

AGM Weekly Update

Good Day AGMers,

It's been a week for the records...the precipitation records, anyway. CPER headquarters received .56 inches of rain over the holiday weekend, making the running total for the month around 2.5 inches. There were no signs of illness with our experiment's bovine participants, however, a bit of Tom Foolery is being suspected in 12 steers that were found just outside an open gate of the Elm pasture yesterday. The suspects were kindly escorted back to their pasture by our staff and the gate has been secured. The cool season grasses are starting to go to seed, bringing our high VOR average up to 19.8cm. The low reading dropped from 5.2 last week to 3.8 this week.

Highlights of happenings:

- Our 214 steers still occupy the Elm pasture (top photo).
- The water tanks are full and we had no reported issues with animal health or behavior.
- The fences are holding up just fine, however, we suspect that the gate in the SW corner of the Elm pasture was rubbed open by cattle. The 12 escapees remained in the vicinity of the opened gate in section 19S where they were rounded up and returned to Elm.
- Over the holiday weekend, CPER headquarters received .56 inches of rain. Other pastures received as much as 1.4 inches! Precipitation measurements near the Elm pasture averaged around 1.0 inch.
- The average high VOR from yesterday was 19.8cm (up from 15.1 on May 16th) and the average low was 3.8cm (down from 5.2). This appears to still be above our standing biomass threshold for (see http://www.ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/Place/54092500/2-VOR_to_assess_standing_crop_for_AGM.pdf).

For more detailed precipitation data, maps, and to review the decision tree for the grazing sequence, see our website: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=24218>. Also, feel free to send any questions, suggestion, or concerns relating to the project my way and I will do my best to respond in next week's email.



Above: AGM herd in Elm



Above: PhotoPoint from the Elm pasture.



Above: Can anyone ID this aquatic vertebrate from our water tank-ecosystem?

Other Notables:

- Forb of the Week: Little cryptantha (*Cryptantha minima*) is in flower right now at CPER. It is one of our most commonly found forbs in our vegetative survey. It has tiny pretty white flowers that develop into nasty bur-like seed capsules that are commonly found stuck in my fingers after a day of clipping. For a better description, range map, and photos see <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=CRM15> .

On behalf of the USDA-ARS-Rangeland Resources Research Unit, I thank you all for your continued participation in this project.

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