

AGM Weekly Update

Good Day AGMers,

On this rainy July morning, we sit in the office dreaming about days of old (yesterday and the day before), when the roads weren't so muddy and we frolicked in greener pastures, sorting cattle and measuring vegetation. Those days may soon return (tomorrow and the next day), but until then, enjoy this communication email and have another cup of coffee. If nothing else, check out the latest fecal analysis results and our mini experiment with removing six-weeks fescue from the VORs.

Highlights of Happenings:

- We haven't had any mix-ups this week with the AGM herd as they occupy the Salt Flat pasture.
- On Tuesday, the CPER crew assisted David Smith in swapping out the 10 GPS collars on the AGM herd at the headquarters corrals. In the process, we treated one steer for pink-eye, one new foot-rot, and retreated one other foot-rot. The two foot-rot cases are being held at the corrals for further observation. Our total foot-rot cases for the season in the AGM herd, so far, is 8.
- The VOR average was down from 7.7 cm last week, to 6.6 cm this week (See figure 1). Last Friday, we tested to see how the VOR average would change in the absence to six-weeks fescue by mechanically removing it from a subset of 25 VORs. The result was about a 2 cm drop in the average when blue grama was present at the lower reading. We will continue to use the current protocol for the VORs throughout the rest of the season, however, we may need to discuss the possibility of modifying it next season based on this test.
- Our mid-season rains continue as the CPER headquarter reports 0.98 inches since our last communication with most of that falling within the last couple days. This brings our total for July to 2.15 inches, keeping us above average for the month and year. Our cool season grasses have mostly gone to seed while our dominant warm-season grasses, blue grama and buffalo grass continue to benefit from the moisture.
- In our latest fecal analysis results (see figures 2 and 3); crude protein continues to decline as the season progresses in the TGM and AGM herd with a slight uptick in week 9. In general, TGM steers still have a higher dietary crude protein. Interestingly, digestible organic matter is now higher in AGM steers suggesting that that they have more leaf material in their diets.

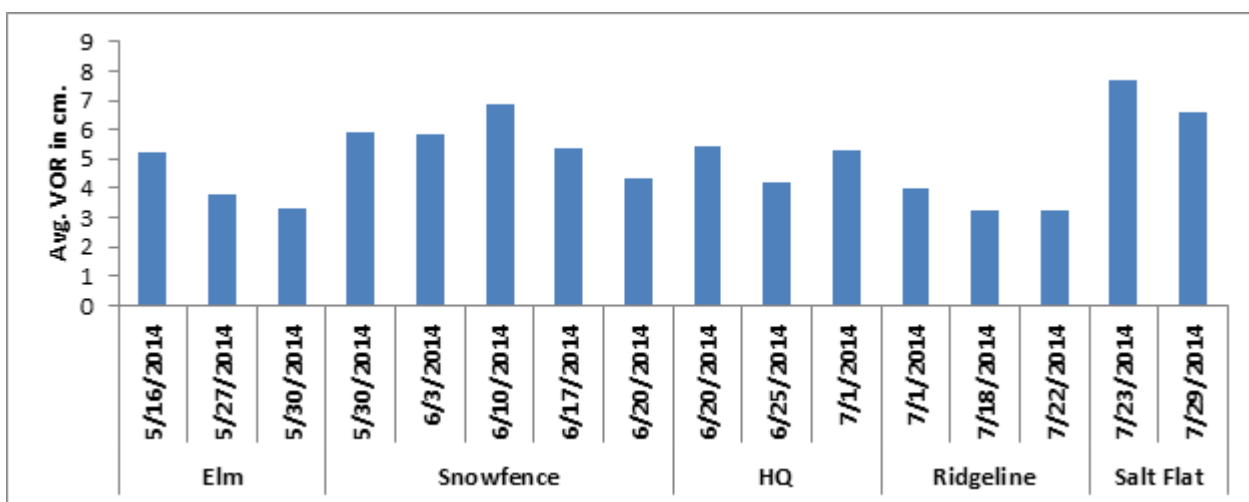


Figure 1: VORs throughout the grazing sequence so far.

