



# Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter

Spring 2010

<http://www.extension.colostate.edu/boulder/acreage.shtml>

## From the SAM Coordinator

Spring time in Colorado, 70° F one day and snow the next. We do have to be thankful for the added moisture. When we do have a nice day, get out and walk your pastures making note of the weeds you see and generally how healthy is your grass. Start planning your weed control and grazing management strategies for the year.

This spring we had 5 more people go through our Small Acreage Management Volunteer program. They have all graduated and are ready along with our returning volunteers to answer your questions and to identify and help you manage your weeds. All of our volunteers either currently own or have previously owned or grew up on farms or small acreages so they are very knowledgeable.

The small acreage website has been redesigned with a new look but all the same features are still available such as back issues of this newsletter. Please use the above new link to get to the updated website.

*Sharon Bokan*

Small Acreage Coordinator

## SAM Newsletters Online

View previous newsletters via the SAM link above.

## SAM Email Listserv

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time and are not subscribed to the

(linked in header above). This quarterly e-newsletter and other timely info will be distributed via this email listserv.

Subscribers may use the listserv also as a SAM info gathering mechanism. For example, you may inquire about who is available in the area supply hay, to perform swathing/baling, etc. The listserv is not a marketplace, however. Because it is hosted on the CSU server, **NO COMMERCIAL EMAILS ARE ALLOWED. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SELL ANYTHING VIA THE LISTSERV – THANKS.** Use the newsletter ad section for these purposes.

Currently, there are 198 subscribers to the listserv

## Coming Events

We are in the midst of planning 2 workshops. In cooperation with Larimer County Extension and Pawnee Buttes Seed Company, we are planning the 2010 Grass Tour. The tour will consist of visiting various sites in Boulder and Larimer County to see reseeding, weed management and good grazing management in practice. The tour will be August 11 and 12, 2010. The second is a Small Acreage Workshop to occur at The Ranch east of Loveland on Saturday, September 11, 2010. As we get both events finalized, we will send out the registration details.

## Spring weed considerations

With the moisture we've had, it is too late to spray the early mustards (blue mustard, flixweed, tumble mustard) and other early season weeds. At this time, mowing, light tillage or hand pulling to prevent seed production are your only options. The kochia is up and at this point can

be controlled by hoeing, pulling, tillage or spraying. The best chemicals for kochia are dicamba and Vista/Starane. Keep a look out for the biennial thistle and knapweed rosettes. In the rosette stage, undercutting, pulling or spraying with Milestone, Transline, Curtail and Redeem can control them. Plan your strategy for perennials. Some are best controlled as they are emerging while others you need to plan on mowing all summer to prevent seed production and a fall herbicide application. Planning ahead will give **you** the edge in weed control.

Also remember to wait until your grasses are 6-8" tall before letting your animals out to graze. Keeping your grass healthy will minimize weed problems.

For help with weed management and control, you can bring a weed sample to the Extension office for identification and management strategies.

### **Weed ID and Management Workshops**

Once again we will be offering 2 weed identification and management workshops on June 23 and August 25 from 6-8 pm at the Clover Bldg. on the fairgrounds. You need to only attend one class as they repeat. Cost is \$10 due at the class. Please bring your weeds with you for identification. Call the office to sign up 303-678-6238.

### **Reseeding, What to Expect**

By Deniece Hopkins, SAM Volunteer

Thinking about reseeding your dryland pasture? Have visions of your horse frolicking in a beautiful lush green pasture just like that one on the front cover of the recent horse magazine?

We can all dream but that doesn't change the reality of the Colorado climate and conditions that exist here. Unfortunately, these limitations are beyond our control and we have to learn to work within them for the benefit of our land.

Most pastures in this area are dryland however there are some irrigated pastures and they may take less time to renovate, but the care is similar.

Reseeding is not cheap and it's not a quick fix to an over grazed, or drought damaged pasture. Before spending money on this, you need to know what to expect and how to make your project successful. Do your homework, control your weeds, select your seed wisely and your contractor if you aren't going to do it yourself.

