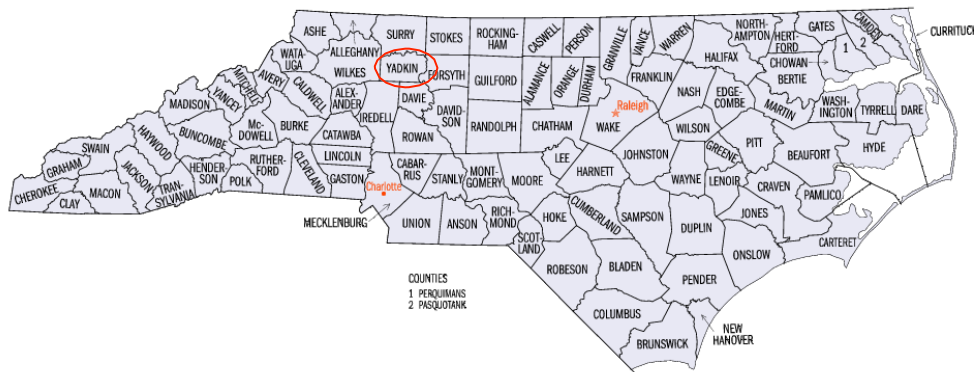


Nomination for Brad Storie for the 2015 Environmental Stewardship Award

Description of the Operation

Brad & Jan Storie
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Brad Storie is very proud of the beef cattle operation he and his wife Jan own in Yadkin County. Brad does most of the day to day work and Jan is always there to offer support and help Brad when needed. The operation is primarily cow/calf but because of the innovative management practices now used, they feed less hay and the excess can be marketed to generate additional income to help make the overall operation more profitable. Brad has improved his genetic base and keeps heifers for replacements or to market to other farms. He purchases additional heifers to grow out and breed for replacements or to resale. Brad has a growing freezer beef market with the grass fed aspect becoming more and more popular.

Brad started farming in 1979. At that time, the operation was primarily a tobacco and grain farm. The initial farm was 45 acres. In 1993, 12 adjoining acres were purchased. A second farm that had been in the family was purchased in 2003 and in 2005 another 80 acre farm was leased for pasture and hay. The first cattle came to the farm in 1986. The crop land purchased in 1979 was seeded to grass and fenced in 1995 to begin the expansion of the cattle operation. The farm purchased in 2003 was converted from tobacco and row crops to pasture in 2005. Also in 2005, more cattle were purchased to graze on the leased pasture. The original farm currently supports between 25 to 35 brood cows and their calves, depending on weather conditions and marketing needs. At present, the original farm is used to wean calves and grow out the heifers until they are bred the first time. The land purchased in 2003 and the leased pasture is used to grow out steers and occasionally to pasture heifers, allowing the operation to maintain about one hundred head of cattle including brood cows, heifers, steers and bulls.

The farmland is a mix of woodland and grassland. The acreage is about equally divided between the two. All of the farms are well watered by springs, streams, and a pond. Two wells have been drilled and to date, eight waterers have been installed. The wells and waterers were made possible by the assistance of the NRCS and Yadkin Soil and Water. Our local Extension Service, the Farm Service Agency and Forest Service have also been very instrumental in the development of Brad's farms. He has an established forestry plan in place and has sold and planted Loblolly Pines under their direction.

Brad has entered into three contracts with the NRCS that have been completed. There is one contract that is being implemented at this time. This contract will allow Brad to install water lines and waterers whereby Brad can implement grazing management practices at this additional farm.

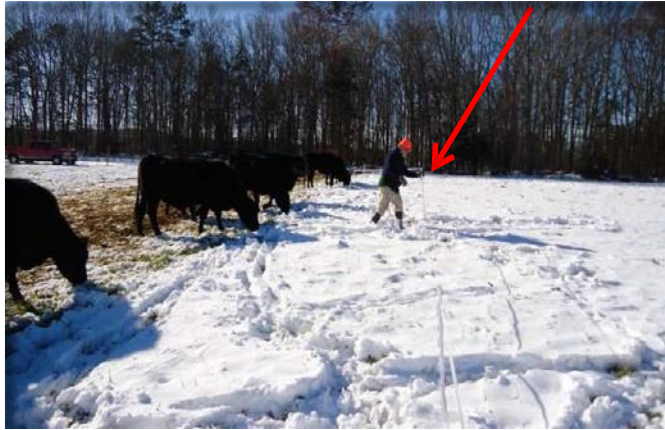
Other agencies and organizations who have been very helpful in not only the cattle side of the operation but providing conservation and stewardship advice as well are the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association, North Carolina Forage and Grassland Council, Yadkin County Cattlemen's Association, and North Carolina State University.