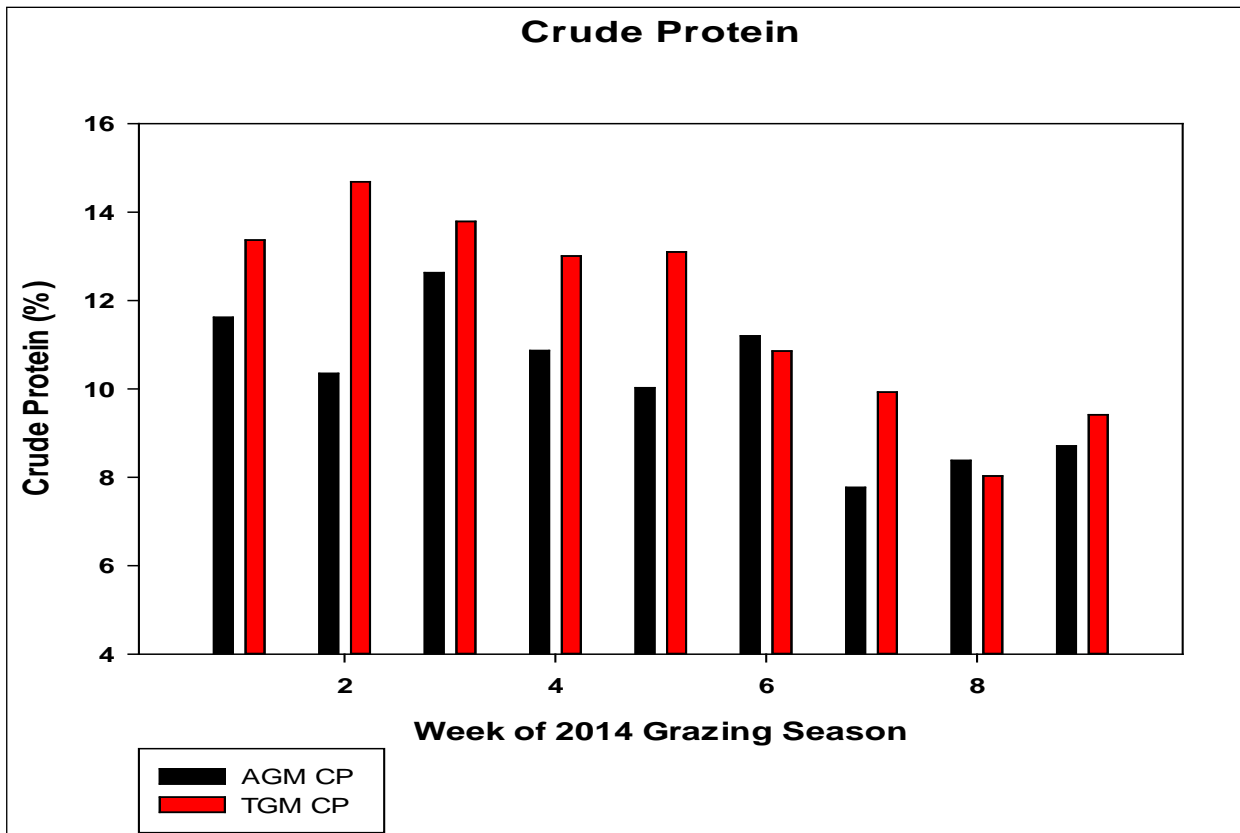


Figure 2: Fecal crude protein for the TGM and AGM grazing in the first 9 weeks.

