity to reevaluate fencing.**

The need to move animals to different paddocks quickly and often while pastures recover, as with regenerative grazing, could be an incentive to repair burned ranch fencing with different infrastructure, Jones says.

“Maybe the ranch had excessive interior permanent, five-wire fences,” he says. Now, if they want to incorporate a regenerative ranching scheme to target different areas of the ranch, or even to try a different species of grazing animal that needs different infrastructure, “this may be a prime opportunity.”

Gaskamp says if a goal is to be more adaptive with grazing, a rancher may want to do a lot more with temporary fencing, or electric fencing instead of permanent fence.

“So instead of 7 miles of fence on their 160-acre property, they may have only one mile of fence now,” he says. “This also may be the opportunity to say, ‘How do I holistically think about grazing every acre of this ranch?’ and look at getting water to the areas where I historically haven’t had it, and fencing in a way that I can utilize more of the ranch.”



Take the opportunity to reevaluate fencing. (Photo courtesy Noble Research Institute)

**Opportunities with brush after wildfire.**

Gaskamp also points out that in contrast to a prescribed pasture burn, wildfire is likely to have burned through forest or woodland rather than stopping at the edge of the forested area.

“That opens an opportunity for those ranches to now utilize different types of forage that weren’t available to their livestock before,” he says. For example, greenbrier “is a highly nutritious plant that cattle love, but they can’t reach it in the woods because it’s up in the canopy of the trees. But if the wildfire went through there, it likely knocked that greenbrier back to the ground where it’s accessible by livestock now. That’s another place to get food for cattle right after a wildfire.”

In addition, says Charles Rohla, senior regenerative ranching advisor at Noble, ranchland with a lot of brush encroachment that is suddenly cleared out by wildfire “needs to be managed, or they’re going to have an explosion of that brush coming back worse than before.”

As someone who grew up near where the Smokehouse Creek Fire occurred, he has seen that happen.

Rohla recommends using high-stock-density, adaptive grazing a couple of months after the burn to stem that brush encroachment as it starts to regrow.

“They can utilize their livestock to do that instead of chemicals,” he says. Depending on the kind of brush, if cattle aren’t keeping it down well enough, “something like a goat might do a better job.”

**Is it time to try another species or enterprise?**

Gaskamp picks up on that point, saying, “It’s a good time to evaluate what enterprise you have on your land. If a producer was thinking about small ruminants for a while, and if now they’re having to offload cattle because they don’t have enough feed, he says this might be the encouragement they need to switch that enterprise.

“We need to be adaptive if we want the business of ranching to be successful,” he says. “If the best thing for my business is to not sell pizza anymore; now it’s to sell chicken nuggets, I’d better sell chicken nuggets, or I’m going to go out of business.”

Rohla acknowledges that talking about choosing a different enterprise after a disaster like a

wildfire “is not a fun conversation to get into. But it is an opportunity to reassess your operation, and maybe even change to a different species all together.”

**Looking ahead at forage supply and stocking**

Rohla says if it had to happen, “this is the best time of year that a wildfire could have occurred. We’re getting into springtime; things are greening up.” As producers look ahead, however, he encourages them to set triggers based on rainfall and forage growth by a given date “so they are not depleting their forage resource on their land and therefore reducing the carrying capacity of their land long-term.” Rohla recommends having strategies to either cull a portion of the herd or find a way to move them to other grazing land if needed to have adequate forage, “especially since we’re hitting a La Niña year and there’s a chance that we don’t get the rains necessary to really rejuvenate that burned area.”

For landowners in the area of Texas that burned, he advises not basing regrowth expectations on last year, when rain was plentiful. Use production levels from two or three years before for comparison.

“This is a good opportunity for ranchers to investigate the true carrying capacity of their ranch and make sure they are not overstocked to do further damage to their ranchland,” he says. If pastures are overgrazed, “it won’t allow the plants to recover, hurting not only their forage, but also their soil health. Total production of forage is going to continue to go down over time.”

*Editor’s Note: Josh Gaskamp, Charles Rohla and Travis Jones are three of the facilitators of Noble Grazing Essentials, a three-day, hands-on, in-person course that gives ranchers and farmers the tools they need to assess forage production and carrying capacity to design and implement grazing plans that work for them, their livestock and their land.*



# Noble Learning:

## Don't Forget Your Horses When Making Regenerative Grazing

By Laura Nelson

**T**he same principles apply as when grazing ruminants, with adjustments for horses' grazing habits and needs.

Several years before Joe Pokay started as general ranch manager at Noble Research Institute, he experimented with adaptively grazing his working horses, moving them from one part of the pasture to another to help the grass.

"I just knew I never liked the way the horse traps looked, and they're usually right by your house," Pokay says. "When I first started, I didn't really understand what I was doing with the rest periods and all that," he says, but as he fully adopted adaptive multi-paddock grazing, he found that "a horse pasture doesn't have to be

'sacrificial' land."

"Every acre matters," Pokay says. "If I apply the same principles to the 25 acres my horses graze as I do to the rest of the ranch, it'll benefit from the same positive effects: fresh grass, better nutrition, better health for the animals, better health for the soil, and I'm all about that."

### Same soil health principles, different expectations.

If you want to apply regenerative practices to every acre, start by simply recognizing the ways your horses are, in fact, going to differ from your commodity livestock.

"If a cow falls off, loses condition, doesn't get bred back, she's pretty primed to be culled. But

I'm not going to do that with my horses," Pokay says. "I'm not going to wreck a good horse by trying to graze them too tight. There are some concessions I'll make to keep a good horse around. But I'm not going to wreck my soil to do it."

It is true that because of their top teeth, horses tend to graze closer to the ground. That can be especially damaging to tender, new growth.

"The hardest part of grazing horses is to just keep them moving fast enough to maintain condition, applying enough density, and allowing the tender stuff a chance to come back and regenerate after that first bite," he says.

Plants may need a longer re-

covery period after a horse graze than a ruminant graze, but Pokay says the key is to pay close attention to the plants, no matter the animals you're using.

"You can't just wholesale apply a certain management to all horses, because some horses handle grazing differently than others," he says. With regenerative management, always use frequent observations of the animals, plants, and land as your guide.

Perhaps the most challenging part of managing horses' grazing is the fact that for most, the herd size is sometimes just one or a handful of horses. With these differences in mind, here are the top five lessons he's learned while

**Continued on page 27**

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- 20 A Bar Ranch Black Baldy fall bred heifers safe to Hinkson & Schilling Ranch Angus bulls. To start 9-12-24. Will be sorted into 30-day calving periods.
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- 40 Red Angus 3-5 year old fall bred cows. Safe to Angus bulls.
- 60 Brangus 3-5 year old fall bred cows. Safe to Angus bulls.
- 42 Black Baldy 3-5 year old fall bred cows. Safe to Angus bulls.

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## Continued from page 23

incorporating his horses into a regenerative grazing plan:

### 1. Create stock density, even with small numbers.

As with ruminant animals, the key when grazing horses is still to create opportunity for adequate plant rest and recovery. With small numbers on small acreage, that often means creating many very small paddocks.

At times, Pokay has used paddocks of less than one-tenth of an acre, equating to roughly 100,000 pounds of stock density with his five horses. He saves that heavy density for high-impact grazing, like in the middle of summer to knock down tall, warm-season plant growth. He moves his horses through very small grazing cells quickly in order to make an impact and give the grazed grass a long recovery time.

When new grass emerges early in the season, he grazes larger paddocks and tries to keep the horses moving to avoid potentially damaging the tender plants. It might sound like a lot of work to build so many small paddocks, but Pokay says at those sizes, it's a simple task.

"Remember at this scale, you're building fence in feet, not miles," he says.

### 2. Consider mechanical harvest if the horses are too choosy.

Even with a high stock density, he doesn't always get the even graze he desires.