Environmental Stewardship Practices and Accomplishments

The goal of the farm is to produce, within the available acres, the best and most grass possible. With the use of soil tests and guidance from the Extension Service, Brad has learned the nutrient needs of his forage and grasslands. By utilizing soil tests, Brad is able meet those needs in a cost effective and environmentally friendly manner. Brad has seen the need to use diverse forage crops and as a result, Brad has tried to improve his forage output and quality by seeding new grasses and clovers with the use of the sod drill from his local NRCS. Brad uses Forage Analysis to check on his improvement.

Forage Quality of Pastures & Hay; Brad Storie Farm					
Forage Characteristics	Pasture			Hay	
	1/3 each of Fescue, bermuda, crabgrass	Fescue: Crab 50:50	Fescue 60%: Crab at 30%	First Cut Fescue	
	2-Nov-10		29-Dec-10	2-Nov-10	
DM (%)	21	27	30	55	86
CP	12.7	11.8	16.9	13.8	9.6
Unavailable CP	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.1
Adj. CP	12.4	11.4	16.9	13.3	8.5
TDN	66	63	66	63	59
Ca	0.34	0.35	0.42	0.44	0.34
P	0.31	0.34	0.39	0.28	0.32
K	2.12	1.85	1.63	1.01	1.39

On one farm, a solar power system provides the electricity to operate the electric fence. The use of waterers and cross fencing as well as temporary fencing has allowed Brad to implement both rotational and intensive grazing on different pastures. Brad raises cattle but has come to understand that he is actually a grass farmer using cattle to market the forage he produces. He knows that grass is a necessity and the quality of his forage has steadily increased. Brad says that the greater quantity and higher quality of forage that he can produce, leads to heavier and healthier animals for his operation or to market to others for their benefit. Through these grazing practices the land and forage have time to rest and recover. This has helped Brad realize that overstocking is one of the worst things that can be done on any livestock operation.



Moving the fence to ration the forage much the same as using a hay ring to ration hay feeding.

Portable mineral feeders are essential to provide cattle with necessary minerals in Brad's strip grazing System.



Brad's cattle are trained to respect a fence of poly wire and step in posts. One strand will usually do the job.

Cross fencing is a must to establish a grazing management program, allowing more efficient use of available forages. Brad strip grazes stockpiled fescue in the winter which reduced the amount of hay he needs to feed.



Limited water sources presented a huge hurdle in the early days of cattle production, making managed grazing nearly impossible. Brad worked with the local NRCS and Yadkin Soil and Water District to design a system of waterlines and automatic drinkers which allowed him to stop watering cattle out of a creek, provide adequate clean water consistently, and utilize a grazing management system. The pastures are mostly fescue and clover; however, by utilizing some warm season forages like crabgrass and common Bermuda, Brad's grazing management helps promote grazing through most of the year. The warm season forages have been a real blessing when the summer was hot and dry. Through Brad's efforts, the pastures have a stronger, healthier, and thicker ground cover leading to reduced erosion and run-off potential, quicker recovery after grazing, and greater resilience during extreme weather conditions. Brad's good pasture management is keeping silt and nutrients out of our streams and ground water.

Drinkers were installed when cattle were "fenced out" of creeks and springs. Filter cloth and gravel was installed in these heavy use areas to reduce mud and erosion.



Another benefit of using rotational and intensive grazing is the improved distribution and management of the manure. Manure is deposited over more of the fields instead of in central locations like water and feed sites. This leads to improved nutrient placement and management that reduces the need to purchase expensive, commercial fertilizer that can pose environmental risks. When Brad needs to feed hay, he frequently moves the feeding location and rolls out the round bales as much as possible. This practice helps with manure distribution. Utilizing portable mineral feeders is another practice that helps keep the manure from piling up at a single location, as would be the case with a stationary mineral feeder.

Cows can get to grass in 6" of snow as long as there is no ice pack. If ice or heavy snow, then consider rolling hay onto the snow and the hoof action and tractor will encourage exposure of underlying forage.



Since Brad installed drinkers and fenced the cattle out of streams, he has seen the recovery of stream banks and the return of some species of wildlife. The use of the drinkers has also helped to deliver clean drinking water to the cattle herd which in turn has helped prevent the potential spread of disease. Brad has noted overall improvement in the health and hair coats of the cattle. They have fewer problems with their feet and they stay cleaner now that they cannot access streams.



A once trampled and eroded spring has healed and provides clean drinking water for the increasing wildlife population.





A site where the cattle accessed the creek for water was eroded but now is healed and stable once again!

As a result of fencing out creeks, springs and other surface water areas, these areas now are experiencing healing, forage regrowth and a vibrant wildlife habitat.

Intensive grazing is an important part of Brad's environmental stewardship efforts. With the available acreage, Brad has been able to provide grazing almost year around. By using stockpiled fescue, he has increased the number of grazing days provided by each acre for his cattle herd. This greatly reduced the amount of hay he has had to provide and increased the amount of hay he can market to other cattle operations who have not implemented managed grazing. The grazing management practices also have helped control weeds and allowed more efficient use of the available forages. Brad's grazing management practices reduced the grazing pressure on the pasture, which improves the overall plant quality and vigor.



