

Bressner Range Research Project by Dale L. Lanham

The Bressner Range Project involves adjacent half-sections of native grass near Yates Center. The KSU Foundation received this land valued at over \$128,000 through the Willie J. Bressner estate in 1988. This property was donated without restrictions, but Mr. Bressner requested that it be utilized as an experimental project to study the preservation and the use of native grasses.

The Bressner Pasture committee was formed in the fall of 1988 to determine the feasibility of running a research pasture in southeastern Kansas. After securing a five-year lease from the Kansas State University Foundation, the committee started the process of making this land a research pasture. We agreed to study the effects on the range composition, stocking at typical stocking rates for our area. Half of the pastures were stocked until July 15 and the other half were stocked until August 15. We wanted to know if we were changing the range over time with these systems. Cattle gains, as well as cattle economics, would be important, but the main emphasis would be the effects on the native grass.

In 1989, the pasture was run as a complete unit to try to make the pasture more uniform. During the prior year, the cattle had over-grazed the east side but had very little grazing pressure on the west half section. Income from the rent in 1989 was used to start the cross fencing into the eight pastures as they are currently being used. The pasture was leased to the highest bidder which was Pringle Ranch.

The 1990 pasture contract allowed for 241 head of 500 to 600 weight steers to be grazed from April 20 until July 15 (146 head) and August 15 (95 head). All cattle were individually weighed in and individually weighed out. Different colored ear tags were used for the eight pastures. The first range survey was taken this year.

The 1991 pasture contract allowed for 241 head of steers, with the same dates for removal as in 1990. However, in early May, there was a hail storm that completely eliminated the grass in the southwest pasture on the west half section. Due to the hail storm, 15 head of cattle were removed from this pasture for this season. Again, Pringle Ranch was the high bidder for this year's contract.

In 1992, the pasture contract was the same as the past two years. We started planning for our first field day. In July, Ron Wells, local stockman and committee member, was killed in an accident. In August, Clyde Hill, a committee member and the person most responsible for Kansas State University receiving this land from Bill Bressner's estate died suddenly at his home in Yates Center. The first field day was a success with over 350 people in attendance. Sericea lespedeza was sprayed for the first time.

Pringle Ranch was the high bidder for the 1993 pasture season. No changes were made in the contract this year. We spot sprayed several pastures for sericea lespedeza this year.

1994 brought several changes to the contract: Increase the head count to 261 head, change the beginning date from April 20 back to April 25, and agree that we will not allow any cattle to be fed hay in these pastures. It appeared that some of the sericea lespedeza problems were coming into the pasture with hay. On March 10, 1994, a truck going east on 54 Highway lost the emergency brake which started a fire that burned approximately 80 acres on the west half section. The rest of the pasture was burned as usual around the second week of April. Again Pringle Ranch was the high bidder for this year. We also looked at the nutrient value of the standing dormant native grass; and when all the results were in, there was no difference between the ungrazed grass, or the aftermath from the 1/2 season grazing or the aftermath from the 3/4 grazing. The second range survey was completed in June of 1994.

Hay Capital Feeders was the highest bidder for the 1995 contract. Contracts for this pasture are sent out to prospective bidders, and the results are sent to all the bidders by mid-February each year. We did not spray for sericea lespedeza this fall due to the dry weather.

Hay Capital Feeders was awarded the contract again in 1996. In the spring of 1996, there was a burning ban in Woodson County due to extremely dry conditions. On April 24, we received a light shower, so on the morning of the 25th we did burn the east 1/2 section but not the west 1/2 section. During the first four years, the cattle gains have been the best on the west 1/2 section. By burning the east 1/2 section and not the west, we changed cattle gains by 24 pounds due to the burn. The cattle were turned out the afternoon that we burned, and no additional forage was provided. Surprisingly, the steers appeared to be more content with less running the fence on the burned grass compared to the unburned pastures.

Edgar Beecher was the high bidder for the 1997 and 1998 grazing seasons. This research project is very unique in that it is self supporting and receives no tax funds. Each year, we have been able to continue to build new fences which add up to 4 1/2 miles of barbed wire fences, and about 3 miles of electric fences, add several new water sources, gravel roads into the corrals, built two corral systems, and attempt to keep the sericea lespedeza in check. Approximately 400 people attended the 1998 field day.

Kimbell Ranch was the high bidder for the 1999 Bressner Pasture for 313 head. We doubled stocked all eight pastures until July 15, to even out the pastures from the previous years. As we were working the cattle at Kimbell Ranch, we had the misfortune to kill a steer in the head gate. We were very fortunate to have a great group of cooperators who have furnished cattle to be used on the Bressner Pasture Research project. Bressner committee did pay for the dead steer.

