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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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Defining "Normal"

We live in a world of variability with decisions that are sometimes based on traditions. I was recently asked what normal is when referring to the annual forage production on rangeland for a specific ecological or range site. This was a great question and at first seemed like a very simple task. I was rather confident in the fact that I knew what normal is. Was I? Most all of the forage production figures on rangeland that I have been working with are scientific based documents based on years of clipping and precipitation data. I was not concerned with the how and why, but rather that the figures were there to reference. As I contemplated the question of the how and why of normal I soon became more intrigued, mainly because I couldn't defend the very document I am tasked to write. I couldn't define what normal is.

So I did what any father would do when working on scientific literature and asked each of my children to help me define normal. My 4 year old response was, "normal is when someone is talking different". My 6 year old said, "normal is between something that is real and something that is fake" and my 8 year old response was, "normal is when you're not acting crazy and when you don't do what other people do". We can learn a lot from our children if we would just ask them the hard questions sometimes.

I would venture to say most of our preconceived notions about normal refers to people. Defining normal becomes difficult when we try to define it out of context. When defining normal we may refer to people, Psychology, Chemistry, Education, teaching, technology, Arts, entertainment and Mathematics. In this article I will refer to normal as a mathematical term based on data. Normal starts to have meaning when we keep it in context.

What are your normal stocking rates? Are your stocking rates based on tradition? Are your stocking rates driven by economics? Are your stocking rates based on

normal vegetation production figures? Yes to all of these? There is a document called Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) formerly Range Site Descriptions in which annual forage production data exist for your farm or ranch. These forage production figures are categorized with the terms unfavorable, normal and favorable. These figures resemble fluctuations to be expected for the year based on climatic variability, primarily by precipitation. The question that I was asked relates to defining the 'normal' when referencing vegetative production amounts inside the ESD document.

The precipitation data and percentages I use to help define normal is based on major land resource area 76, also known as The Flint Hills. Normal is defined as receiving 70% (22-28 inches) of the annual precipitation (32-40 inches) during the growing season (April through October) with May through August being the heaviest months. Normal refers to a production figure based on timely precipitation during the growing season. The departure from either side of normal defines unfavorable and favorable. Unfavorable and Favorable refers to the variability in which we live. The amount of vegetation produced on your ranch varies from year to year in relation to the timeliness and amount of precipitation received. This is an attempt at defining normal and I thought I would share this information in an article form.

Ecological Site Descriptions are guides to use in planning, monitoring and assessing your resource needs on rangelands. Ecological site descriptions describe rangelands and their soil, vegetation, and abiotic features. For more information on Ecological Site Descriptions or Range sites please contact your local NRCS office or visit the Ecological Site Information Systems (ESIS) website at: <https://esis.sc.egov.usda.gov>

If you have any questions about Ecological Site Descriptions or content of this article please call: Chris Tecklenburg USDA-NRCS, Ecological Site Specialist (620)663-3501 ext. 114.

**KANSAS SECTION
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2013 Kansas Range Youth Camp

The Kansas Range Youth Camp was held June 25-28 at Camp Mennoscah in Kingman County. Twenty-seven high school youth from Kansas attended the camp put on by the Kansas Section, Society for Range Management. Most participants are sponsored by their local conservation district. Dusty Tacha was the camp director this year with help from fellow counselors and instructors Alex Miller, David Kraft, Walt Fick, Toni Flax, and Jonie James. Top campers this year were Valerie Klassen, Tyler Marr, Issac Bohnenkemper, and Josh Dunn.



Kansas Range Youth Camp Participants



Grazing Like a Cow



KC Olson and Livestock Behavior

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

I would encourage you to join or renew your membership with SRM. Forms are available at <http://www.rangelands.org> or if you have questions e-mail srm@allenpress.com or call (800) 627-0326.

The Fall Meeting on October 2 should be an interesting event to catch up on Section activities and tour the Ringneck Ranch. We also have the opportunity to learn about the Kansas Grazing Land Coalition and join their meeting on October 3. Contact me if you have any questions about these events. If you would like to write an article related to rangeland management please do so and send it to me at whfick@ksu.edu.

Submission deadline for the next issue of the Bluestem Bulletin: November 1, 2013



Kansas Section for the Society for Range Management and the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition Meeting and tour.

Wednesday, October 2th, 2013

Joint Mtg/tour 9 am—4 pm, Oct. 3 KGLC

Board Mtg. Ringneck Ranch Tipton, Ks

Fall Meeting

Join us for the first KSSRM-KGLC joint meeting.

Informative soil health presentation, lunch and tour of 1872 homestead ranch overlooking Blue Hills range.

Highlights

- Business Meeting
- KSSRM-KGLC visions
- Rangeland Soil Health Presentation
- Lunch
- Tour of Ringneck Ranch
 - 10,000 acres of quail and prairie chicken habitat
 - Located on the edge of Rolling Plains and Breaks and near the Sandstone Hills of Kansas



Registration fee (includes lunch and guided tour):

SRM Members: \$15

Non-Member: \$20

Driving directions to the Ringneck Ranch: From Salina, KS: West on I-70 to the Sylvan Grove Exit #209, Turn right (north) on Hwy 181 through Sylvan Grove to Hunter. Turn left (west) on Hwy 181 four miles which turns right (north) another 4 miles. When you make the “S” curve across the creek on Hwy 181, it will be 3/4 mile to the Houghton Ranch sign and Ringneck Ranch sign. Turn right (east) at the Houghton Ranch Sign, 1 mile to the Ringneck Ranch.

Ringneck Ranch is located just south of Tipton, KS, 655 Solomon Lane (785-373-4835)

Contact Chris Tecklenburg ASAP to register (620-200-6997 or chris.tecklenburg@ks.usda.gov)

If you plan to stay overnight for the KGLC meeting Oct. 3 please contact Tim Christian (620-241-3636 for Lodging details.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 26	Beef Stocker Field Day, Manhattan, KS [www.asi.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=1260]
October 2-3	Joint Meeting of the Kansas Section, Society for Range Management and Kansas Grazing Land Coalition, Ringneck Ranch, Tipton, KS
November 24-26	KACD Annual Convention, Wichita, KS [www.kacdnet.org/convention.html]
December 4-6	KLA Convention and Trade Show, Wichita, KS
January 30-31, 2014	Kansas Natural Resources Conference, Wichita, KS
February 8-13, 2014	Society for Range Management Annual Meeting & Trade Show, Orlando, FL [www.rangelands.org/events]