Now would also be the perfect time to study up on grazing management. Many people reseed only half of their pastureland at a time, so the animals can run on the other half. Learning to properly manage your grazing land now will save your newly reseeded pasture a lot of damage. You can ruin 3-5 years worth of reseeding work with a few months of bad grazing management. On the plus side, with a good grazing management plan, you may find that the other half of your pasture land won't need to be reseeded when the time comes.

Now let's assume you did all your homework, selected your seed according to your goal for you pasture and did what you could to control the weeds, now what?

Well, this is the part of reseeding I dislike the most. With years of experience in the area of pasture maintenance, I've found that seeding is by far my least favorite thing to do. We live in a world of immediate gratification, and I, like everybody else, want to see the fruits of my labor **RIGHT NOW!** Unfortunately, seeding is not an area where you can have such an attitude. Seeding is a long process that requires care and patience.

So what can you expect? While both pastures and lawns contain grass, a pasture is not a lawn. It will not grow lush and green in a few short months. Getting your pasture back into shape will most likely take 3-5 years with correct care.

Year one, you can expect to be very disappointed. You'll probably be very angry

with your contractor. You will think that the seed you planted was 100% weed seed and that you threw all your money away. At this point many people get discouraged and let their horses back on the pasture and give up, or they call yet another contractor and reseed again. Don't do this! Any good contractor will have told you that it takes 3-5 years and a lot of care to get your pasture going good. This means, keeping the horses or other animals off the land for that amount of time, controlling the weeds and hoping for rain.

You need to understand, that the seed has certain requirements that have to be met in order to germinate. These include temperature and moisture levels. The good news is that with most cool season pasture grasses; the seed will remain viable for several years until these conditions are met. So again patience is required. Look closely and you will probably see little fine grass blades coming up here and there. That's what you should see the first year.

You won't want to spray for weeds during this first year, but do expect and budget for mowing it at least twice. **DO NOT LET THOSE WEEDS GO TO SEED.**



Year two: Here it is year two and you had a very hard time being patient last year. You are seeing a few more blades of grass but nothing like you expected. You are pretty sure you need to reseed again. There are tons of weeds still and all this is very frustrating. You've been good to keep the

horses off the land all last year, but they are getting fussy and want to get to this pasture. However, you are determined not to waste all that money you spent and those people at the Extension Office assured you that this was normal, so again you try hard to be patient and see what happens. You still need to mow or spray for weeds, a couple of times this year. Be careful with the spray be sure to use something selective enough that you are sure it won't kill your tiny little new grasses.

Year Three: Wow, there really is grass out there. You can see the green now. It's looking pretty good and you are tempted to let the horses go out there. But again you were cautioned that horses and other animals love those tiny green sweet grasses and will pull them right up from the roots and ruin your newly seeded pasture in a very short time, so once again you exercise patience and keep them off and control any weeds that might be coming up.

Year 4 rolls around and that pasture is sure looking good. You might actually be able to let the horses out a little but only after you've checked to make sure the grass doesn't pull up easily and that it's at least 6-8" tall. If it does pull up easily you know to leave them off for yet another year.

Year 5 is here and it looks great. It's not totally filled in like you expected but you've learned that that is normal and that this is Colorado not Kentucky so that's what pastures look like. In time with very careful grazing management it will continue to look better and better as the years roll by.

Of course you know that you must continue to manage your pasture carefully if it's to stay nice and continue to improve over the years. You know that if you don't control the grazing, you could easily end up where you started in a very, very short time, just weeks in some cases. Good thing you had so much time to study up on how to manage your pasture.



Managing Small Acreage Pastures During and After Drought

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/natres/06112.html>

[Weed Management for Small Rural Acreages, Fact Sheet 3.106](#), Colorado State University Extension.

## Pollinators

By Jennifer Cook, Small Acreage Management Coordinator

Pollinators are needed for reproduction of 90% of all flowering plants and one-third of all human crops. We all depend on pollinators to provide us with the wide range of food we eat. But pollinators are disappearing at alarming rates due to habitat loss, disease, inappropriate or excessive pesticide use, and most recently, Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). By adding certain plants to your landscape that provide food and shelter for pollinators, you can help them and our food supply.

