



Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc.

Newsletter

Volume 14, Number 3

Fall 1999

The Three Keys to The Low Cost Cow/Calf Program

1. The cow's ability to store and relinquish energy in the form of body fat
2. Time of calving
3. A balanced supplement that accounts for forage deficiencies relative to animal requirements - no more/no less

By Dick Diven

There is a time to breed and a time to calve. There is a time to wean. There is a time to build energy reserves as body fat and a time to utilize the stored energy. As with the seasons of the year, the annual reproductive cycle of the cow similarly is ordered. As ranchers, do we allow the cycle to flow with nature or do we apply expensive fossil fuel technology to force the cycle to fit our desires?

Key = Store and Relinquish Energy

The ability of the cow to conceive is controlled more by body condition at the time of calving than any other factor. Body condition is an expression that describes the amount of body fat stored by the cow. When expressed numerically, it is called body condition score (BCS).

BCS is a means of placing a numeric value on the amount of body mass that is fat. BCS has considerable utility in the management of a Cow/Calf operation. Its first application is conception. The higher the BCS (within reason) at the time of calving, the higher the conception rate within 85 days postcalving. The foraging cow that has just calved utilizes stored body fat for energy to recover from pregnancy. Energy, over and above feed energy, appears to function primarily in the normalization of the ovary and the initiation of follicular activity. However the stored energy may function, the end

result is an early return to cyclicity after calving. The probability for conception is highest with the cow that has experienced more than one normal cycle postcalving.

Key = Time Of Calving

The cow that calves closest to the longest day of the year is considerably more

sexual activity of cattle was greatest at or near the times of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, i.e., around March 21 and September 22. Since he was in the Southern hemisphere, he recommended that breeding take place around the time of the vernal equinox. In the Northern hemisphere, the

autumnal equinox would be considered. If a cow is bred September 22 and she has a 280-day gestation period, she will calve June 29 of the following year. The 30th parallel crosses central South Africa. Austin TX is situated at 30° 30' North latitude.

Key = Specific Supplementation

The third key to the Low Cost Cow/Calf Program is to provide a supplement that accounts for forage deficiencies relative to the animal's requirements. This is an area in which the rancher generally shirks his/her duty and relinquishes responsibility to the feed company.

One glance at "Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle" published by the National Research Council, the UK's Agricultural Research Council's "Nutrient Requirements of Farm Livestock" or the Continent's "Starch Equivalent" system makes obvious the rancher's reluctance. All of these nutritional systems require that you know how much forage dry matter the cattle consume. Whenever the subject is broached, whether by ranchers or nutritionists, a heated debate

see Cow / calf, page 5



fertile than one calving closest to the shortest day of the year. This is due to the fact that she experiences a short postpartum interval. It is most desirable, particularly in young cows, to experience two normal cycles prior to visiting the bull. The young cow is about 20% more fertile on her third cycle than on her first. She must be bred within 85 days of calving, however, if she is to have a calf every 365 days.

Dr. Jan Bonsma, the noted South African animal scientist, observed that

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President's Report

by Joe Williams

In much of central Texas a spring and early summer with adequate rain has turned into a blistering hot and bone dry late summer and early fall.

As we move into fall, standing forage quantity becomes critical. Flexibility regarding stocking rate will probably be forced on us.

The annual planning meeting is being hosted by the Bamberger Ranch on September 30- October 1. This is to be an important session as it will determine the activities and direction of our group in the future. All members are encouraged to contact any Board member with comments or suggestions. In order for HRM of Texas to best serve us all, input from all members is crucial, just as in the planning and management for our family farms and ranches.

I can be reached at 214/368-5479 or e mail joetex228@aol.com

Joe Williams



HRM of Texas Mission Statement

To provide encouragement and support of holistic management in Texas

THREE-PART GOAL

Quality of Life - We value a healthy ecosystem capable of supporting the people in it, strong family units, financial sustainability, a land ethic, and personal growth and development; while having fun and fellowship as a professionally proactive organization.

