

Producer Stories

From Alberta Farms and Ranches

Glen & Kelly Hall - Stavely, Alberta

Glen and Kelly Hall manage 3200 acres of grass and a 330 head purebred Simmental cattle operation for the Bar None Ranch near Stavely, Alberta. The ranch includes two quarters of pasture along Mosquito Creek separated by a municipal road.

In 1992, the east Mosquito Creek pasture was part of a larger pasture unit and had been heavily grazed, resulting in

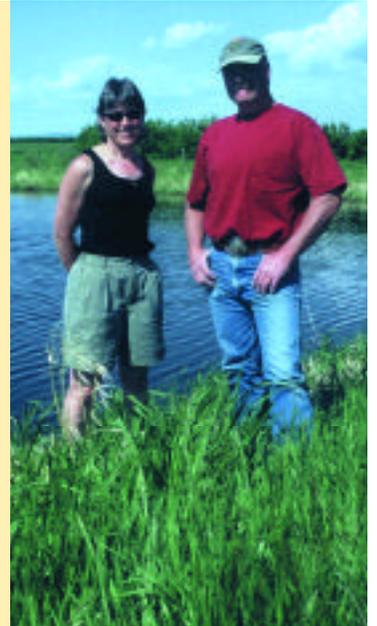
Successful riparian management requires modifying animal behavior to control grazing patterns, timing and intensity.

unhealthy riparian areas. Areas of bare ground, weed infestations, trampling, and lack of plants with deep and binding roots along the banks were symptoms of overuse. In the next couple of years, Halls strategically fenced the large pasture into three smaller units and developed alternative water sources to help improve livestock distribution over the land.

Following fencing, the Mosquito Creek pasture was left to rest allowing the uplands and riparian areas to begin to recover.

Since then, the pasture has been managed under a time-controlled (seasonal rest) grazing strategy, used primarily as a breeding pasture from May 15 to June 30 most years for 35 to 40 cows, plus a bull. Cattle do not return to this pasture until the following spring so riparian areas benefit from almost a full growing season of rest.

Halls have two goals - one is to include both Mosquito Creek pastures in the overall ranch grazing system. The second is to maintain the native grass stand for potential to harvest and market native grass seed.



Management Highlights

- * 320 acres native pasture in the Municipal District of Willow Creek along Mosquito Creek
- * historical full season grazing until 1992; two year rest and recovery strategy from 1992 to 1994
- * since 1994, time-controlled grazing management, pasture used primarily as breeding pasture (May 15 to June 30)
- * two separate management goals: to provide pasture for purebred cow herd, and to produce high quality native grass seed for market



Successful Riparian Management

Seasonal Rest

Using a seasonal rest grazing strategy has resulted in a remarkable improvement of riparian health, including excellent shrub regeneration. The willows are coming back, the grass is healthy and the streambanks are rebuilding themselves. Healthy and abundant vegetation builds strong streambanks to dissipate stream horsepower, trap sediment, build ground water reserves and maintain stream channel shape.

Grass Management & Utilization

Cows and heifers are supplemented with grain during the breeding season to keep up their condition and to reduce pressure on the grass. Calves also receive supplemental feed in creep feeders to reduce their demands on the cow. Extended feeding into spring and summer is labor-intensive, but it is the best way for Halls to keep a close eye on the health and condition of the animals and the grass.

Keep the cow healthy, keep the land healthy. It's common sense.

Halls believe in managing grass utilization by managing cattle behavior. Strategic fencing and off-site water development of springs and dugouts have expanded their options for pasture rotation, livestock distribution and timing of grazing.

The end result is high quality, healthy animals for stock and sale, high quality grass for seed and an improvement in riparian health.



Future Plans

Using practical management strategies to maintain and improve the health of riparian areas along Mosquito Creek and the range health of all grasslands they manage is one objective of the Bar None Ranch. Controlled grazing will remain a key strategy to ensure the cattle continue to be a management tool in maintaining high quality, healthy native grasslands for pasture and native grass seed production.

Management strategies will be adjusted to drought conditions, water availability and impacts of a new reservoir development. The Halls plan to continue working with the Cows and Fish program to monitor and assess changes in riparian health.

Photo Credits: Glen & Kelly Hall
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Cows and Fish Partners

Producers & Community Groups, Alberta Beef Producers, Trout Unlimited Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment, Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Conservation Association

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