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**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY  
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**Cover Crops “ Hot Button” Issue for Bovine Connection**

Once again I find the need to write about the Bovine Connection to Profit scheduled December 2 and 3 at the Airport International Inn, Williston. This is a two-day seminar packed with many speakers addressing what I believe to be some “hot button” issues of the beef cattle industry.

A previous column announced Jim Gerrish, co-owner of American Grazinglands Services, as a featured speaker the first day. He comes to us with many years of research work and practical application of his research. In addition, his work as a consultant to farmers and ranchers brings an added dimension of information of forage management practices.

The use of cover crops is another issue which has been gathering widespread attention across the northern plains, particularly in south central North Dakota. Cattle people seem to be most interested in cover crops as a practice to extend the grazing season. Some use cover crops for fall and early winter grazing, some use them for early spring grazing while others use them on both sides of the winter months. During a recent conference involving all Extension Service staff in North Dakota, Greg Lardy, now Department Chair of the Animal Science Department, took us on a tour of some unique farming and ranching operations in southeast North Dakota. One of the stops was on a farm which uses cover crops solely for soil health improvement. For this farm, the objective was to increase soil organic matter levels, tilth, water holding capacity and decrease soil erosion. After several years of using cover crops the farm owner is satisfied that cover crops are meeting his expectations.

To address this issue the planning committee has been successful in securing two people from the Bismarck area. These guys have years of experience with the concept.

Josh Dukart has the topic “Enhancing Soil Health with Cover Crops and Livestock”. He will explain how cover crops can increase soil microbe diversity, speed up biological time, improve water and mineral cycles and increase ability to capture solar energy.

Ken Miller, a rancher in the Bismarck-Mandan area, will share how he uses cover crops for both spring and fall grazing. Greg Lardy will review the economic and livestock performance research gathered at the NDSU-Streeter Research Center.

Those attending this year’s Bovine Connection will be treated to some special meat entrées prepared by the staff of the North Dakota State University Meat Science Department. One of the meals will feature a new cut “Boneless Country-Style Beef Chuck Ribs”. The other noon lunch will include a variety of new muscle cuts discovered through the muscle profiling study commissioned by the Cattlemen’s Beef Board.