"Horses can be a little more picky, so sometimes I end up with tall plants that are oxidizing," he says. When he sees leftover, dead growth piling up, he has followed grazing with a brush hog (rotary cutter) to create thatch and ground cover. Be prepared to let the land fully recover after a mechanical harvest like this, he says. Depending on local conditions and weather, it might take up to 200 to 250 days for the forage to grow to grazing height.

He has also had success with brush-hogging before a light



Consider mechanical harvest if the horses are too choosy.

graze, laying the grass down for the horses to eat clippings off the ground.

**3. Use smart solutions to keep water from being your limiting factor.** An advantage of building small grazing cells close to a house or other outbuildings when possible can be the presence of convenient water hydrants. To take advantage of this, Pokay mounted a float onto the side of a heavy-duty, two-wheeled hand cart. Now it's a portable water tank he can reach with simple garden hoses to fill, then easily dump and roll on to the next paddock.

**4. Get creative with paddock shapes, sizes for back-grazing success.** Even with a convenient, mobile watering system, Pokay still uses back-grazing to keep horses moving to fresh grass without having to move equipment constantly. Back-grazing allows animals to return to a previously grazed area, usually in order to return to a fixed point of water

or shade.

"The problem is, when you're back-grazing to water, it's really hard to not let that area around the water get way more impact than anywhere else," Pokay says.

Over years of experimentation, what he's liked most is an inverted-triangle paddock, with water in the middle of the wide, triangle base. As he moves animals away from the water source to the triangle point, the paddock sizes get incrementally smaller.

He creates the same effect using a lane design that back-grazes to water or shade by varying the amount of newly allocated grass each day.

"By the time I get to the end, I might be only giving them five feet of fresh grass at the end of the fence, whereas at the beginning they got 50 feet. But that five-foot area grazed for one day gets the same impact as the big, 50-foot area near the water that might have had five days' worth

of grazing on it."

**5. Regain overused areas with variation, focused recovery.** In some cases, he's built a travel lane that leads animals back to shade or water, creating what he admits is a short-term sacrifice.

"Especially one summer, during the drought, when it was so hot I had this one permanently fenced trap they had to come back to for shade, so it looked like a dry lot," Pokay says.

But that fall, he spread old hay over the area and broadcast a combination of rye, wheat and winter pea seed. With good winter moisture and 200 days of rest, an abundant crop reclaimed the bare ground.

"That stuff was over eight inches tall, and I grazed it three or four times with the horses after that," Pokay says. "So, you can reclaim ground, and you can fix those problem areas, if you apply the principles."

**Continued on page 28**




**Continued from page 27**  
**The results? Happier horses,  
healthier soil.**

Now a couple years into grazing this land, Pokay says he's beginning to see more diversity in the native grasses.

"There's an area right behind my house that was all johnson-grass when I moved in, and just last fall, I started seeing some big bluestem come in again. That's really encouraging to me."

The quick moves between paddocks when flies are hatching help keep the fly load down, he's noticed, and reduce the need for a de-worming treatment to once a year. The goal he continues to work toward with his horses, as well as with all livestock on the Noble Ranches, is to graze them year-round.

"So, it's good for the horses and their well-being, and it's good for the soil, and my ultimate goal is to improve the soil," he says. 



Regain overused areas with variation and focused recovery. A couple years into following this grazing plan, Pokay says he's beginning to see more diversity in the native grasses. (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)



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# The American

By Krista Lucas Wynn

The American Western Weekend on March 8-9 at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, was a weekend full of rodeo competition that fans looked forward to for the past 10 years. The night of the American rodeo is something cowboys and cowgirls have worked hard for, in order to have a chance to win a \$1,000,000 prize.

The top five from the 2023 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo were invited to compete alongside five contenders. The invitees were vying for a \$100,000 paycheck for first place, and if a qualifier won their event and was the only qualifier to do so, he or she walked away with \$1,000,000.

In the bareback riding, Kade Sonnier, Keenan Hayes, Jess Pope, and Tilden Hooper made it out of the long round of 10 to advance to the final four-shootout round. WNFR qualifier, Sonnier, made a 90.5-point ride on Agent Lynx to win the \$100,000.

Breakaway ropers Josie Conner, Martha, Angelone, Jordan Jo Hollabaugh, and Sarah Angelone were the top four moving on. It took a 2.4-second run to make it into the short go. Sarah, the younger Angelone sister, roped her second calf in 2.16 seconds to win first.

In the team roping, veterans Luke Brown and Hunter Koch beat out Derrick Begay and Colter Todd, Coy Rahlmann and Billy Jack Saebens, and Shay Dixon Carroll and Logan Moore with a time of 4.94 seconds. NFR steer wrestler, J.D. Struxness threw his steer in 4.6 seconds to win the big paycheck, beating out Stephen Mullins, Dalton Massey and Stan Branco.

Saddle bronc riders Kade Bruno, Damian Brennan, Sage Newman, and Brody Cress, all WNFR qualifiers, qualified for the shoot-out round.



The American Rodeo, along with the American Performance Horseman event, was aired for the first time on Fox and featured superstar music entertainers Luke Bryan, Aaron Watson and Post Malone. (Courtesy photo)

Newman, no stranger to pressure under the bright lights, rode Dandy Delight for 89.5 points, barely edging out second-place finisher Bruno by half a point.

In the calf roping, world champions Haven Meged and Shad Mayfield battled it out for first place. Meged would win the long round in 6.95 seconds, but it was Mayfield who walked away victorious after a 7.06-second run for \$100,000.


Leading up to the barrel racing, there were several contenders in the mix for the \$1,000,000.

However, Brandon Cullins was the only one to win the final four shootout for the \$1,000,000 check, becoming the first male barrel racer to win the event. Cullins is a full-time trainer with his wife, Emily Efurd. Mindy Holloway, featured in last month's lead-up to the American Rodeo, made a great run to just miss the final four cutoff. It took a 15.428 to make it back, and Holloway ran a 15.487, proving just how tough the barrel race really is.

Creek Young, Jeff Askey, Cody Teel, and Chase Dougherty all

rode their bulls for eight seconds to make it to the final round.

Young made an 89.25-point ride on Glory Days to win the \$100,000 paycheck. Teel and Askey were in the running for the \$1,000,000, until Young edged out both contenders.

The American Rodeo, along with the American Performance Horseman event, was aired for the first time on Fox and featured superstar music entertainers Luke Bryan, Aaron Watson and Post Malone. It is a must-see event for rodeo and music fans alike. 

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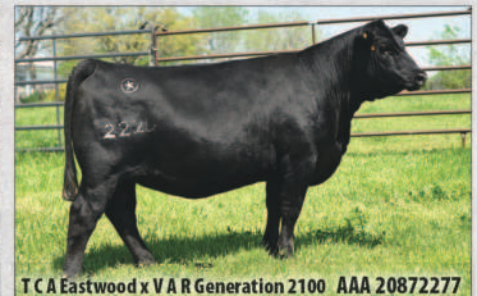


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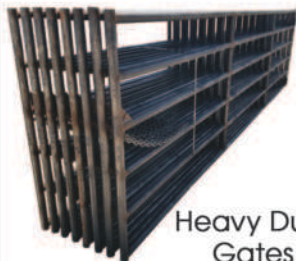
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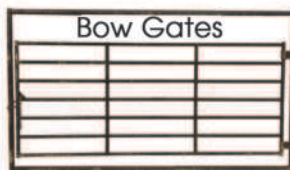
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# Isaac Hawkins, Jr., 2023-2024 Giving



FFA is an organization made up of state associations, and at the helm of the Texas FFA is a team of 12 officers representing their respective areas within the Lone Star State. (Photo courtesy Texas FFA Association)



# Weston Parr ing Back and Growing Forward



Future Farmers of America was founded by a group of farmers in 1928 with the mission of preparing the next generation of agriculture. It has done just that during its 95-year history, as the organization works to give back to others by following its motto, “learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve.”  
**Continued on page 38**

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FFA is an organization made up of state associations, and at the helm of the Texas FFA is a team of 12 officers representing their respective areas within the Lone Star State.