Forms of Production / Activities - Practicing holistic management, self-sustaining forms of revenue, facilitating training and education, creating public awareness and forming collaborative partnerships.

Future Landscape Description - High biodiversity, a healthy water cycle, a healthy mineral cycle, efficient capture of solar energy, and a harmonious interdependence between urban and rural communities through an understanding of ecological processes.

Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc.

Newsletter

is published quarterly by HRM of TX, Inc., a non-profit organization. News articles, area updates and photos are gratefully accepted and will be published as space allows. We welcome letters to the editor related to HRM principles or activities. Direct newsletter correspondence to:

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Events/Announcements

HRM of TX 2000 annual meeting

Plan to come to Waco, Texas, March 3&4 for the HRM of Texas Annual Meeting. We'll let you know all the details in the winter newsletter, but this meeting promises to be a good one. The usual Friday afternoon workshop will be conducted by Dick Richardson. We hope to have time & weather for a short field day to learn about intensive grazing on native grasses from Harry Burleson. Our usual business/board meeting precedes the social on Friday night. Saturday has speakers and panels and lunch providing both enlightenment and entertainment for attendees. Subject matter will include management strategies for drier times and income diversification. Mark your calendar now and watch this publication for more information.

1999 Acres USA Conference

is scheduled for Thursday, December 9 through Saturday, December 11, 1999 at the Radisson Hotel South and Plaza Tower, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Acres USA* publishes books and a magazine on eco-agriculture. Their conference is always a popular source for information and networking in the sustainable agriculture field. Although details of the 1999 conference are not available as we go to press, you may get a free sample of the magazine, a catalog of available books and a brochure on the upcoming conference by calling Acres USA at their new office in Austin (512-892-4400). Commercial exhibit space is available. If you plan to attend the conference and need room reservations, call the Radisson hotel (612-835-7080) and ask for the special *Acres USA* rate of \$65 per room.

Grass Fed Meats & Milk Seminar

Hosted by the Stockman Grass Farmer, the seminar on the production and marketing of grass fed meats and milk will be held in Dallas, Texas, December 2-4, 1999 at the Harvey Hotel. Speakers include Allan Nation and David James on beef production, David Wright and Doug Gunnink on pastures, Kay James on grassfed poultry, and Jan Moseley on grassfed bison during the day on Thursday with a production workshop that evening. Friday is dedicated to marketing in all its vast variety with a trip to cowtown in the afternoon. Saturday's agenda focuses on the health aspects of diets including meat and milk. Meals are on your own. Cost of the seminar is \$275 per person or \$500 per couple. Call 1-800-748-9808 for more information.

Donnie E. Harmel Research Facility

On September 18, 1999 the Donnie E. Harmel Research Facility was dedicated in a ceremony at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area. This is where Don pioneered the white-tailed deer genetic research project. There were over 100 people there, and the memories of his work and his personal contributions glowed bright in everyone's memory as the tears flowed down their faces. It was a wonderful tribute to him.

The inscription on the rock that is also inscribed with two pictures of Donnie and a silhouette of "Big Charlie" reads, "Donnie Harmel (1944-1997)—a pioneer in the influence of genetics and nutrition in white-tailed deer—was Area Manager of the Kerr

see Harmel, page 5

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It's time to begin dormant season planning!

by Doak Elledge

Dormant season planning is called a closed plan while the growing season plan is called an open plan. While both plans are equally important, the closed plan is usually the most neglected. The further north one travels, the longer the dormant season, thus the need for better planning. Once a killing frost arrives, what forage one has left is what one has to ration through the winter. As winter progresses, there is a continual decline of forage quality and quantity, depending on weathering, livestock and wildlife exposure.

This article looks at some of the benefits of a good dormant season plan as well as some techniques that have worked for me in the past. The HRM textbook and workbook can give you specifics on making the plan.

