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## Beef with a Story to It

By Blair Fannin

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Direct beef purchases from the farm continue to be an emerging trend as consumers want to know both the story and faces behind the products they are purchasing, according to an expert. At the recent Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Stiles Farm Field Day, producers learned more about how they can tap into this growing trend of the beef production segment. Rather than traditional marketing where beef producers sell their cattle to the local livestock auction or contract directly through a feed yard, they are capitalizing on the opportunity to sell direct from the farm to the consumer.

“Whether it’s all natural, organic or grain-fed beef coming off the ranch, for consumers who can actually see where and who they are getting their beef product from carries a lot of weight and trust,” said Jason Cleere, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, Bryan-College Station. “Consumers are wanting beef with a story to it. It could be grain-fed beef off the ranch or simply grass-fed. There’s a lot of interest from producers wanting to get into this niche market, and some are having a lot of success.”

**Continued on next page**

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Photo by Photo by Laura McKenzie Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

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#### Capitalizing on additional profit

There are opportunities to receive high premiums for their cattle, though there are associated additional costs, experts said. For example, carcass weights much reach 1,300 pounds to 1,400 pounds and require additional feed costs to reach those weight-gain thresholds. To add an additional 3 pounds of gain a day requires purchasing feed for \$360 a ton and a feed cost of gain of \$1.20-1.30 per pound. The typical feed yard gain cost is about 90 cents a day.

“We tell people to start at the end where you will market the animal and work back when calculating costs and returns,” Cleere said. “Figure out how much it’s going to cost to slaughter, custom package the steaks, hamburger, all the cuts that will be sold, plus your feed expenses. At the end, you will see how much your total costs will be and that will help you determine how much per pound you want to price in selling to the consumer. If your costs are more than what the consumer is willing to pay for beef, then you price yourself out of the market.”

#### Risk and infrastructure needs

Cleere advised staggering the amount of feed to the different weight classes of animals, so they are not marketed all at one time. Recommended slaughter weights are 1,200 pounds to 1,400 pounds of fat.

“The risk is holding these animals,” said Dan Hale, Ph.D., associate director for agriculture and natural resources for AgriLife Extension. “There are also health issues when holding these animals for extended periods. These types of risks need to be carefully considered.”

Producers will also need to evaluate where they are going to acquire custom slaughter services and how much they will pay for cutting and packaging.

Considering how much to sell each animal for is best determined by live weight.

**Concludes on page 5**

# Wetland Ecosystem Restoration

## Article and Photo by USDA-NRCS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$17 million for conservation partners to help protect and restore critical wetlands on agricultural lands through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is prioritizing proposals that focus on assisting historically underserved producers conserving wetlands. Proposals from partners are due August 15, 2021.

Restored wetlands help to improve water quality downstream, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce impacts from flooding and provide recreational benefits.

"Our goal is to support agricultural producers in their efforts to conserve natural resources on their land," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "Wetland Re-

