

# Plain View

## Implementing what is appropriate



### About Eddie Bryan

**We chose Eddie as our February Grower of the Month. Eddie farms dryland wheat and milo for grain and raises stocker cattle near Happy, Texas. He manages pests through the balance of crop rotation, a graze-out program, and a wheat variety that grows well in dryland conditions.**

By Sean Keenan  
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**E**ddie and Phyllis Bryan farm near

Happy, Texas, southeast of Amarillo. They married in 1969, and they have two grown children and two grandchildren. The Bryans are involved with the community and have been involved with the Texas Cooperative Extension Service in Randall County for many years.

They live on part of the original land farmed by Eddie's parents. They raise stocker calves and grow dryland wheat and milo for grain. They also produce forage sorghum for silage and red-top cane for hay.

Wheat and cattle have always been an important part of the operation. Eddie first added milo to the operation in 1972. As they leased more farm ground, he established a wheat-milo-fallow rotation program. It produces two dryland crops over a three-year period. Fallow periods between wheat and milo crops help to conserve moisture.

In a normal year, they can stock calves on wheat pasture at the rate of one calf per two acres during fall and winter.

"We buy calves around 450 pounds in August or September. By mid-March, we will look at pulling cattle off about half the wheat acres. This year we have good moisture, so we can probably run two per acre through the spring for graze-out," he said.

Concentrating calves on half of the wheat allows them to harvest half of the acres for grain and graze cattle for a target weight of around 800 pounds by late May or early June. Graze-out has advantages besides cattle gain.

"We consider the graze-out program to be equivalent to 50 percent of a summer fallow program. You do not have the same moisture conservation as a true summer fallow, but you do have more than if you had harvested grain from that ground," he ex-

plained.

He also bales wheat for hay. He has grown Longhorn, a beardless variety from AgriPro that is good for forage production, but prefers an older Triumph wheat that he feels can withstand dry conditions and insect pressure.

He enjoys the work of farming over the management, as well as the art of welding. Eddie has a longtime friendship with the Byrds in Tulia, Texas, who build Roll-A-Cone brand farm implements. He discusses implement design with Dan Byrd, and he has made many changes to his own Roll-A-Cone implements.

For producing dryland milo, he built his own planter using a Roll-A-Cone plow frame as the base. Eddie built his planter with 30-inch row spacing, skipping every third row. The "skip row" method allows the milo crop to use moisture uniformly over the entire field in the same way that the first few rows will do naturally near the ditch.

Growers have many options in choosing farm enterprises and managing costs of production. Eddie's approach is to keep the costs of the operation appropriate to expected dryland yields for his area. He manages risk by emphasizing cattle gain and crops that work well with the cattle operation. With crop rotation, a graze-out program, and a wheat variety that grows well in dryland conditions, he does not worry about the need to spray wheat for insects.

Matching inputs to the scale of his operation allows Eddie to continue to enjoy farm work as he enters his "retirement" years. It also helps him to have time for other things he enjoys—like traveling with Phyllis and riding his Harley Davidson. For more information about Eddie and his operation, please see our Web site.



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*We are Areawide Pest Management for Wheat, a five-year project developed by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, to demonstrate pest management practices for the Russian wheat aphid and greenbug. Our main goal is to collaborate with wheat producers in evaluating and demonstrating non-chemical pest management techniques, with particular emphasis on the management of the Russian wheat aphid and the greenbug. The elements of our program include:*

- *Crop Diversification*
  - *Variety Selection*
    - *Field Monitoring and biocontrol*
      - *Best Management practices for Wheat*

## **Using what works...**

**"There is a lot of cotton coming into this country, but my philosophy on dryland is don't plant anything that cattle won't eat. We can salvage a milo crop with cattle, and we can salvage a wheat crop with cattle. And we try to keep our hay on hand so we don't have to buy hay." Grain from their milo crop is added to silage for cattle feed. For more information about Eddie Bryan and his operation, please see our Web site.**



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