These individuals dedicate a year of their lives as they serve members, provide leadership, and work together with the state staff and board of directors to develop policy and lead the organization of over 177,000 members.

North Texas is represented by Area IV and Area V, stretching from Wilbarger County to Bell County and from Runnels County to Grayson County.

This year, those chosen to lead this great area are State President Isaac Hawkins Jr., Area IV, and State Vice President Weston Parr, Area V.

These young leaders share a drive to give back to the organization that has given to them as they work to support FFA members while preparing for a future in the agricultural industry.

**Isaac Hawkins, Jr.**

From the 12 selected representatives, delegates elect a president and first vice president, with the remaining 10 serving as vice presidents from their respective area associations.

The selection process consists of a popular vote by delegates at the state convention, which accounts for 40 percent of the decision, and a committee process that includes a written knowledge exam, worth 10 percent, and an interview, accounting for 50 percent. This year, after all was said and done, Hawkins was named this year's Texas FFA President.

Hawkins grew up as part of a large, blended family with five sisters and three brothers. While he says he did not grow up in agriculture, his youth was spent outside fishing and doing all things outdoors with his father, whom he calls his best friend.

As he entered Hirschi High School in Wichita Falls, Hawkins



This year, those chosen to lead the North Texas area are State President Isaac Hawkins Jr., Area IV (left), and Weston Parr, Area V (Right). Photo courtesy Texas FFA Association

knew he wanted to be a vet but was unsure of what courses to take to

*"I am someone who says if God gives you a gift, use it, because what He gives you, He can take. I decided I was going to use this gift I have and dedicate it to giving back to an organization that has given me so much."  
- Isaac Hawkins, Jr.*

set himself on that path. "I signed up for ag principals just because they had animals in the description.

The first day of class we talked

about churning butter, and I went to my school counselor that same

day and told her to change my schedule immediately, but she refused. She made me stay there," Hawkins laughed. "Luckily, I had an incredible ag teacher, and she

really helped me to fall in love with the program."

During his high school FFA career Hawkins competed in the job interview, radio, quiz and agriculture advocacy contests. He also took courses that studied pork science, vet science and had a livestock project his senior year. All of this allowed for hands-on experiences, and led to him receiving an internship with a hometown licensed veterinarian.

However, his primary project has always been reptiles. Hawkins and his family operate a self-owned reptile breeding operation, Country Boy Exotics, breeding ball pythons, blood pythons, and bearded dragons.

"It is different," Hawkins said. "Back in 2017, we decided we wanted to start building our collection and turn it into a business. It just grew from our love of reptiles and is something we have been able to nurture and make our own."


Hawkins fell in love with FFA when he realized there is a place for everyone in the organization, including someone like him, with a nontraditional agriculture background.

"I want others to know that, especially coming from someone like me, a kid who came from no ag background who literally deals with reptiles, still found his place in FFA. There's a place for every single person. When it comes to future opportunities like your ag teacher asking you to go on trips, just say yes. You never know what power that opportunity may have for you or what doors it may open. It has changed my life in so many ways, and I feel like it can change yours."

Hawkins started as a chapter officer his sophomore year. He went on to be a district officer his junior year and an area officer his senior year. He was nearing the end of his area officer year still unsure if he wanted to run for state office.

"I was already tapped into


**Continued on page 40**



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**Continued from page 38**

college, ready to go to school and be a student. I was really on the fence on whether I wanted to dedicate another year of my life to FFA,” Hawkins admitted. “But I was talking to some of my advisors, and one of them had told me, ‘Isaac, you have this ability to connect with students that we have never seen before.’ When I heard that, I was kind of taken aback because that is a powerful statement to make. She told me I had a gift that I needed to use. I am a big believer in gifts, and I am someone who says if God gives you a gift, use it, because what He gives you, He can take. I decided I was going to use this gift I have and dedicate it to giving back to an organization that has given me so much.”

Hawkins said he wanted the chance to pour into students and advocate for both traditional and nontraditional agricultural students.

The process of becoming the Texas FFA President was a grueling one, but Hawkins found himself enjoying connecting with others throughout.

“It was interesting. We had our initial round of interviews, and our test, then gave our speeches at our respective area conventions. Being able to give my speech, talk to members and truly let them see the authentic real me at all times, was very important to me,” Hawkins explained.

“I was able to do that, so hearing my name called as the next officer from Area IV at my convention was already a huge blessing. I always told members that I didn’t fill out a state president application, I filled out a state officer application because that was the ultimate job I wanted.

I knew whether I heard my name called for the travel team or not, I was already a state officer. So, to hear my name called is just an honor words cannot even describe. I thank God every day I can do what I do, and I love every minute of it.”

Being named Texas FFA President meant Hawkins would defer his first year of college to travel the Lone Star State. Hawkins, together with the vice president, make up the travel team. They visit approximately three schools a day, five days a week.

“When it comes to member engagement, I get to see FFA members every single day. One of the most beautiful things has been that no chapter is the same. No area is the same. How FFA looks up in the Panhandle versus how it looks in South Texas is completely different. Being able to talk to members and get their experiences of where they come from, and who they are as people, you get to see little parts of the world. That is something I have loved the most. You understand people a lot more when you see where they come from.”

The biggest obstacle for the state president during the past year has been taking care of himself, a hard thing to do when on the road every single day. Yet Hawkins explained you must take care of yourself to be able to be there for the members.

Fortunately, there has been an incredible group of state staff and board members who look after the state officers and take good care of them, along with a large network of past members across the state who are always more than happy to help in any way possible.

It is all worth it for Hawkins as he has daily opportunities to sit and engage with members.

“My favorite part honestly is having a good laugh. There are two things that are an easy way to get to my heart, laughter and music. Being able to share jokes and music tastes and engage members in that sense where we can just sit down at a table and have a good meal, make a few jokes, and then talk are things I love to do the most. That is where I shine. I love being able to meet members where they are at,” Hawkins said.

As he gathers with FFA mem-



After his year of service is complete, Isaac Hawkins, Jr. will attend Tarleton State University where he will be a pre-vet major studying animal science for his undergraduate degree. (Photos courtesy Texas FFA Association)

bers, he says his one goal is an abstract one; to be forgotten.

“The reason I say that is because when you think of people who have made such incredible impacts on our world, such as the creator of the iPhone or the traffic light, those people and the things they did are so synonymous that when you think of it, you don’t think of the person who made it, you think of the object itself.

So, my ultimate goal at the end of the year is not that people will remember Isaac Hawkins, Jr., or the fact he was 5’5, or that he bred snakes. I want people to be able to reflect on their time in FFA. When they see that blue and gold emblem, I hope they see a sense of community. I hope they have a sense of pride and know they can always come home; they always have people who are willing to





talk to them and willing to help them. If that is the feeling I can instill within members at the end of my year, I could care less if people remember who I am at the end of the day because, for me, I have done my job.”

After his year of service is complete, Hawkins will attend Tarleton State University where he will be a pre-vet major studying animal science for his undergraduate degree. His goals are ultimately to attend graduate school and become a livestock veterinarian with a specialty in exotics.

#### Weston Parr

Parr is from the Sam Rayburn FFA chapter and the Area V Association, but the leader who now serves more than 19,100 members of Area V entered the FFA organization as a shy teenager who sat in the back of the room.

“I didn’t talk to a whole lot of people. I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life or where I could see myself, so I wasn’t involved on my high school campus,” Parr recalled.

