

AGM Weekly Update

Good Sunny Day AGMers,

Yes!! This week, the sun finally shines upon us as we hit the prairie in search of bird nests, fresh cattle poop, and astraguli (astragulus?). There's nothing like a warm sunny day after weeks of gloom and doom. The back of my neck would disagree as applying sunscreen failed to enter my eager mind on Wednesday. Here's to annually repeated hard lessons and sleeping face down. Cheers!

Highlights of Happenings:

- **The AGM herd now occupies the Salt Flat pasture.** Tuesday's biomass measurements suggested that we had reached our minimum threshold on the patch-burned area. This is the first time in experiment's history that our steers have grazed over fire treated range. As a fire nerd, I can't wait to see the GPS collar data and upcoming VORs.

- **CPER headquarters received .79 inches** of rain in the past week. This brings **May's total up to 5.6 inches**, 3.3 inches above the 76 year average.

- Reports from the cowboys tell us that **the AGM herd is in outstanding health.** They also added that there have been no mix-ups this week.

- **The exit VOR in Snow Fence was 4.1cm.** This is only a slight drop (0.7cm) from last week. I noticed much heavier grazing on the cool season needle and thread grass in Snow Fence this year compared to last year.

For detailed precipitation data, maps, last year's updates, scientist bios, and AGM documents, 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.

Photos



Above: The summer talent records nest information to help monitor grassland birds at CPER.



Above: Plant ID quiz #1. Any guesses? How 'bout those boots!!



Above: This pronghorn fawn tries to befriend Jake and Craig. Good luck with that, I say.

Other Notables and Questions:

-What's *the best* shortgrass steppe plant genus and why?

-If you could be any bird on the shortgrass steppe, which one would you be? Don't say Big Bird.

I'll post the *correct answers* next week.

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

Nick Dufek