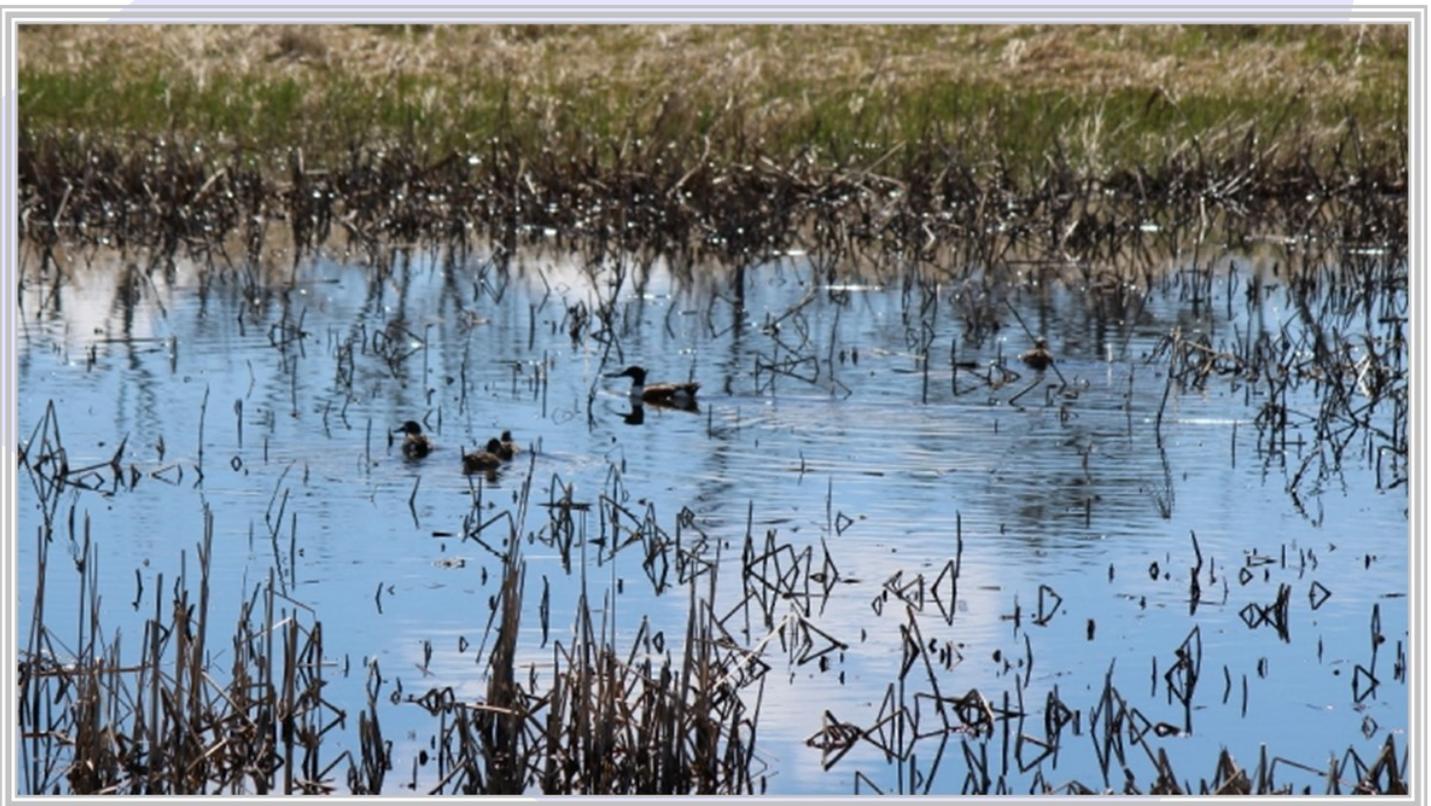
serve Enhancement Partnerships (WREP) help partners and producers work together to protect wetland ecosystems on working lands."

Through WREP projects, eligible conservation partners protect, restore and enhance high-priority wetlands on agriculture lands. WREP enables effective integration of wetland restoration on working agricultural landscapes, providing meaningful benefits to farmers and ranchers who enroll in the program and to the communities where the wetlands exist.

Eligible partners include Tribes, state and local governments and non-government organizations. WREP partners are required to contribute a financial or technical assistance fund match. WREP funding is for fiscal year 2022, which begins on Oct. 1, 2021.

Partners interested in applying should contact their NRCS state office for more information. Proposals are due by Aug. 15, 2021.

**Concludes on page 5**



# 10 Tips on Managing Drought Stressed Horse Pastures

**Krishona Martinson, PhD, UMN Extension**

Recent dry weather has raised several questions about how horse pastures should be managed. These 10 tips for managing drought-stressed cool-season grass pastures in the Midwest can help ensure pasture longevity and maximize growth when rainfall comes.