Most operators are first concerned with the bottom line. Dormant season planning can trim supplementation costs. In the panhandle of Texas, the average winter supplementation cost averages about \$60-\$65 per head.

On the last ranch I operated this cost was trimmed to \$17-\$21 per head while more than doubling the carrying capacity. As most experienced graziers know, this process didn't occur overnight. Over the years paddock numbers were increased, which reduced grazing periods for each paddock.

Example for a 180-210 day dormant period including 30 day drought reserve: On a ranch with 60-100 paddocks with one grazing pass, the grazing period "average" for 180 day dormant season will be 1.8-3.0 days. With 210 days of dormancy, the grazing period average increases to 2.1-3.5 days. If the same ranch had only 8 paddocks, the one pass grazing period for 180 days would be 26 days. If you were a cow, where would you like to be grazing?

Labor costs were reduced with only one herd to maintain. If a follow through grazing was used, there could be several herds but they would all be in the same area. Paddocks farthest from cover and facilities were planned to be grazed first, then moved towards areas like the creek and headquarters. This reduced travel time and vehicle wear during inclement weather.

Grass samples were taken after frost during sample step planning to check nutritional levels. This gives a better handle on supplement requirements. The amount of supplement is stair-stepped through the dormant season (39% cottonseed cake gener-

For any operator, especially after an extended drought, planning the dormant plan can ease both mental and financial worry. Knowing at frost what can or can't be comfortably stocked on a ranch relieves the rancher as well as the banker. In some instances, the numbers of livestock may be able to be increased during a usually lower-priced fall market. On the same note, if you have to destock you'll know ahead and can plan accordingly. There is nothing worse than having to destock right before green-up with dollars invested in feed, labor and livestock condition loss.

The most difficult part of planning is estimating what will feed a cow for one day comfortably. This takes lots of practice and it is essential to have past records. However, this work takes place in the field, so it should be enjoyable. The person or persons doing the sampling should develop a cow-like mentality. Try to look at the forage in the way that a cow would *like* to eat, not what she is *forced* to eat. It is better to estimate conservatively and give yourself



ally was used due to its forage quality, rumen stimulation, and the ease of applying herd effect). Gradually increasing the supplemental feed allowed the cow's rumen to adjust and then match the cow's climbing nutritional requirements. The forage right after frost is at its highest nutritional level, so there is less need for supplements. The cow's requirements at this time (after weaning) are lower. This is the time period I used to work poorer pastures with herd effect and without harming the cow herd's body condition. With all these variables to keep track of, a person would be very wise to use proper planning to operate a closed grazing plan. Anytime you can save \$40-\$50 per cow should be plenty of incentive to use a grazing plan.

a buffer zone.

Each year, with practice, the sampler becomes more accurate. Remember that the plan will be only as good as the estimation on the ground. Past years' charts can keep track of forage removal rates and hopefully increases in carrying capacity. I know from experience the planning process is a real pain, but the results are worth it. The mental strain from worrying brings zero results, while the mental strain from proper planning may save a ranch operation.

Another plus for dormant season planning is the ecological benefit. During the dormant season you can prepare the land for the next growing season. At this time herd effect can be applied to areas noted

see Dormant, page 5

Dormant, from page 4

during the sampling process. With the use of an attractant (protein cubes) I could work areas easier than I could during the growing season. An operator can note areas ahead of time and during feeding can concentrate on those specific areas. The area affected will depend on herd size, amount of brush and type of attractant. Each year, I would try to work areas that had heavy rank growth and lay it down with herd effect. It was a slow process but the results came.

Areas were also reseeded while I fed. Unrolling hay bales in an eroded site, mixing clover seed in mineral and cake, mixing grass seed cleanings in my cake (protein cubes) brought results from the herd effect. An operator can feed, apply herd effect and plant all in one trip. Use your team's creativity to develop what works in your operation. The ecological benefits can be tremendous.