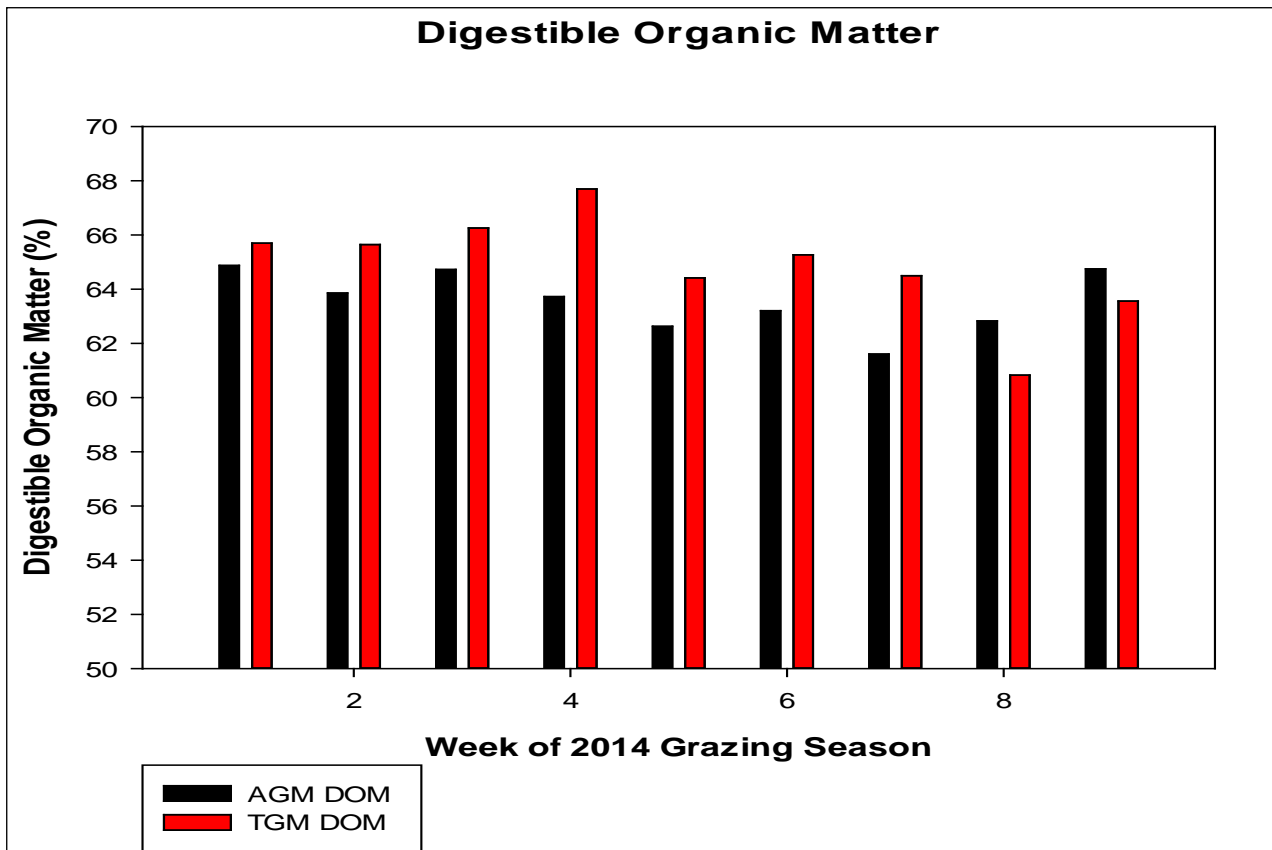


Figure 3: Fecal digestible organic matter for the TGM and AGM grazing in the first 9 weeks.

For more detailed precipitation data and maps, see our website:
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=24218>. Remember to send your questions, concerns, and ideas my way and I do my best to have them addressed in next week's email.



A line of steers as far as the eye can see in the Salt Flat pasture.



Our forb of the week, hairy golden aster, shining with brightness on this cloudy day.

Other Notables:

- Forb of the Week: Hairy golden aster (*Heterotheca villosa* or *Chrysopsis villosa*) is in bloom on the CPER. This perennial forb is fairly easily identified, even when not in bloom, due to its soft green hairy leaves and distinctly sweet smell (scratch and sniff photo above).

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

Nick Dufek