1. Avoid over-grazing. Without moisture, pasture growth slows and pastures may even become dormant. Grazing (or mowing) below 3", and excessive hoof traffic, can accelerate drought effects and slow regrowth once it rains.
2. Evaluate stocking density. Horse grazing pressure can be reduced by limiting the amount of grazing time, grazing only a few horses vs. the entire herd, using grazing muzzles, and feeding hay.
3. Provide time for regrowth after rainfall. One rainfall event does not immediately improve a dry pasture because it can take several inches of rainfall to restore soil moisture. Regrowth should reach 6-8" before grazing resumes. While grazing regrowth before it reaches 6" may provide some forage, it is detrimental to pasture plants, can weaken root systems, and will reduce the long-term productivity of the pasture.
4. Control weeds. Some weeds are especially good at surviving dry conditions and use scarce water resources. Weeds are best controlled when actively growing; therefore, weed control is best achieved during wetter periods. Always read the herbicide label before application to ensure the product is labeled for pastures and observe grazing restrictions and recommendations related to environmental conditions at the time of application.

5. Maintain pasture fertility. All pastures should be fertilized annually according to soil test results. Fertilizer is most effective when it's dissolved into the soil via rainfall; therefore, owners should be ready to apply fertilizer when rainfall returns. Dry pastures regrow more quickly when fertilizer, especially nitrogen, is applied prior to rainfall. Fertilizers can be applied up until early September.

6. Consider annuals. Planting warm-season (e.g. teff) or cool-season (e.g. winter wheat) annuals can provide emergency forage. Annuals have been shown to effectively provide short-term forage for horses when planted between mid-August and early September. However, in cases of extreme drought, annuals are not a good option as some rainfall is needed to support germination and plant growth.

7. Maintain and use a dry lot. Housing horses in a dry lot will help avoid over-grazing and provides an ideal place to feed hay.

8. Be aware of nonstructural carbohydrate (NSC) content. Cool-season grasses average 12 to 16% NSC during summer months; however, NSC content can exceed 20% during dry periods. This is because grasses tend to accumulate NSC to help buffer the negative impacts of stress, including drought. While elevated NSC concentrations may not negatively impact healthy horses, these levels are likely to cause issues in horses with a history of laminitis, obesity, Equine Metabolic Syndrome, and other diagnoses requiring a diet lower in NSC.

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### Wetland Conservation Continued from page 3

Funding will be provided through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP), part of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), a Farm Bill conservation program. Through WREP, states, local units of governments, non-governmental organizations and American Indian tribes collaborate with NRCS through cooperative and partnership agreements. These partners work with tribal and private landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their properties.

Wetland reserve easements enable landowners to successfully reduce impacts from flooding, recharge groundwater, enhance and protect wildlife habitat and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Partners benefit from WREP by targeting outreach and enrollment priorities supported by NRCS, including places impacted by natural disasters.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation's lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

—USDA NRCS

### Beef with a Story Continued from page 2

“An animal that weighs 1,300 pounds will yield 700 to 800 pounds of meat,” Hale said.

There are many components to factor in when selling direct from the farm, he said.

“Consumers like the aspect of buying beef from people they trust,” Hale said. “There are people who, instead of going to the grocery store, would rather buy direct. This does not mean that we cannot trust our traditional beef supply found at the grocery store, because it is very safe and of high quality. Some consumers just value the from-the-farm experience and are willing to pay for it.”

### Drought Pastures Continued from page 4

9. Know the risks associated with nitrate toxicity. The potential for nitrate toxicity, especially if grazing weedy pastures, warm-season grasses, or their early regrowth, is elevated during dry periods. A forage nitrate test can determine the risk for nitrate toxicity. Horses should not consume forages with nitrate concentrations over 4,600 ppm.

10. Watch horses. Dry pastures tend to be sparse with shorter grasses which can increase the likelihood of ingesting soil, especially sand, and parasites. Watch for signs of sand colic and ensure horses are current on deworming.

Finally, during dry conditions it's important that horse owners plan ahead. If pastures are negatively impacted by dry conditions, its likely local hay supplies will be as well. Calculating hay needs, communicating early and often with hay suppliers, and considering forage alternatives can help provide viable options and allow owners time to prepare for feeding horses during dry periods.

# The Irritating, the Toxic, and the Ugly: Prostrate Weed Problems

By Kara Harders CSUE and NRCS

[Dictionary definition for prostrate: BOTANY- growing along the ground.]

