



Grassland Award – ENS Cattle (Erik and Kaitlyn Steffens)

Erik and Kaitlyn Steffens of ENS Cattle is this year's winner of the Grassland Award.

The purpose of the Grassland Award is to recognize an individual, organization or business providing exceptional service and support to the conservation, management and/or education of the grasslands of Kansas.

To be recognized for the award, the recipient must be working with, managing or supporting grasslands. The service and support to the conservation, management and/or education of Kansas grassland must be above and beyond that normally expected. The contributions of the recipient must have been provided over an extended period of time.

ENS's contribution to conserving the grasslands in Lane County include the management of 2800 acres of pastures that stretch from the Lane/Finney County line to Highway 4, the majority of which are rented. To conserve the grasslands Erik mentioned they do their best to not hit the acres with large numbers and really try to hit the pastures at various times throughout the growing season. Much of their efforts depends on the weather and the amount of growth from pasture to pasture and year to year. If they heavily graze in the spring, then cattle will not be on that piece for 8-10 months. They also try to give at least 2 of their pastures a break each year, which allows time for the grass to recover. Another tactic that they utilize is early weening, usually by September, which allows them to move the cows to a different pasture that wasn't used the year before.

ENS began pursuing their current grazing practices and improving the land over the last 3 to 4 years extensively. Erik saw the biggest reason for starting to actively manage their grassland was because they rented 99% of their acres and wanted to keep their landlords happy. Along with that, it has added more pounds to their calves, as there is better quantity and quality of grass. He also mentioned it doesn't hurt having less pastures to check on a regular basis.

It was mentioned that, along with weather and the lack of moisture, one of the biggest challenges they have faced is keeping all of the landlords up to date on what is happening. With so many landlords it has been a learning curve on managing the people along with the acres.

Erik mentioned that besides of course staying in business, it's important to pay close attention to what is happening with your grass acres and approach them with different modes of action to keep them healthy.

At this time, will you please welcome Erik and Kaitlyn Steffens of ENS Cattle, to accept the grassland award.