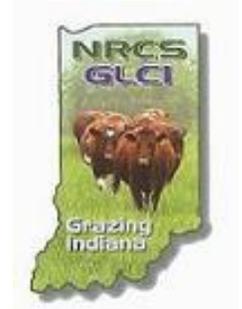


# Grazing Bites

November 2012

Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

I remember in the past listening to people older than me talk about how fast time flies by. I've been finding this statement to be increasingly true every day. It is an odd realization the day you suddenly come to grips with the awareness that you are not the same person you were twenty-five years or so ago even though down deep something keeps telling you otherwise. I mention this because time does not stop for any of us and we should never miss an opportunity, especially to learn something. I truly believe that the day that we quit learning is the same day we quit living. We tend to be way too passive – so don't miss any opportunities to learn or positively influence someone else, especially the next generation. I often say, I have more questions than answers and that is so true. The more I know, the more I know I don't know.



Perhaps I just look too hard, but I like to discover things that make me stop and scratch my head. The collaborating regenerative relationship between grazing animals and forages is one of those things that I find fascinating and you should too – it is one of those things that approach true sustainability.

There is a lot of science and biology going on at any location being grazed, and this is especially true in regard to the soil and the duff layers. You may have heard me talk about this before, but I can't overemphasize how important it is! When you mix the sugars, proteins, structural biomass from the forages being grazed with all the flora present in a healthy rumen, the result is an explosion of microbial activity – good activity. This is not only good stuff for the soil, but also for the plants growing there and then back again to what is consuming those plants – just a fantastic cycle. Though hard to describe, you really have to see it to believe it and at first glance you will say to yourself, “self...there is something going on here; this pasture is just better, significantly better”. You can visually see the difference. The pasture is truly alive.

This “life” can have an extraordinary impact on the soil and the plants that grow on it...and of course the animals that consume those plants. Lots of attempts to make ideal environments have failed to really function at their best because one critical element was left out – a ruminant. I have seen some interesting things over the years and some of the most amazing were the positive impacts made by grazing livestock.

How do you really know when you're improving pasture health? Relaxed grasses don't feel stressed out enough to produce as much seed; they have broader leaves, darker green vegetation; longer vegetative periods; more and deeper roots; resulting in higher yields. Is this possible during a drought? To a certain degree; yes it is.

Our extremely dry and hot summer has finally turned into an increasingly moisture sufficient and cooler environment. Those fall showers have certainly helped pastures recover and rebound...abundantly in a lot of cases. I would hope that most are doing a good job of allocating the forages they have – efficiently – to reduce waste. You would not turn the cows into the barn full of hay and say “don't waste anything”; the same is true for that “standing hay” in the field. This is also true for any annuals, cover crops, or crop residues that are being utilized by grazing.

In early 2013, the two Indiana grazing conferences will be here again and going strong like normal. Both conferences will have some outstanding speakers and I would strongly encourage you to attend either or both. You normally have to travel a long ways to hear some of these speakers and with a lot more expense. Each has its own agenda and different speakers so there will be little duplication.

Learn something new today, and keep on grazing!

## Mark your Calendar!

**NE Indiana Pasture Walks** - Pasture walks in the NE corner of Indiana the 2nd Thursday of each month from 1 PM till 3 to 4 or until done. Contact LaGrange County SWCD (260)463-5200 x3 for more information

**Acres U.S.A. Conference** – December 6-8, 2012, Louisville Marriott Downtown, Louisville, KY  
<http://www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm>



**5<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Grazing Lands** – December 9-12, 2012; Orlando, Florida. For more information, go to <http://www.glci.org/5NCGL.html> A few featured speakers will be Temple Grandin, Fred Provenza and Kit Pharo.

### **Indiana Grazing Conferences –**

**Northern Indiana Grazing Conference** – February 1-2, 2013; Michiana Event Center in Howe, Indiana. Speakers include Scott Stoller from Sterling, Ohio, Reuben Stoltzfus from Pennsylvania, Will Winter from Wisconsin (this is really a brain you want to pick), Howard Person, Jerry Perkins, Jim Courtright, and yours truly all from here in Indiana. For more information contact the LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation office at 260-463-3471, Extension 3, email Marsha Bogado at [marsha.bogado@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:marsha.bogado@in.nacdnet.net) or visit their website at <http://www.lagrangeswcd.org>.

**Southern Indiana Grazing Conference** – February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013; Simon Graber Community Center near Odon, Indiana. Speakers will include Walt Davis who raises cattle, sheep and goats and author of the book, “How to Not go Broke Ranching”, knows the tricks of the trade; David Hall from Missouri, selecting cattle for fescue; Gabe Brown from North Dakota, Gabe is adamant that a successful farm starts with a healthy soil, Gabe is backed by Jay Fuhrer from NRCS tying livestock into a healthy cropping system; Ed Ballard from Illinois, specializing in extending the grazing season, and Wally Olson from Oklahoma with years of experience in marketing strategies. For more information contact the Daviess County Soil and Water Conservation office at 812-254-4780 Extension 3, email Toni Allison at [dcswcd@rtccom.net](mailto:dcswcd@rtccom.net), or visit their website at [http://daviesscoswcd.org/main/page\\_sigc.html](http://daviesscoswcd.org/main/page_sigc.html).

**Livestock, Forage & Grain Forum** - February 11, 2013, JW Marriott, Indianapolis - Registration opens December 1<sup>st</sup> – more details coming.