Common Purslane, Spotted Spurge, Prostrate Knapweed and Puncturevine . Can you tell them apart? These four have much in common, but where they differ is very important.

All four are annual weedy forbs (non-grasses). They enjoy many of the same conditions, such as hanging out in lawns, gardens, and sides of roads/paths. You may wonder “If they are so similar does it

matter if I can tell them apart?” Read on to learn why!

Prostrate spurge - *C. maculata* L.

Prostrate spurge is the only toxic plant of the four, its stems produce a milky latex juice when broken, and it is the only plant of the four which is native to North America. This plant has a slight variant within the species, Spotted Spurge, which looks the same but with a small purple spot on each leaf. Leaves are ovate, slightly hairy, and generally dark green. The flowers are tiny and pinkish, which will go unnoticed to an untrained eye. Seedpods are 1/16 inch or less long and the oblong seeds are about 1/25-inch-long. Be sure to wear gloves when hand weeding this plant! See picture below, and notice the milky sap!

Continued on next page



Prostrate Spurge (in July) Photo by Kara Harders

## Prostrate weeds continued from page 6

Prostrate knotweed - *Polygonum aviculare* L.

Also a non-native annual, growing 1 to 3 feet tall, with wiry corrugated stems. The leaves of this weed are hairless, alternate, and lance-shaped to oval, 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches long and 1/8 to 1/3 inch wide. Flowers are small and pink, occurring in clusters along the flower stems at leaf axils. Flowering stems compose about half of the height of a mature plant. It was likely introduced to North America with the first colonists and was first collected in Canada in 1821.

See picture below on left.

Common purslane - *Portulaca oleracea*

A non-native, fleshy weed with succulent like leaves, this prostrate annual was introduced in the Americas as early as the 16th century and has

made its way around the world. A possible reason for its wide distribution is its historic role as a medicinal plant and edible plant, meaning it was likely, at times, spread intentionally. High in a variety of nutrients, this plant is grown intentionally in some places, but its ability to easily reproduce and visual similarity to the toxic Prostrate Spurge has made it undesirable in many lawns, gardens, and fields. Small yellow flowers will produce many small black to brown seeds within a brown seed pod.

\*Please note that this article does not contain enough information to teach or instruct people to consume weeds or other herbs for culinary purposes, please do additional research if that is something you are interested in. See picture blow right.

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Prostrate Knotweed (in July) Photo by Kara Harders



Purslane (in July) Photo by Kara Harders

## Prostrate weeds continued from page 7

### Puncturevine - *Tribulus terrestris*

Another non-native annual, Puncturevine is mat forming, with trailing stems, each can be 1/2 to 5 feet long. With small, hairy, oval leaves, it can look similar to the prostrate spurge. A key identifying figure are its flowers, which are yellow, 1/3 to 1/2 inch wide with 5 petals, And of course, its seed pods. These seed pods develop as a larger pod of 5 sections that break at maturity into tack-like structures with sharp, sometimes curving spines. These seeds will remain dormant in the soil for 4 to 5 years, so even when they appear controlled one year, they may come back the next. This is one of the later flowering weeds, with blooms not coming

on until July to October.

