Grazing Management Pays Off for Experienced Cattle Rancher

Story provided by Joshua Archuleta, Soil Conservationist at the Estancia Field Office.

Estevan Jaramillo has more than 20 years experience managing the LT Lewis LTD Company Ranch in Encino, New Mexico. He runs a cow/calf, Black Angus operation on the ranch and signed up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in 2010 with the primary goal of increasing forage production.

Mr. Jaramillo selected a conservation enhancement to identify the key grazing areas in his pastures, as well as, to keep track of the key native species being grazed by the cattle. Monitoring the impact of grazing on the key plant species has played a big role in developing and modifying his written grazing plan over the past six years which has resulted in a sound grazing rotation and an increase in forage production.

One of the grazing practices adopted is to remove cattle from a third of the ranch each year during the fawning season. Deferring grazing during this period allows plants to recover and provides food and cover for pronghorn antelope and mule deer. As a result of the annual deferment on over 13,000 acres, Estevan has noticed an increase in mule deer and pronghorn antelope numbers.

Having reliable water was a critical part of the grazing plan. With CSP assistance, Estevan added a solar unit to a well in the middle of the ranch that created a reliable source of water for cattle and wildlife in the northern, middle and southern end of the ranch. Pleased with the results of the first CSP contract, Estevan renewed the contract for another 5 years. He is now monitoring the nutritional content of the forage by collecting manure samples on a regular basis. The results help him to adjust the type of feed he provides to his cattle during the winter and better plan the grazing rotation by understanding the nutritional differences of the forage in the pastures.

The work that Estevan has done with monitoring through CSP has confirmed his long held belief that pasture rotation and deferment are very important to keeping the range healthy and productive. Estevan’s success with increased forage production and wildlife is testimony that protecting natural resources is good for the ranch bottom line.

Mr. Jaramillo always says that he, “farms grass, because if as a rancher, you aren’t good at farming grass on the range in your pastures, you will never be a successful rancher!”

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