

CONSERVATION Showcase

Cowboy Ingenuity Aids Lovington Rancher

Southwestern ranchers know the need for being inventive and finding practical solutions for issues on the range. Clyde Fort, of Troy Fort Ranch, 15 miles northwest of Lovington, is no exception. He has put together programs from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with homegrown ingenuity to tackle burned out fences, cholla, and the need for stock water systems to bring good sound conservation to his ranch.



Fort is carrying on the legacy of his father, Troy Fort, who did much of the early fencing and other conservation work on the ranch. Clyde Fort, however, was faced with a heavy infestation of cholla cactus that needed immediate action.

“Something had to be done or the rangeland would be of very little value for the ranching operation,” said Fort.

A major step on Fort’s part was to apply to NRCS for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds. He successfully competed, and used the cost-share monies for grubbing cholla, developing watering sources for his cattle, and building miles and miles of fence. Some 23 miles of his fencing was lost due the fires in Lea County this spring.

But Fort did not stop there. Stepping outside the box and using that cowboy inventiveness he has set out to do battle with the cholla. He has worked on his own creations to remove the cholla and realize cost savings at the same time. Time will tell effectiveness of his efforts.

Not stopping there, however, Fort made drinkers on his watering tanks that are attached directly to the main storage tank. Typically a watering source for cattle will consist of a large storage tank that holds a 5-10 day supply for the number of cattle involved, with a smaller separate drinking tank that holds a one-day supply. Fort attached drinking tanks directly to the main tank that are continuously being replenished.

Fort’s inventions were created and used outside of any of the EQIP funding, and were cost effective solutions that enhanced his overall conservation efforts. According to Ford, the rail dragging technique cost him about 25 percent of the cost of conventional grubbing.

“I needed to find ways to reduce my out-of-pocket cost,” said Fort.

Two other conservation measures he has been applying to his property are rotational grazing on all his pastures, and fibreglassing all of his watering tanks to extend the life of the tanks.