“Then I started FFA and slowly but surely, my ag teachers worked me into attending more contests, meeting new people, and speaking. I remember the first time I gave an officer speech to my chapter. I can still remember how embarrassing it was. To see the progression from that moment to speaking on stage at the state convention in front of thousands of people. Now I feel like I can enter the industry I want and be successful all because of what FFA afforded me for five years.”

There is not much Parr did not do during his time in high school. His contest participation included chapter conducting, wool judging, cotton judging, wildlife, and job interview, but his favorite was extemporaneous speaking, which he did not start until his senior year of high school.

“I wish I could go back to my freshman, sophomore, and junior years and start that sooner. I think if I had more time, I would have



Texas FFA is a dynamic youth organization that makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.(texasffa.org)

been more successful than I already was, but that was something I didn’t realize I liked at the time. I’m not naturally somebody who

Service-Learning Proficiency title, was a National FFA Service-Learning Proficiency finalist, and a Texas FFA Extemporaneous

*“When I started I asked myself, ‘How can I be the best state officer I can be so that those who voted me into this office can see we are making an impact on their life?’ I think we, the whole team, have done an incredible job of that this year and it is something we are very proud of...”*  
- Weston Parr

likes to speak in public, but it was actually my favorite,” Parr said.

Parr won several awards during his time competing. In 2023 alone, Parr earned the Texas FFA

Speaking finalist. In addition to his CDE and LDE events during high school, he showed commercial steers at Houston, and boilers at most major shows, participated in

the county show with projects in ag mechanics, showed goats from time to time, and showed heifers until graduation.

“FFA provides invaluable resources and knowledge to be successful once you leave high school and you are out of the blue jacket for the first time. I have been a part of a lot of great organizations over the years, and they are all great in their own way, but in my opinion, FFA is the most successful at producing members of society who want to go and do something with themselves,” Parr said.

He was halfway through his time as Area V Association President and attending the national convention when he began to ponder the idea of running for state office.

“This is around the time when you usually figure out if you want to go through and be a state officer or you decide that area officer is your last run. I was unsure of where I wanted to go, but I knew I didn’t want to be done with FFA. I decided maybe it would be a good opportunity not only for me to make more friendships and connections, but also to give back to the program that allowed me to be able to do what I can do today,” Parr explained.

Somewhere along the way, Parr made the leap to run for state officer, still a little doubtful of his chances, but he at least wanted to take the opportunity.

“Lo and behold, I got it, and now I am here doing this, and it is one of the coolest things I have ever gotten the opportunity to do,” Parr said.

The state officer said the process was a grueling one. After candidates go through their interviews and their test, there is a waiting period where they do not know where they stand amongst the other candidates.

“I could not focus on anything except worrying about, ‘Am I going to be a full-time college student and state officer, or am I

**Continued on page 42**



**Continued from page 41**

going to be a full-time state officer and travel the state of Texas?" It is very gut-wrenching. Every day you wake up, and that is all you think about," Parr said.

At the state convention, his nerves were running high, but it was all worth it the moment Parr heard his name announced.

"The moment you hear your name it is like all of the bricks just fall off your shoulder," Parr said.

"The whole process is just one of those things that breaks you down, in a good way, but it is going to build you back up again. You are going to be better than you were before you started."

State officers serve a one-year term as they dedicate their time to inspiring and informing members of FFA across Texas. One day they might be meeting with a class of FFA members and the next be attending a leadership event in Austin.

In addition, Parr balances the responsibilities of his role with being a full-time college student at West Texas A&M University.

He must keep high enough grades for his scholarships and is a member of the agricultural fraternity Alpha Gamma Rho, all of which can be difficult to keep up. For example, Parr just recently returned from being gone for nearly two weeks.

"The hardest part is balancing everything. A lot of this job is being a college student while also traveling the state and getting some of the coolest opportunities that a lot of people don't get or even know about. It varies and is the most diverse job I have ever had and probably ever will have," Parr said.

His favorite part of this experience is attending events and meeting with members. He recalls when he was young and would see officers on stage or at an event. He thought they were the most important individuals who were doing an amazing job.

"Now that I get to do that,



Weston Parr balances his role with being a full-time college student at West Texas A&M University. He plans to graduate with a degree in agricultural education. (Photo courtesy Texas FFA Association)

I want to make sure those kids that were like me get interactions with me. I try to go to those kids as much as I can and meet them, add them on Instagram, ask them questions about who they are, so maybe they can go home and say, 'I met this state officer, maybe I want to do that one day. I want to be able to do what he does for other people.' That's my favorite part," Parr said.

The bit of advice he shares for

other FFA members wanting to run for office or with big goals of their own is to never deviate from their plan and never give up.

"Everything happens for a reason. You hear that all the time, but it is true. As a state officer, sometimes I don't know how I am going to get through the week. I will have five tests and several things to be submitted, and I don't have time to do it all, so balancing that is hard. But if you keep your

head down and stay focused, you will get through anything. You might think you won't, but you'll come out on the other end better than you were," Parr said.

Parr plans to graduate with a degree in agricultural education. He hopes to teach for a while before entering administration, and then hopefully one day down the road run for a state elected office in order to support farmers, ranchers, first responders, and medical personnel.

One of Parr's biggest goals entering his year as a state officer was to create ties with others, knowing it would help boost his future success and provide him opportunities to give back to agriculture in the future.

"I have very high standards for myself in life so I wanted to use this year to build connections with people that I thought I may have a run-in with at some point within my career as an educator and hopefully one day when I get into local and state policy.

I wanted to use it as a networking tool for me to shake a lot of hands and meet a lot of faces, introduce myself to a lot of people, and also at the same time, make contacts that are going to last me the rest of my life. But I also wanted to give back to the members who voted me into this office," Parr said.

"When I started I asked myself, 'How can I be the best state officer I can be so that those who voted me into this office can see we are making an impact on their life?' I think we, the whole team, have done an incredible job of that this year and it is something we are very proud of. Our travel team does a fantastic job with the workshops so getting to be a part of that is super cool. This whole year for me was about growing connections and giving back to those who gave to me in the first place."

To learn more about Texas FFA organization and its leaders, visit [texasffa.org](http://texasffa.org).



# WHEN A CITY GIRL goes country

By Annette Bridges

## Ode to a Very Good Bull

It was one of those necessary, yet very sad days in the life of a cattle rancher.

We had to say goodbye to our bull, Frankie. We returned from the agonizing drive, and I felt compelled to sit down and ponder how to write an ode to a very good bull.

I have read all the rationale on when it is time to retire a bull. The average age for many ranchers is around eight years.

Our Frankie was beyond his prime.

We probably knew last year it was about time for him to retire.

His lack of enthusiasm when he returned to the herd after his spring hiatus was a clue.

The very slow start to our spring calving this year, and cows that never conceived confirmed what we did not want to admit last year. It was time.

Frankie was a handsome and gentle giant. A Charolais mix, but he could be fierce if he felt threatened.

I remember one summer when a neighbor's Charolais bull stepped over his broken fence and leaped over ours.

He was not welcomed. This neighbor bull was significantly larger than Frankie, but that did not stop our Frankie from defending his territory.

Frankie immediately challenged the intruder into a head-butting duel and trust me when I say Frankie would not be defeated. Size does not matter when it comes to fighting for and protecting those you love. Love makes



Frankie the bull had a polite and cooperative disposition. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

you brave and strong.

What do you get when you mix a Charolais bull with black Angus cows? Stunning smokey gray calves.

Frankie produced the most beautiful calves we have ever had on our ranch, as well as one or two sets of healthy twins each year.

I know our girls appreciated

having calves fathered by Frankie. His babies were smaller than his predecessors.

Our gentle bull gave us gentle calves. His calves were the first to eat cubes out of my hand and loved to have their heads rubbed.

I honestly do not know if this is normal bull behavior, but I always loved how Frankie was the last in line on a pasture move.