2000 brought about a new study for the Bressner Pasture in which all pastures were double stocked until July 15 and four pastures were fall grazed for approximately 75 days. Kimbell Ranch was again the successful bidder for the grass for 313 head. The old corrals were made of very light weight portable panels, so we rented a good set of portable corrals from the Yates Center Elevator to help at weigh in and weigh out. The Bressner Pasture Committee purchased 79 head of steers in late September to be put on 4 of the pastures for the fall grazing trial. Gary

Kilgore had measured the standing forage and with Frank Brazle's calculation we stocked the following pastures: 1-43 head, 3-4 head, 6-15 head, and 8-12 head. Yes, I did add right and it doesn't equal 79 head that we purchased. As with a lot of cattle that was being purchased at that time of year we had some major health problems and we did lose several! Left cattle on Bressner pasture until November 30 and sent them to Pratt Feeders in Pratt. Sold ½ interest to the feedlot to "protect" our money. Right decision, just too much death lost early.

Kimbell Ranch was the successful bidder for the 2001 season. Piqua Coop spot sprayed over 200 acres in late August of sericea lespedeza. Bressner Pasture Committee purchased 68 steers for the fall grazing trail. We purchased bigger-older steers and had less health problems.

In 2002, local welder Jerry Steinforth and his crew replaced the old light temporary panels with two new corrals. These 100 X 100 foot corrals have a runway, head gate, and 5 pens inside with lots of gates which makes it possible to pen all four of the pastures and still keep them separate by pasture. We spent over \$1,000 spot spraying for sericea lespedeza. Reed Ranch was the high bidder for this year's grass. Purchased heifers for the fall grazing trial. Used the new corrals to work the cattle and kept them penned for 4 days before turning out to the 4 pastures. Had less health problems than previous years.

2003 contract was awarded to Eldon & Scott Lanham for 313 head of double stocked steers. New for this year was the option of having the pasture for two years. Added anti-backups in the alley way and a couple of new quick latches. Also added a short walk-way near the head gate. Again purchased heifers for the fall study, cattle feeding was finally profitable.

In 2004 Eldon and Scott Lanham retained the pasture from the 2003 contract. Had a chance to lease the fall grass to Ronnie Reynolds and did so. Dale fed and took care of them and Ronnie furnished the feed and heifers. This did save the Bressner Pasture Committee some money.

2005 Ronnie Reynolds had the lease. New this year was the use of micro-chip ID's and it was definitely a learning experience. We worked on the solar water pump that supplies water for pastures 1 & 5. Cattle also have access to the pond and several springs in the pasture which kept water in the sloughs most of the spring. Warren Bell will report on this project during this field day. Gary Kilgore did another range survey this year.

We have had excellent cooperation from the cattle owners who have allowed the Bressner Pasture to work as a research pasture. I would like to personally thank the many County Agents who have helped by weighing cattle over the years. That group would include: Darren Hibdon-Franklin Co, Warren Bell-Retired Coffey Co, Rod Schaub-Osage Co, Jeff Davidson-Greenwood, Jim Mengarelli-Crawford Co, David Kehler-Butler Co, Mark Schuler-Linn Co, Brian Creager-Retired Lyon Co, Joe Smith-Retired Montgomery Co, and Mike Holder-Chase Co.

The KSU Foundation has extended the lease to the Bressner Pasture Committee until December, 2010, and we are eagerly looking forward to a new study on "Patch-burning".

Bressner Pasture KSU Scholarships

Bill Bressner Estate gave this section of grassland to Kansas State University Foundation with the request that the pasture be used for research. Along with this request, was that some of the income from the rent of this pasture be used for scholarships for students from Woodson County to attend Kansas State University. In keeping with this request, the following scholarships have been given.

1993	\$500 - Wade Collins
1995	\$500 - Chris Stockebrand
1996	\$500 - Cheri Adams
1997	\$500 - Quentin Stoll
1998	\$500 - Erin Solomon
1998	\$300 - Josh Troyer
1998	\$200 - Josh Stockebrand
1999	\$500 - Justin Weseolh
1999	\$500 - Nathan Weber
2000	\$500 - Tara Solomon
2001	\$500 - Jeff Barney
2003	\$500 - Terryl Mueller
2004	\$500 - Garrett Eggers
2005	\$500 - Zack Morrison