

Extension Resources Enhance Range & Pasture Programs

Public Value Statement

Rangeland provides many ecosystems services to the public. Improving the conditions of rangelands enhances biodiversity, water quality and wildlife habitat. The NDSU Extension Range and Pasture Management Program provide producers with management options to enhance the health and sustainability of their grazing system, enhancing the sustainability of their operations. These operations are an integral part of our rural communities and economy.

The Situation

Extension agents are expected to deliver programs on a broad array of topics. Some of these topics are in areas in which they did not receive formal training. Range and pasture management is one area that few Extension agents have been trained, as a result they are not comfortable conducting programming in this area. There are 12.5 million acres of range and grasslands in North Dakota that producers utilize for grazing livestock. It is critical that Extension is providing the resources and programming to aid them in managing these resources

Extension Response

Extension specialists developed resources and technical in-service trainings pertaining to range and pasture management Extension Personnel and technical service providers in North Dakota. These resources include tools that can be utilized by agents, technical service providers and producers, including: five Extension publications, two videos, the Grazing Calculator App, a Grazing Monitoring Stick, and Forage Production Kits. In addition, the following resources were developed specifically for Extension agents to use in their programming efforts that included five presentations and three activities/demonstrations. These materials are introduced to Extension personnel and technical service providers at an annual in-service training that was initiated in 2016. To date these trainings have reached 98 individuals

Impacts

These training efforts, in combination with the development of resources, has improved the knowledge and confidence of participants, empowering them to address local issues and provide programming in Range & Pasture Management.

Follow-up surveys of training participants revealed the trainings increased participants' knowledge and understanding of the principles of range management:

- Stocking rates, 40%
- Carrying capacity, 38%
- Forage production, 35%
- Pasture rental rates, 36%
- Monitoring utilization, 39%
- Plant identification, 24%

Many in-service participants incorporated the resources developed into their programs: 33% (2016), 62% (2017) and 43% (2018). These programming efforts have increased participants interactions with producers by 78% and lead to conversation about grazing management (89%). It is estimated that over 1,000 producers have been reached through these programs.

The incorporation of Extension resources into programs has increased their use by Extension agents, technical service providers and producers. To date the five Extension publications have been referenced over 10,000 times, videos viewed 233 times, the Grazing Calculator App has 584 downloads, nearly 5,000 Grazing Monitoring Sticks have been distributed, along with 48 Forage Production Kits.

Feedback

"The resources available inspired me to develop local programming that has engaged my community and work with local organizations. Even better is the publications and tools, such as the Grazing Monitor Stick and Range Kits, allowed me to generate and deliver a hands-on engaging multi session curriculum that I'm currently delivering over one school year. Activities and discussions have included taking forage samples, working with a

ration balancing spreadsheet, determine stocking rates, and learn of the variables to figure out carrying capacity. Before spring turnout there will be a Grazing Monitor Stick module and before their school year ends the class will learn how to use the range sample kits. I look forward to delivering this to other schools and communities within the County.” – Julianne Racine, Extension Agent LaMoure County

“North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Service has proved to be an excellent and reliable partner helping ND NRCS to provide high quality assistance to our livestock producers in the areas of grazing management, providing management strategies, developing and publishing extension publications aimed at improving land stewardship and livestock production, and holding outreach and educational events. The ND NRCS has incorporated Extension publications into our Conservation Practice Standards as the information is specifically designed for grazing resources in the North Dakota. NDSU Extension continues to have a vital and key role in helping our producers become the best stewards of the land they can be.” – Mark Hayek, ND NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist

“The range management resources were helpful in assisting ranchers to make more informed decisions with their grazing plans. The forage kit and grazing stick provided a tool to estimate production and utilization of a particular piece of land. Using these tools for observation and data collection has led producers to adjust their spring turnout time and grazing rotations.” – Paige Brummund, Extension Agent Ward County



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Collaborators

Agriculture Natural Resources Agents
NDSU Agriculture Communications

Non-Extension Collaborators

North Dakota NRCS
North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition
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Resource Links

NDSU Extension Range Pasture Website:
<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/livestockextension/grazing-management-folder/range-and-pasture>