Who are the pollinators? Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, birds, and bats all contribute to plant pollination, as well as wind.

Bees pollinate alfalfa, melons, squash, and heirloom tomatoes. Most of us are familiar with the honeybee, which were imported from Europe almost 400 years ago. There are also nearly 4,000 species of native and twig nesting bees in the US, such as bumblebees, wood diggers, carpenter bees, and polyester bees. Bees have tongues of varying lengths that help determine

which flowers they can obtain nectar and pollen from.



Jack Dykinga, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

Butterflies are attracted to eye catching bright flowers. Numerous trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants support butterfly populations. Butterflies prefer plants in full sun with flowers that provide a good landing platform, such as black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and smooth blue aster (*Symphotrichum laeve*).



Moths are typically active during the night. Moth bodies are hairy and stouter than butterflies, with simple to featherlike antennae. Moths are attracted to flowers with a strongly sweet aroma, which open, in late afternoon or night, such as antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*).

There are over 30,000 species of beetles in the US. Beetles are not as efficient as some pollinators and many have a bad reputation because they damage plants. Beetle pollinated plants tend to be large strong smelling flowers with their sexual organs exposed, such as red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*).

Flies are generalist pollinators, which means they visit many different species of plants. Flies pollinate small flowers that bloom in shade in

seasonally moist habitats, such as goldenrod, members of the carrot family, and skunk cabbage.

Hummingbirds are the primary pollinating birds, with long beaks and tongues that draw nectar from tubular plants. Pollen is carried on both the beaks and feathers of different hummingbirds. Hummingbirds can see the color red, while bees cannot. Colorado blue columbine (*Aquilegia caerulea*) and whole leaf Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja integra*) attract hummingbirds in the Southern Rocky Mountains. White-winged doves (*Zenaida asiatica*) are another bird pollinator that pollinate the saguaro cactus in the south central US.



The long noses and tongues of bats allow them to extract pollen and nectar from flowers. Though bats in the Southern Rocky Mountains are not pollinators, bats are important pollinators in other regions such as the southwest where they feed on agaves and cactus.



You can attract pollinator populations by planting a pollinator-friendly habitat in your garden or farmscape. Check out Pollinator Partnership at [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org) to learn more about how you can support pollinators in your region as a gardener, farmer, or land manager. Download a regional guide, which is a complete “How To” guide for beginners, and discusses plant traits, habitat hints, and lists plants that attract pollinators in your region. Colorado’s

Front Range is included in the Southern Rocky Mountain Steppe region.

Here are some helpful hints from the guide:

Pollinators travel through the landscape without regard to property boundaries. Understand the vegetation patterns of your neighboring land and strive to provide appropriate food and shelter.

Plant flowers in groups of the same species to increase pollinator efficiency.

Plant herbs such as mint, oregano, chives, parsley, and lavender.

Choose a variety of flowering colors and make sure something is blooming at all times.

Choose a variety of native plants when planting windbreaks and field borders.

Practice integrated pest management (IPM) and minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides.

To learn more about IPM, watch the [July 16 webinar on Weed Management](#).

<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/nativebee.html>

Alternative Pollinators: Native Bees – This is a downloadable guide that discusses native bee biology, habitat, and how you can attract native bees. Includes case studies, how to build nesting sites, and forage lists by region.

CSU Fact Sheet “Attracting Butterflies to the Garden, #5.504

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05504.html>

## **Maintaining water quality**

By Sharon Bokan, Small Acreage Coordinator

We don’t often think about how our actions affect water quality. Whether you have a ditch or stream or no obvious water source on your property, there are things you can do to protect water quality for both you and others. For most people, our water starts as a snowflake or rain

drop in the mountains. Think about that drop as it comes down to the plains; notice the number of people and things that could possibly contaminate the water before it gets to you. Then think about your actions that could contaminate it for others beyond you.



### **Inside the house**

Do not dump chemicals, oil or other hazardous materials into your sewer or septic system. Take advantage of local hazardous waste disposal centers or events. Use less toxic products and do not dispose of unwanted products in the drain. Don't dump expired or unneeded medications in the toilet. Check with your local hospital for collection events.