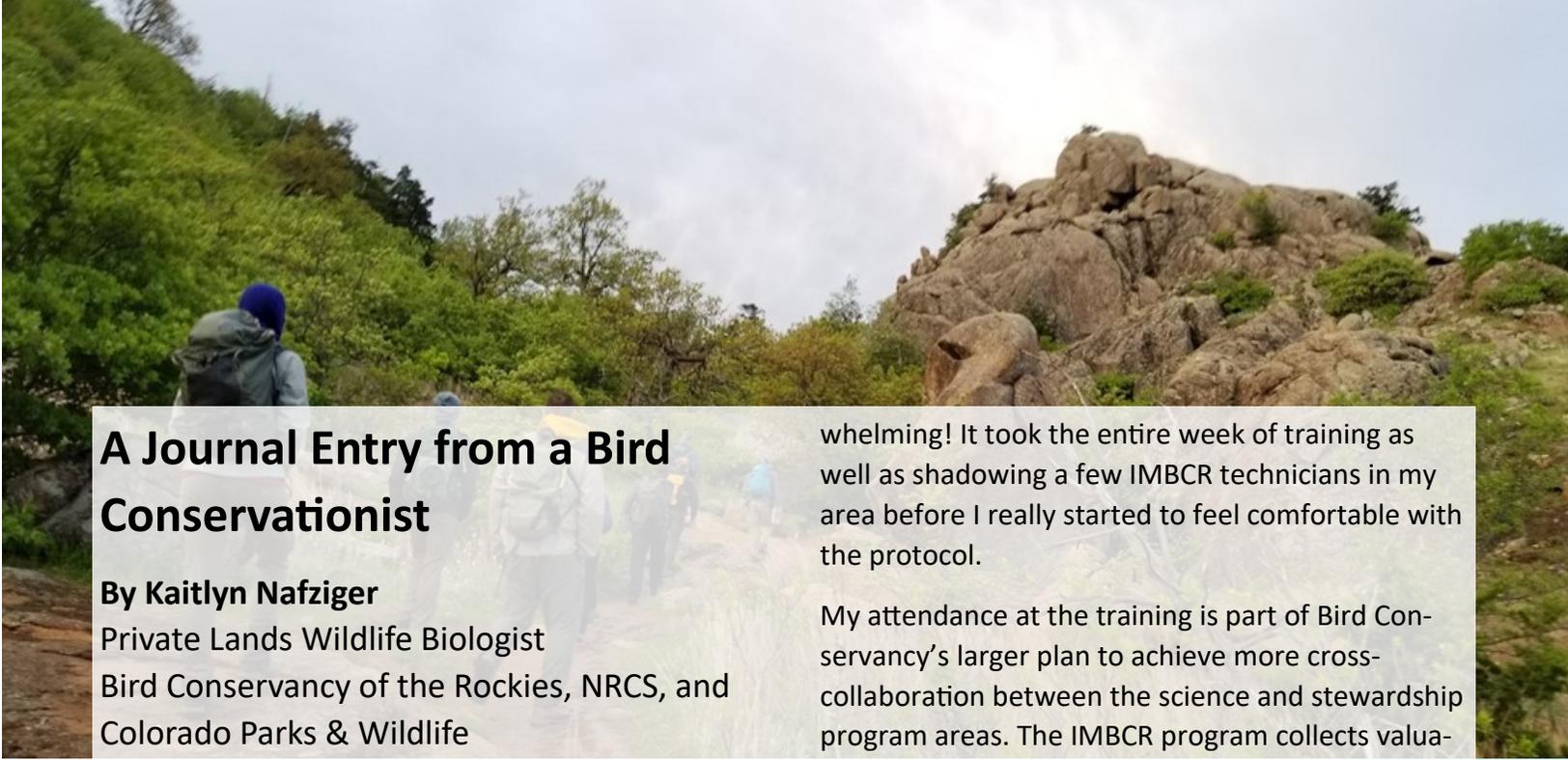
These four plants do not make up all of the prostrate weeds we have here in Colorado but they should help you distinguish between the most common problematic ones.

When you are trying to identify a weed and are unsure of what you have, try to identify what time of year it grows, the flower size, structure, and color, and other factors so you are better able to research it, or present your problem weed to another person to try to get an ID.

Remember, you can't properly control a weed until you know what kind it is!



Puncturevine Photo by Kara Harders



## A Journal Entry from a Bird Conservationist

**By Kaitlyn Nafziger**

Private Lands Wildlife Biologist  
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, NRCS, and  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

It was 5 a.m. and pitch black on the cool, crisp April morning. I groggily waited for my coffee to boil. I added a few more layers, grabbed my backpack and headlamp and made my way down to meet up with the rest of the group. Not the typical start to my work day, but for that week I ditched the office to attend the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) point count training in Wichita National Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma. I arrived at the training thinking I was relatively familiar with some of the birds in the region and was excited for a week of camping and birding. I glanced over the protocols ahead of time and thought “record birds, time, distances, and vegetation - how hard can this be?” After all, I had experience with bird identification and other wildlife field practices before I joined the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies as a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist (PLWB). But—when I attempted my first point count and tried to pinpoint every bird that was attempting to out-sing its neighbor at the same time, I realized it was much more challenging than I anticipated!