I liked to think he was being chivalrous and gentlemanly and let his ladies go through the open gate before he did.

Watching our Frankie with his wife of the day was a sweet sight to behold.


When he was with his lady love he would graze beside her, give her sweet licks, and lay down next to her.

Even when mating season reached its conclusion, he remained a loving companion to his herd mates.

Frankie was a kind and patient teacher to his bull calves. I never saw him be aggressive toward or frustrated by his pack of young bulls who stayed beside him, or even in his way when it was time to inseminate. He simply waited for them to move aside so he could do his business.

Our Frankie had a polite and cooperative disposition with us and did what was wanted or commanded of him.


Even loading him up to make his last trip in our stock trailer was not difficult. You will be missed, Frankie.

I hope you know how much you were loved. 



# JESSES JEWELZ

By Jesse Kader

This month western meets safari with this fun army green jumpsuit. I love a good jumpsuit that is simple but stylish and can be accessorized in so many ways. This one especially caught my eye because of the western yoke detail. See this and more at [www.jessesjewelz.com](http://www.jessesjewelz.com) 





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# Lacey's Pantry

By Lacey Vilhauer

## Beef Chimichangas



**Total Time: One Hour | Serves 8**

### Ingredients:

1-2 cups vegetable oil  
 ½ cup diced white onion  
 2 tsp minced garlic  
 ½ TBSP chili powder  
 ¼ tsp oregano  
 ½ tsp ground cumin  
 1 lb. ground beef  
 1 tsp salt  
 ½ tsp black pepper  
 ½ to a full can of Rotel tomatoes and green chilis  
 8 (burrito-sized) flour tortillas, warmed  
 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese  
 Toppings: salsa, sour cream, guacamole, queso

### Directions:

Brown hamburger meat and onions in a large skillet until onions are slightly softened. Add in garlic chili powder, oregano and cumin. Stir and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in Rotel. Cook and stir another five minutes. Set aside.

Warm tortillas in the microwave. On each tortilla, place about ½ cup of meat mixture. Do not overfill. Top with shredded cheese. Fold sides over the meat and cheese, then fold bottom over the sides and roll up. Place all folded chimichangas, seam side down, on a large plate and repeat with remaining tortillas.

In a separate large skillet, pour enough vegetable oil to fill 2 inches full of oil. Heat oil over low heat. The oil needs to reach 375 degrees. Using tongs, lower one chimichanga at a time into the hot oil, seam side down. Fry until golden brown on both sides, 1 to 2 minutes on each side. Place cooked chimichangas on a paper towel lined to absorb oil. Repeat with the rest of the chimichangas. Serve warm with your favorite toppings.

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# Today Will Become Tomorrow

By Dal Houston

I am often amazed by the speed of changes in our technology and our lifestyle. I struggle to get my head around something new, only to find out it is now old. Here is the thing to keep in mind; what is new today, will be old tomorrow.

Recently, I came across a picture of a farm auction from the mid-1940s, and in looking at it, the picture might as well have been from the Dark Ages.

It depicted the vehicles the auction-goers drove, the machinery being sold, the people attending the auction, and so many other things

indicative of the times.


Obviously, everything shown in the picture is now an antique. The thing that grabbed my attention was the irony that at the time the picture was taken, the technology and the developments of man were at their very highest.

World War II was over, atomic weapons had been created and so many other technologies, developments and other things existed that were beyond our wildest thoughts just a few years earlier.

And yet, here I was looking at this picture that depicted what seemed to be an ancient

time.

I then realized that man today is likewise at the very top of their technology, developments and thoughts, just as those people in the picture were during the time it was taken, and for many of us, we cannot imagine right now just how much more the world can change. Many of us, myself included, think we know it all.

We think we are civilized, sophisticated and smart. What we have to remember is that, in the future, someone will look at a picture of us as we are today and likewise think, that was the Dark Ages. 

# On the Road WITH DAVE ALEXANDER



## Lyle Lovett, Artist in Residence



University of North Texas music students were in awe by Texas Music icon, Lyle Lovett recently during his visit to the Denton campus to share his music and personal secrets on navigating a successful music career.


The four-time Grammy winner has recorded 14 albums and has released 25 singles throughout his illustrious career.

He's also most famous for creating his Large Band consisting of his talented rhythm section and a full horn section.

I too have had the honor of recording with Lyle during my time with Asleep At The Wheel and being a UNT grad, I was pleasantly sur-

prised by this act of good will toward these young musicians.

Composition and arranging students were asked to arrange an original composition of Lovett's and perform it with the world renowned, One O'clock Lab Band under the direction of Alan Blaylock. One of those arrangements featured Lyle's Large Band's lead Alto Saxophonist, Brad Leali. (Pictured above with Lyle and myself.) Brad, or "Professor," as referred to by Lovett, is also a UNT grad and Professor of Saxophone at UNT.

Kudos to my Alma Mater and to Lyle Lovett for giving back to these young people. 

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# From NACs to Climate Smart Easements: Advancing 30X30

By Martha Crump

In the April issue of North Texas Farm & Ranch, I introduced the discussion of what is considered the Biden 30X30 Land Grab via the quiet attempt to push through the formation of Natural Asset Companies. If you are a landowner and have not heard about this, I encourage you to research it for your own protection. Natural Asset Companies would have been publicly tradable securities that hold rights to, and manage the productivity and ecological benefits of natural assets such as natural forests, marine areas and farmland. They place a value on natural processes. Thanks to the watchful eye of a few, NACs have been stopped for now, but make no mistake, this battle is far from over. According to the American Stewards of Liberty, the Intrinsic Exchange Group is the company responsible for the failed attempt to monetize natural processes via the development of “Natural Asset Companies.” The New York Times is already helping IEG to set the stage for a rebranding of the idea with the article they ran entitled “Nature Has Value. Could We Literally Invest In It?” which ran on Feb. 18 of this year. The NYT readily assured their readers that, “Natural asset companies would put a market price on improving ecosystems, rather than on destroying them.” That is a perfect lead-in for IEG as they had already indicated that they would be rebranding the idea in yet another attempt to create the investment vehicle.

United States Representative Mark Green (TN-07), Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, and Representative Harriet Hageman (WY-AL) introduced the Protect America’s Lands Act



Natural Asset Companies would have been publicly tradable securities that hold rights to, and manage the productivity and ecological benefits of, natural assets such as natural forests, marine areas and farmland. (Courtesy photo)

to prevent the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) from authorizing NACs on the New York Stock Exchange or any other Exchange once the initial effort to quietly do so was called out and fortunately stopped. As noted by the American Stewards of Liberty, when filing the bill, Chairman Green stated “NACs are a predatory means for foreign adversaries and radical environmentalists to control and make money off of American lands, both public and private.” Chairman Green strongly feels that, “Since public companies are open to foreign investments, anti-American interests can buy stock in an NAC, giving them ownership of our most valuable resource - land. Most concerning is that NACs could end up being a backdoor for the Chinese Com-

munist Party to control. Additionally, Senator Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming introduced a companion bill in the Senate.”

As of this point in time, Douglas Eger, the CEO of Intrinsic Exchange Group, is the apparent “lone man standing” after the NYSE withdrew its application to the SEC to create “Natural Asset Companies.” Make no mistake however, as he is already noted to have been courting new backers. He even expressed remorse during an interview with Agri-pulse, published on Jan. 24, wherein he stated that he had regrets about the previous approach and that, “We’re trying to help the farm community to get through some very difficult times,” implying there was misinformation spread about their proposal. There has

been an observable “cleaning up” of language on the IEG web pages to make the original language less offensive. As the American Stewards of Liberty have suggested, it seems a rather obvious pivot with the hope that no one remembers. An example of the redirect is seen when this original statement, “Farmers are currently compensated for producing commodity crops but not for producing clean air, water, healthy food, soil, a stable climate, or wildlife habitat (collectively, natural assets and ecosystem services). Yet producing these essential goods and services and managing resources wisely is as valuable or perhaps even more valuable, than food production.” This language was toned down to read “Yet producing

**Continued on page 55**

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**Continued from page 52**

these essential goods and services and managing resources wisely is valuable to many economic actors and to a more prosperous agricultural sector in the future.” It is a new marketing campaign, it is already well underway, and for all intents and purposes appears to again be informing those of us in agriculture that they really only want what is the best for us.