### **Outside the house**

When locating your septic system, you will need to follow local and state guidelines and regulations to prevent contamination of wells and ground water. Maintain your system by inspecting it annually. Systems should have solids pumped every 3-5 years. Additives have not been proven to improve system performance; some may actually be harmful or contaminate ground water. Don't divert storm drains or other potentially contaminated water (i.e. runoff from a dry lot area) into the system. When possible, compost kitchen scraps instead of using your garbage disposal. Using your garbage disposal increases the amount of solids your system must digest. This decreases the time between pumping.

In your yard, do not over fertilize your lawn, or spray unnecessary pesticides. Plant low maintenance plants and use mulch to cover bare ground and prevent runoff. Compost or chip and mulch yard waste and leave grass clippings on

the lawn to reduce soil erosion, improve soil quality and reduce fertilizer needs.

### **In you stable and pasture areas**

Keep your pasture healthy and minimize bare areas. A healthy pasture helps filter water. Maintain a filter strip area around your dry lot to prevent feces and urine-contaminated water from reaching surface and ground water. You can include a few shrubs or trees around the filter strip. Some trees require significant water to thrive so they can help filter the dry lot contaminated water. Having shrubs, windbreaks or solid fencing will keep the soil in the dry lot from blowing away too.

Practice good grazing management to keep your pasture grass healthy. By setting up grazing cells and access areas up for easy access and maximum efficiency you can minimize bare areas. Keeping the grass healthy also minimizes the use of herbicides for weeds and fertilizer, limiting the potential for ground water contamination. When using herbicides be sure to follow the label. Apply at the label rates and be sure to follow restrictions concerning use around water. If you have to apply an herbicide near water, make sure to purchase one that is labeled for that use. Do not over fertilize to prevent nitrate contamination of ground water. Periodically sample your soil to detect nitrogen buildup. Dispose of all pesticides through local hazardous waste facilities. Do not dump pesticides you no longer need on the ground and mix them in an area that can contain spills

Limit animal's access to ditches and water sources. Fence off ditches, streams and lakes, etc. Fence animals and divert surface water away from wellheads. Set dry lots on high ground away from wells, water, ditches, and other water sources.

Build a berm or ditch around the dry lot area to help contain runoff water. Precipitation from a stable roof should be diverted away from the dry lot area. Locate the dry lot so that there is a sufficient vegetative buffer area between the dry lot and ditches, streams, ponds and wetland

areas. Keep manure cleaned up in the dry lot area to minimize water contamination with feces. Depending on your soils, vegetation and slope the buffer areas need to be at least 50' wide. Limited grazing can occur in the buffer areas.

Either spread manure in the pasture on a regular basis and harrow the field after application to spread manure or compost the manure. Again you will want to make sure you have sufficient vegetative buffer areas to prevent runoff from the compost pile from reaching water sources. The ideal situation is to place manure on an impermeable surface with water containment around the pile and when precipitation is expected to cover the pile. Make sure that runoff from the dry lot does not run through or directly past your compost pile. Compost piles must be at least 100' from a well.

To check how well you are doing and to protect yourself you should have your well tested yearly.

With all of us doing our part, we can help keep our water quality safe for everyone.

Resources:

“Living on the Land” University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension and Western Region  
SARE

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website  
<http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/agmodule/index.htm>

Texas A&M University website,  
<http://oceanworld.tamu.edu/resources/environment-book/groundwatercontamination.html>

## **Place your SAM related classified ad or print advertisement here!**

### **Classified Advertising Rates are as follows:**

SAM Volunteer: 20 cents/word  
4-H Member/Leader: 20 cents/word  
General Public, Individual: 25 cents/word  
General Public, Business/Show: 30 cents/ word

### **Print Ad Rates are as follows:**

Quarter Page Ad: \$50.00  
Half Page Ad: \$80.00  
Full Page Ad: \$100.00

**Email Adrian Card for more details  
[acard@bouldercounty.org](mailto:acard@bouldercounty.org)**