Being able to identify every bird, remembering all of the shorthand codes (there are pages!), and writing legibly, in a moment’s notice was over-

whelming! It took the entire week of training as well as shadowing a few IMBCR technicians in my area before I really started to feel comfortable with the protocol.

My attendance at the training is part of Bird Conservancy’s larger plan to achieve more cross-collaboration between the science and stewardship program areas. The IMBCR program collects valuable data that can be used to evaluate bird response to land management actions which, in turn, informs and guides conservation planning to benefit birds. Data collected through this study has shown that since 1970, 2.9 billion birds have been lost! The stewardship team is currently developing our own protocol for doing “ranch reports” for private landowners which includes vegetative, bird, and soil surveys. These reports provide baseline conditions of the ranch and guidance on how a ranch can be managed to achieve both the landowner goals and a healthier landscape for birds. Where I work in southeastern Colorado, the majority of grassland and forest habitat is privately owned.

Farmers and ranchers depend on the land to support their way of life. As a PLWB, I work with them to implement conservation plans to maintain and improve this habitat type. I can show landowners how they can use bird species to be indicators of a healthy ecosystem and evaluate the effectiveness of management practices at achieving our collective goals.

If you want to learn more about this organization and this program, check them out at:

<https://www.birdconservancy.org/what-we-do/science/monitoring/imbc-program/>

# Livestock Checkpoints Planned in Brand States

**Rachel Gabel**  
The Fence Post

Wyoming and Colorado will likely be coordinating livestock check points this summer. Both states are brand inspection states and Colorado Brand Commissioner Chris Whitney said they're hoping to remind people of the requirements for everyone's protection. Whitney said Highway 85 is a likely checkpoint location in the coming months.

Crossing state lines without brand inspection papers is, he said, a violation of both states' laws. Brand inspections serve as titles, of sorts, and are good for as long as an owner owns the animal. Transportation inspections are good for the duration of the trip.

"It's purely educational," Whitney said. "I'm sure we'll hand out lots of warning tickets, but the purpose is to raise awareness."

Wyoming and Colorado, he said, are very much alike in their respective brand laws. A brand inspection is required upon a change of ownership through a sale or gift, travel over 75 miles within the state, or any out-of-state travel.

Entering a brand inspection state may not require a brand inspection but does require a current Certifi-

cate of Veterinary Inspection and a negative Coggins test. CVIs may be paper or digital and must be properly issued by an accredited veterinarian. They are valid for 30 days.

Wyoming Livestock Board Director Steve True said contestants and participants in equine events should check with the particular events for any further requirements. The potential of contagious diseases being active, for example Equine Herpes Virus/Neurological or Vesticular Stomatitis could cause the Wyoming State Veterinarian to impose further restrictions to protect events, participants and industries.

Wyoming requires an Import Permit or shipping number for cattle, sheep, goats and hogs but not horses. According to True, the veterinarian issuing the CVI will contact the office for this number. While people should be prepared to meet all inspection requirements when visiting the state, he said the requirements are in place to protect owners and industries from theft and disease.

Other brand inspection states are South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Colorado, Utah (equine exempt), California, Nebraska and Washington.

"This is an effort by Wyoming and us to raise awareness," Whitney said. "It's not to hassle people. We're not in the hassle business. We're in the ownership business and the system works to make sure people and their interests are protected."

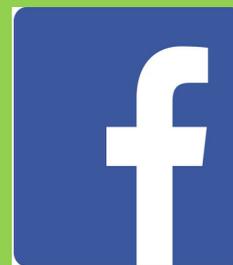


Photo by the FencePost

Do you have a question for extension but don't know who to ask? [Try Ask an Expert!](#)

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Do you have a question about managing your small acreage?

Contact CSU Extension /NRCS Small Acreage Coordinator(s):

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