Now on to a quick look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and their March 13, 2024, announcement that they will invest \$138 million in 138 “climate-smart conservation easements” with Inflation Reduction Act funding. Unfortunately, the programs landowners will be signing up for seem to have an entirely new purpose.

One that is hidden deep inside the verbiage of the Inflation Reduction Act passed in 2022. An additional \$19.5 billion dollars were added to industry approved conservation programs landowners have been using since 1985. The names of the programs were kept the same, but the change was to the statutory purpose for the funds, thus altering what landowners were committing to carrying out. According to research done by the American Stewards for Liberty, “Few landowners are aware of the change. You won’t find it highlighted in the USDA publications or find mention of it in any of the agency literature. You must read the IRA language directly to catch the ‘bait and switch.’” The 138 climate-smart conservation easements the USDA recently announced fall under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). In its inception, this program was a part of the Food Safety Act of 1985. The intended purpose of the program is to “protect the agricultural use and future viability, and related conservation values of eligible land...” and “protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring or conserving eligible



land.” To the discerning reader, it would seem that ACEP’s funding by the IRA might have a new purpose, “...prioritize projects and activities that mitigate or address climate change through the management of agricultural production, including by reducing or avoiding greenhouse gas emissions” (IRA, HR 576 117th Congress).

This is a total flip of purpose of the ACEP program that takes us from ensuring the producers’ agriculture viability to allowing the federal government control over our agricultural production. As the American Stewards of Liberty so clearly summarize, “The IRA-funded conservation contracts must be managed to mitigate climate change at the expense of food production. Whether or not a landowner is meeting this requirement will be determined

by the federal government, which retains the right of enforcement through the federal easement, in perpetuity.” It is a “climate smart” sales pitch with billions of budget dollars aimed at convincing landowners to voluntarily sign up.

When the marketing is good and the programs are endorsed by trusted agricultural organizations, it will be easy to be drawn in. The push is to enroll as many producers into agricultural easements as possible, even going so far as to partner with environmental groups such as Ducks Unlimited, who in turn hired 10 easement acquisition specialists to assist NRCS. I will say that this information is not meant to malign any of our friends and partners in agriculture working in our local NRCS offices. We are constantly utilizing services and checking on NRCS programs that help us get done what we

need to have done and if there are funds to do that, we, like many of you, do not hesitate to apply for them. As obscure as much of the information is, by design, they may be in the dark as much as the rest of us. After all, who has time out from the daily grind to parse through obscure language in governmental documents?

To quote American author Alice Walker, “The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” You have the power to reach out to the representatives for your area. If they are not a co-sponsor of any of the bills to stop NACs then let them know how you feel about supporting the legislation to stop the underhanded land grabs and the extremist agendas. I am no longer doing it just for me but for my grandchildren and their future.

The next meeting of the WFACW will be on May 21, 2024, at the Forum, 2120 Speedway, Wichita Falls, Texas, at 11:30 a.m. if you wish to bring your lunch to eat and visit, with the business meeting starting at noon. Be sure to like and follow us on our Facebook page as well. All schedules, events and news will be posted there.

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# Noble Learning:

## Tips for Using a Digital Map App

By Laura Nelson, Noble Research Institute

A ranch map might be viewed as a guide to what you’ve got: a simple, visual reference to known information. But Josh Gaskamp, Noble Research Institute regenerative ranching advisor and manager, suggests enlarging your view of mapping tools.

“A lot of ranchers who want to introduce more regenerative grazing practices want to start with a grazing plan. Some people are big planners, so that fits them,” Gaskamp says. “But some people are journalers, and when you start to journal your grazing on a map, it turns that map into a decision-making tool.”

The difference, he says, comes down to what suits your personality and gets you closer to your grazing goals.

“For me, having a bunch of

moves planned out ahead feels too prescriptive – I get stuck on what I said I was going to do, rather than observing the forage for what I should actually do in the moment,” Gaskamp says.

Instead, he’s found guidance in using digital mapping software to track and journal his grazing decisions and observations. Using an application like Google Earth as his guide, he uses his recordings to make decisions for the future.

### Find the right application for your ranch.

There are many options to choose from, ranging from paid, grazing-specific software and applications to geo-spatial maps, mapping apps, measuring software – there’s an app and a tool for about every need you might consider. Gaskamp says if you haven’t

used a digital mapping tool on the ranch before, the simplest place to start is likely with a free tool you’re already accustomed to.

Google Maps is almost ubiquitous to most cell phone users. Google Earth is the next level of 3D mapping that uses satellite imagery from around the world. Google Earth can be downloaded for free from the app store on your smart phone or accessed on a computer at [www.earth.google.com](http://www.earth.google.com).

“There are numerous apps out there you can use to do this,” Gaskamp says. “I usually recommend Google Earth as a place to start because it’s simple. Most people have already used Google Maps or have a Google account, so it takes next to no training.”

### Start with the top three tools – polygon, pinpoint, measure.

One of the benefits of a tool like Google Earth is its ability to transfer mapping data across platforms – from your smart phone to your computer to printing out an analog version of your mapping records. While the primary function of the software is available both on the phone app and on your computer, Gaskamp says he often finds it easiest to start by setting up the original map on the computer, where he can use more precise mouse clicks. Either way, start by locating your property on the map. You’ll need a Google account in order to start and save a new project, which is where the following mapping additions will be filed. Experiment with different views and basic layer options – turn on 3D views or longitudinal grid lines – then look at the three





primary tools on the toolbar.

**1. Use the path or polygon tool to outline the boundaries of your ranch.**

Experiment using the different options for colors and shading. Gaskamp suggests using one color for the primary boundary, then use another color to start marking permanent fences. Each new polygon shape can measure the perimeter distance and the area inside the perimeter.

As he builds temporary fences, Gaskamp marks the grazing area with yet another color and saves the polygon, named by the date he moved livestock into the paddock. In the polygon's description, he may record pasture conditions on the date of move-in, how many animals he moved, what water or weather conditions were, and any other observations.

**2. Use the pin or placemark tool to note existing infrastructure.**

Most useful would be water sources, but other buildings, gates, power sources, fencing or utilities might also be of note. Add a description and change the color and size of the markers – say, denoting the capacity of different water sources with different colors. Click '+ media' to add photos of the location. This might also be a place to mark grazing exclosures or observational sites, saving photos of those locations along with monitoring notes and dates.

**3. The third primary tool in the Google Earth toolbox is the measurement tool.**

Measure distances to determine fencing needs, calculate grazing areas, measure the distance animals must travel to water sources and more.

**Use every acre of the ranch, with the most efficiency.**

On his home ranch, Gaskamp uses the visual representation of his grazing history to make sure his sheep have covered every grazeable acre in his quick-moving, adaptive grazing system.

"It really paints a picture when



On his home ranch, Gaskamp uses the visual representation of his grazing history to make sure his sheep have covered every grazeable acre in his quick-moving, adaptive grazing system. (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)

I turn on all these polygons and see, 'I still need to graze over there,' or 'I'm missing an opportunity here.' There are places that maybe I'm not grazing because it's harder for the animals to get to it, or I just don't like building fence in that particular area," Gaskamp says.

Regardless of why the area isn't shaded into the grazing log, seeing it on the map creates a stark reminder: "To be most profitable, I want to utilize every single acre on the ranch."

