Greeting AGMers,

So it…BEGINS!! Welcome back, everyone, to the receiving end of The Adaptive Grazing Management Experiment's weekly communication update. As is tradition, we have some great new people, tools, and methods to highlight this week. As I type, the AGM herd is headed to the Ridgeline pasture, the first stop in the 2016 grazing sequence.

We bring this communication to you on a weekly basis for the purpose of reporting progress, methods, results, and discussion of the AGM experiment, as it happens. We do our best to educate, have fun, and provide you with a means to participate throughout the experiment. I strongly encourage everyone to share questions, comments, concerns, and suggestions with me or the entire group. It's all of you that make this experiment so special and we look forward to hearing from each and every one of you. So please, don't be shy.

Highlights of Happenings: Preseason Edition

- Our crews have been hard at work all week **gathering, weighing, tagging and sorting the herd**. A big "thank you" to the Crow Valley Livestock Cooperative for providing us with such fine animals. By the end of the day, our experimental steers should all be in their respective pastures. **The average weight for all AGM/TGM steers was 641 pounds.**

- Our pre-grazed **VOR in the Ridgeline Pasture was at 2.9cm or 690 pounds/acre.** April precip totaled 1.35 inches and, so far, May has brought us about a half inch. Last year's April and May total was about 7 inches while our opening forage biomass in Snowfence on May 21st was 1,130 pounds/acre.

- **Wind mills, solar pumps, water tanks, hydrants, and a whole-lot of new fence** are prepared to deliver all our water and containment needs in 2016. As always, the CPER crew has been hard at work to ensure smooth ranching operations and scientific support for this year's grazing season and beyond.

- What New in 2016?

    - **We are proud to welcome Melissa Johnston to the crew this year**. Melissa will be our lead technician at CPER. She has a rich experience history in prairie ecology that includes leading the efforts with experimental rainout shelters at CPER and HPGRS for Colorado State University. We are all excited to be working with her and exploiting her talents.
    - **A maximum number-of-days threshold has been included in the AGM pasture rotation criteria** along with the usual Visual Obstruction Readings (VORs), and cattle behavior. See 2016 Grazing Season document for details.

- We will be taking **pictures of pasture conditions on a weekly basis** in the AGM herd occupied pastures and on an annual basis for all other pastures. I will include the weekly photos in future communication emails. We are utilizing the GrassSnap IPhone app to help keep these photos consistent and organized.
- **We will be monitoring defoliation of individual tillers of blue grama and western wheatgrass**. This effort could help us clarify how cattle utilize these abundant forage grasses under season-long moderate vs heavy-rotational stocking rates.
- You will be able to check out pics from our **newly installed phenocams** at CPER. This link lets you view conditions in the TGM pasture-15E: http://phenocam.sr.unh.edu/webcam/sites/cpertgm/
- **The fine folks from GANLAB (Grazingland Animal Nutrition Lab) now have a youtube channel** where you can see how we send, report, interpret, and prepare fecal samples for NUTBAL (Nutritional Balance Analyzer). https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7PXI2yn6zw2btdeI6iVnqw

For detailed precipitation data, maps, last year's updates, scientist bios, and AGM documents, see our website: http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/docs.htm?docid=25733 . Remember to send your questions, concerns, and ideas my way and I do my best to have them addressed in next week's email.

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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