Brad shows how easy and quickly he can move the temporary fence to provide the cattle with fresh forage quicker and easier than feeding hay.

Utilizing grazing management practices as well as good conservation practices has proven to be both profitable and sustainable for Brad Storie and his cattle operation. He is able to carry more cattle per acre, thereby increasing the number of units available for market. He utilizes less commercial fertilizer and less hay. His cattle maintain excellent body condition throughout the year. He has a stronger stand of grass to feed his cattle, reduced erosion, and has reduced the potential for surface water pollution.

Education, Leadership and Other Activities

Utilizing automatic waterers has allowed Brad to implement both rotational and intensive grazing on the farms. While implementing these techniques, Brad gained knowledge of grasses, soil, and land management. Brad says he has become a student of grazing and pasture management and is willing and able to share his expertise with others. Brad says he is not in competition with others, and being a retired teacher and school administrator; he has a heart to share what he has learned to help other succeed in their operations and protect the land for future generations.

Cows enjoying the abundant stockpiled grass.



Brad has hosted and been involved in two different winter grazing workshops (pasture walks). When Brad agreed to host his first pasture walk and field day, he didn't realize what would develop and grow in him. This really peaked his interest and he started reading books by people like Jim Gerrish and others who rotationally and intensively graze cattle and sheep. Through these field days and pasture walks Brad has encouraged neighbors, friends, and producers from other areas of the state to use these techniques to their benefit. Brad is hooked and tries to attend all of the workshops and lectures on forage management and grazing that he can.



Jim Green discusses grazing practices during a grazing workshop.



Brad explains his rotational/ strip grazing plan to fellow beef producers during a grazing workshop.



During a winter grazing workshop, participants moved the fence to get a first hand experience at how easy and quick a strip grazing program can be.

Brad's farm is an open book for any and all who want to see his operation and how his grazing management works. Many local producers have taken Brad up and come to see what all the hoopla is about. Brad does not rush them through or ignore their questions. He takes the time to explain his operation, what worked, and what didn't. He is not ashamed to discuss his failures because it was the failures that helped teach him what would work. Brad has even gone so far as to make farm visits to help producers design a system of their own.

Brad was one of three producers profiled in the NRCS video "Winter Grazing, a Better Way To Feed". The video has received over 30,000 hits. Brad has participated on the producer panel for two NC Forage and Grassland Council Winter Meetings. Brad is very adamant about his grazing and stewardship efforts. He understands his operation might be smaller than others but he takes pride in knowing he made his plan work with limited resources and land. Through this, Brad can better relate to the smaller operators and help them see the benefits and grazing management can be implemented on most any size operation. Brad helps them see that these practices aren't just for the big guys but the small operations can have the same success as well.



Brad Storie was presented the Environmental Steward award at the Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society's (HHBSWCS) awards banquet. Brad received the award for being an ambassador for practicing and promoting sustainable grazing practices. His work is highlighted in the YouTube video "Winter Grazing, A Better Way To Feed".

By joining and belonging to organizations like the NC Forage and Grassland Council, NC Cattlemen's Association, and the County Cattlemen's Associations in Surry & Yadkin counties, Brad gets to hear and see many cutting edge techniques and new methods for cattle and grazing management. Reading the monthly and weekly magazines that are published by these organizations is very informative and helpful. Brad constantly looks for new ways to improve his grass, soil, and cattle. With the knowledge Brad has gained, he is more equipped to talk at formal meetings and workshops as well as discuss with producers in small settings or even one-on-one about ways to improve their grazing management. He has documentation to back-up his claims that grazing management and stewardship efforts do not cost you, but pay large dividends down the road.

Brad has been a strong leader for many years working hard to help producers understand the benefits of being good stewards of not only the cattle but the land. Brad is passionate about these management practices and has shared these words at numerous events, workshops and cattlemen meetings:

“ Through serving as President of my local cattlemen’s association and serving on local and state boards with the NC Cattlemen’s Association I have shown my neighbors and friends that I am committed to improving conservation, water quality and cattle in North Carolina. The use of soil tests and forage analyses and by taking advantage of the services offered by the NC Extension Service and NRCS have led to several of my neighbors and friends in the cattle industry adopting similar practices. I hope to continue to encourage everyone that I can, in the cattle industry, to work toward improving herd health, water and forage quality, and soil fertility through grazing management. Becoming better stewards of the land and water will not only benefit us now but future generations to come.”



Brad and Jan Storie

Brad and Jan have been very pleased with the conservation practices, grazing strategies and management upgrades made so far to their cattle operation. They know the farm is more environmentally sound, sustainable, cattle performance has improved and winter feeding is less stressful than when Brad relied mostly on feeding hay. They know these environmental stewardship practices not only benefit the land now as well as in the future and these practices have reduced a little stress and provided a little extra quality time for the Stories to enjoy.