If you're in the early planning stages of developing a pasture or grazing plan, the measuring tools on a digital map might be a good place to start.

"We know from research that animals will only travel so far for water," Gaskamp says.

That varies depending on terrain, environment and livestock characteristics. Research how far you think your animals might travel on average, then use that as a guide to evaluate pastures. It's likely that forage beyond that distance is underutilized, and the grazing land closer to the water sources are overused. Use the map and those measurements to start planning how to use fencing or

new water sources to more evenly distribute grazing patterns.

"By journaling it on the map, I ensure that I've hit every grazeable acre on my ranch, and that I'm using it most efficiently so I can also offer the longest rest periods possible," Gaskamp says. "That's how we start to utilize every acre, which increases the carrying capacity of the ranch."

**Get honest about your grazeable acres.**

The up-to-date satellite imagery of a digital map provides a valuable view of how much of your land is actually grazeable.

"It doesn't seem like much, but once you start studying that map and take away the couple acres your house and yard sits on, the roadway and ditch, the area that's getting covered up by brush encroachment or is underwater part of the year – it all adds up," Gaskamp says. "You start to realize you've been stocking for a 90-acre piece of land that really only has 70 grazeable acres."

Google Earth Pro offers the additional feature of historic images. Google Earth Pro is also free, but requires a software download from your computer's web browser. If you use the Pro

version, look under 'view' to select 'historic imagery.'

"There, you can really see changes in your land over time," Gaskamp says. "This can offer some big 'ah-ha' moments."

Maybe Grandpa calculated his stocking rate accurately based on 90 grazeable acres, but over time, timber or brush encroachment ate away at that number, and the next generation never made the proper stocking adjustments.

Studying these changes and the current reality can help calculate truly grazeable acres so you can stock your ranch appropriately. It can also help you make a more concrete plan if you need to control brush, change grazing strategies or both to re-gain some grazeable acres.

"Journaling like this significantly changed my operation," Gaskamp says. "I'm journaling on these maps to learn. I'm journaling to help me make decisions next time I come back to that portion of the ranch. I'm journaling to keep track of animal health, animal behavior, forage quality, and I'm putting it into this digital map form so I have a really good visual representation of what I did, and how I can keep improving."

# Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean, [tonydean.tx1@gmail.com](mailto:tonydean.tx1@gmail.com)

## Bud Break

Many of us who live and work in the country take note of when mesquites leaf out in the spring. For most people, this is just a casual observation of life around us and a promise that warm weather is around the corner.

If you are interested in killing mesquite with an herbicide, “bud break” on mesquites is a significant event and signals the beginning of your planning for a successful control.

Mesquites go through a fairly predictable life cycle every year. This, of course, changes somewhat with location, weather patterns, soils, and other factors, but the overall process is very similar wherever you find mesquite.

Research during prior decades has shown us that there are times each spring when we can anticipate a good kill on mesquites with foliar application of herbicides.

Bud break signals the tree is ready to come out of its long winter dormancy.

The first leaves soon follow and carbohydrates stored in the roots begin moving up in the trees to furnish energy for leaf formation and for other forms of growth including new stems and sometimes a bean crop.

The primary goal to effectively kill the tree is to get the herbicide translocated from the leaves, where we have to apply it, down to the root system.

So, this early part of the spring, when the sap is moving up to furnish energy to grow leaves, is not the time to spray. All we accomplish is knocking the new leaves back a few days.

Recording the date of bud break will help us to predict when



These limbs are from trees less than three feet apart, but the upper limb is several days ahead of the lower tree in maturity. In applying herbicide to kill mesquites, we must wait until all trees reach the right level of maturity. (Photos courtesy Tony Dean)

the trees will begin sending carbohydrates back down to the roots. The first period of the downward translocation occurs about 42 to 63 days after bud break. The second window occurs 72 to about 85 days post-bud break.

These periods are not absolute and can be influenced by rainfall and other factors, but they are approximate periods when herbicide can be delivered to the roots of the plants.

The first window is somewhat difficult to hit, so most of us learn to apply the herbicide during the second opportunity. There are several good indicators as to when this occurs each year.

**Leaf Color**

For a period when leaves first appear, they are light green, then late in the summer, they turn dark green.

We should wait to spray until the leaves have turned from light green to dark green across the

whole pasture. After the leaves turn dark, a good rain can cause new leaves to sprout on the trees, and we must wait for them to turn dark.

**Soil Temperature**


There is a strong association between soil temperature, the period of time when the leaves change color and the movement of carbohydrates down to the roots. This all occurs when soil temperature at 12" to 18" depth reaches 75 degrees and stays 75 and above.

**Mesquite Beans**

If there is a mesquite bean crop, wait until the beans are fully elongated before applying herbicide.

**Foliage Condition**

The leave must be in good physical condition. There should be very little damage by insects or hail.

There are some other minor items that could be considered, but these four factors are the primary indicators to look for. 

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# The Garden Guy

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

## Cobalt Verbena: Super from North to South

It's planting season for many and verbenas are high on the list. We had just fallen in love with Superbena Imperial Blue verbena and piled on a bunch of awards then, stop the presses! It has a new name which is now Superbena Cobalt. Not sure if this would be similar to Shakespeare's 'What's in a name?' scenario but one thing is for certain, it is even better than 'The Garden Guy' thought.

This year a cold spell of a few nights had 'The Garden Guy' moving containers to the garage for a series of nights in the mid-teens. It was about five nights straight, when they were afforded protection. Several of these containers had Superbena Cobalt verbena. There were three other containers of verbenas on the hillside that I did not move. All of them are now in a stage of riotous bloom.

Superbena Cobalt is a crazy blue or violet blue. It is this color that has always driven photographers crazy. Sometimes it looks like its name suggests, the old-fashioned cobalt blue.

Then there are times it looks more purple. Even the Proven Winners website has trouble nailing the color. There, it looks purple. But I can't fault that, because as I write this looking out my sunroom's windows, I see blooms cobalt blue and purple and all on the same plant. One of my Facebook followers said it even seems to glow.



Here a dazzling display has been created with Superbells Pomegranate Punch calibrachoa and Superbena Cobalt verbena.

This verbena, winner of Top Performer at the University of Georgia and University of Florida, had a Perfect Score Award at Michigan State University. In other words, from north to south and rest assured at your home too, you will have an award-winning blooming performance bringing in butterflies and hummingbirds.

The vigor will surprise you too. Proven Winners describes it as six to 12-inches tall with a spread up

to 30 inches. As they mound together in a mixed container don't be surprised to see blooms two feet high, maybe even taller and some falling two feet over the rim.

Superbena Cobalt verbena will need a lot of sun. The soil need not be luxurious but as I always say, fertile, well-drained, will be perfect. Tight compacted clay that takes a pick axe is hardly suitable. On the other hand, a large mixed container with a good lightweight

potting soil will give you the 'green thumb.'


I've been trialing verbenas for a long time, including old heirloom varieties, know this, the handheld pruning shear is the friend of both you and the verbena. Cutting back to remove stressed woody shoots will stimulate new growth and more blooms and add years to your planting if you are in the right zones.

I largely grow mine in mixed



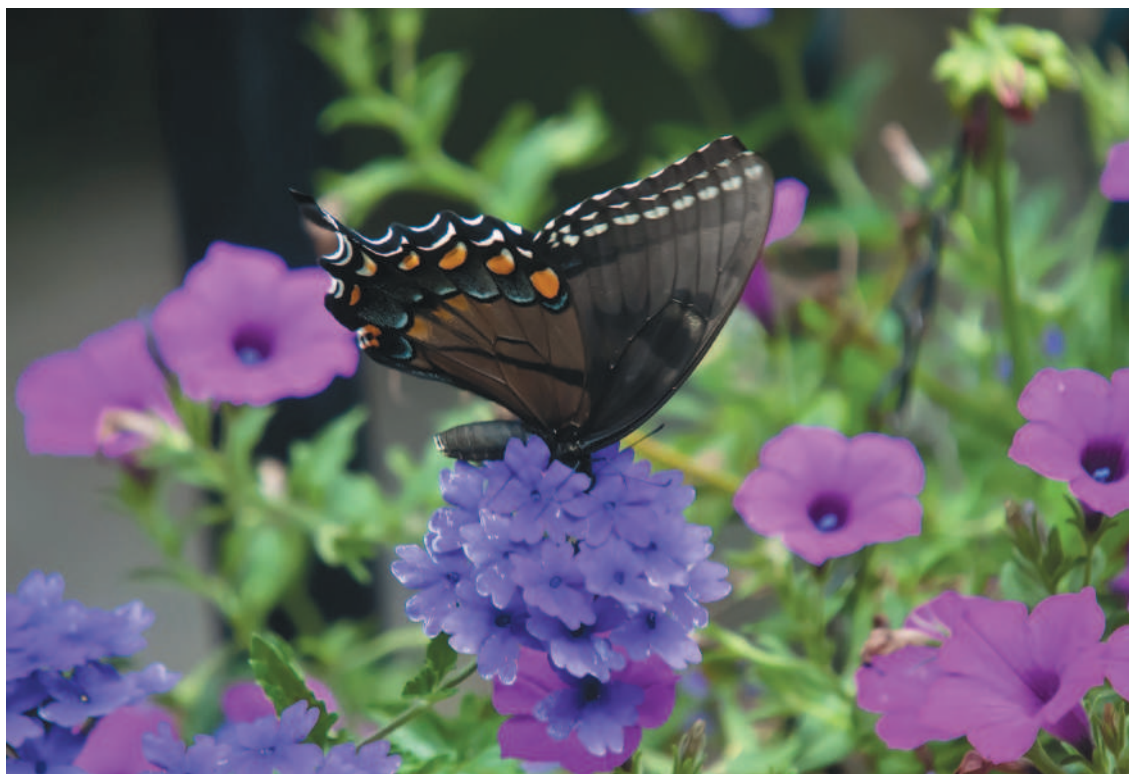
Superbena Cobalt verbena has won awards from north to south like Top Performer at University of Georgia and University of Florida and Perfect Score at Michigan State. It will win in your garden, too.

containers. This year the Superbena Cobalt blue blooms have coincided with an uncountable number of yellow flowers from Lemon Coral sedum. I have partnerships with both Superbells Pomegranate Punch and Tangerine Punch calibrachos, as well as Supertunia Mini Vista Scarlet petunia.

Since I am growing them in mixed containers that get watered most every day, I feed every two to three weeks with a water-soluble mix. Those in the ground can be fed with controlled release granules at planting with additional side dress applications about every six to eight weeks. They are perennial in zones eight and warmer but considered outstanding value if grown as an annual. Look for the award-winning Superbena Cobalt as you shop during planting season. Follow me on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy for more photos and garden inspiration. 



Superbena Cobalt verbena and Lemon Coral sedum blooms show out in this complementary partnership of color. (Photos courtesy Norman Winter)



This dark morph female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail zeroes in on Superbena Cobalt verbena grown with Supertunia Vista Jazzberry petunia. (Photos courtesy Norman Winter, The Garden Guy)

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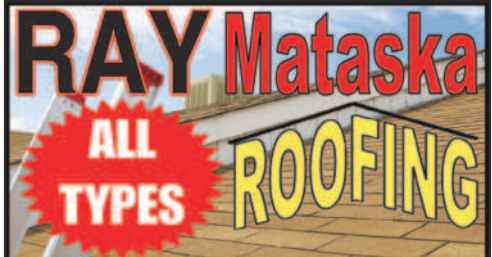


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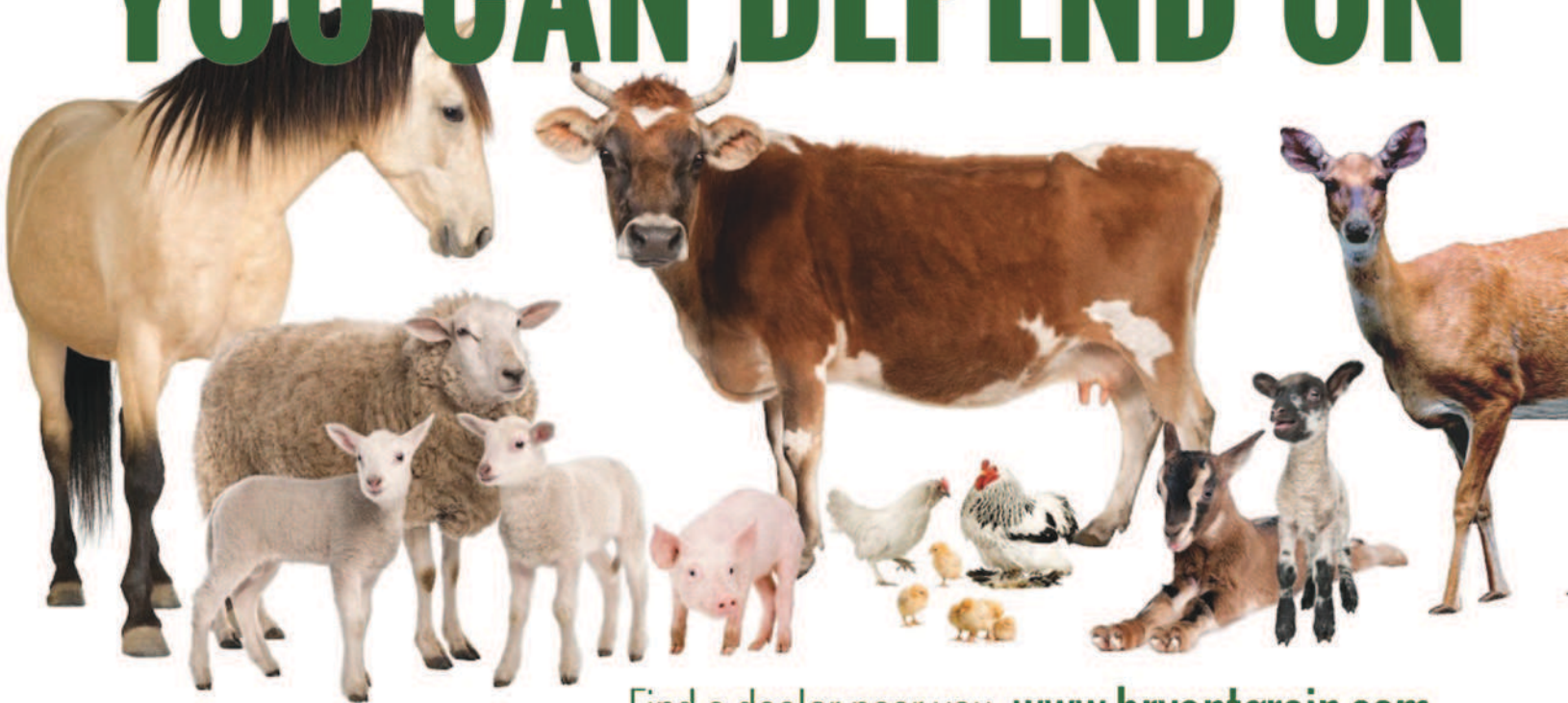


## Dancing with Rain...

By Jelly Cocanougher

With rainfall expressing all over the region, it looks in resemblance to landscapes that drape over the English countryside when viewed with a squint. There are lush and greened up landscapes with newly adorned blossoms peacocking themselves. Meanwhile, cowboys chase the horizon, in pursuit of cattle they seek to gather. A poetic infrastructure claims the enriched land, solace between nature, and the symbiotic relationship of horse and man. 

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