If cool-season forage plants are present, a proper grazing plan can extend their quantity, quality and vigor. With multiple pad-

docks and managed grazing, the chance of over-grazing will be limited. Cool-season grass perennials can help stretch the growing season. I used these plants during the start of calving to reach the warm-season grasses growth period. Through proper planning and application of herd effect, these areas of cool-season plants greatly increased in population and variety. Also, it helped reduce my cost of supplementation.

Dormant season planning should also be used in extended drought situations—the same situations that require rationing of forage while maintaining livestock condition and performance. This is where large numbers (>30) of paddocks are of greatest benefit. One pass grazing limits the drop in animal performance and condition. This happens due to short grazing periods (<4 days) while maintaining long recovery periods. More paddocks give more flexibility, allow greater stock density, reduce supplementation and maintain stock condition. However, the risks also increase. Any misjudgments will greatly magnify mistakes with this higher stock density. In the past, we have used temporary fences to increase paddock numbers without the higher ex-

pense of more permanent fencing. Any operator should only increase his paddock numbers as his level of experience increases.

I hope these comments will help show the benefits of the closed/dormant grazing plan. Both the closed and open plans complement one another. Different situations will require modifications in the plan, but that's the point in planning. Mother nature always throws us a curve, but with a grazing plan, we can adjust to the situation in advance. It is hard enough to work during a crisis (drought) and to create a good plan at that time is next to impossible. Sometimes the lack of confidence and experience will hinder a person in planning. Find someone experienced to help you. Make an attempt to go to a biological school (HRM). Once you make a school, go home and practice while the information is fresh. Try to plan the dormant grazing around frost each year and keep records on your grazing charts. Be *conservative* and consistent in your sampling methods. *Good Luck!*

Doak Elledge ranches near Pampa, TX with his wife Marla and his sons Con and Ty. He is also available as a holistic management consultant and can be reached at 806-669-6884.

Cow/calf, from page 1

ensues without resolution. In the Low Cost Cow/Calf Production School, dealing with energy consumption circumvents the matter of feed consumption.

Simply by knowing the weight of a cow that maintains that weight for a given period, we know the quantity of energy consumed. Likewise, if she maintains her weight and the calf gains (xx) pounds, we know the energy consumed for maintenance plus that for lactation. Tabled or easily calculated values are available for weight gain or loss, gestation, etc., at the School.

Energy consumption varies with the energy content of the forage. Young, growing forage (elongation stage) is high in energy, low in fiber and free of lignin. Energy consumption is high. Conversely, mature forage is relatively low in energy, high in fiber and contains considerable lignin. The indigestible portion of the forage waits in the rumen for regurgitation and grinding

before moving along the gut, destined for excretion.

Conclusion

Nutritionists tell ranchers that the highest requirement for energy, during the cow's yearly cycle, is at the peak of lactation. The summation of energy required for maintenance and energy for lactation produce the highest energy requirement. Therefore, calving is timed so that lactation occurs when the forage is at its highest quality. This is not true for cows that lose BCS after calving and then must regain condition just prior to the next calving.

Weight gain, along with maintenance, produces the highest requirement for energy. When do you want to use your high-quality forage?

Dr. Diven is a beef cattle nutritionist who teaches Schools and consults for beef cow/calf operations. For information and brochure, call Agri-Concepts, Inc. at (800) 575-0864 or write 12850 N. Bandanna Way, Tucson, AZ 85737-8906. A School is scheduled for Amarillo in May 2000.

Harmel, from page 3

Wildlife Management Area from 1975-1997. During this time, the management area became a training ground for range and wildlife professionals, ranchers, hunters, educators, college students, and others.

His five loves were: God, family, friends, hunting and work. His life's work was to bring about a better understanding of God's tools in a biological setting—bringing together a diversity of people into a common setting to discuss genetics, axe, five, gun, and cow. Donnie was a respected leader in wildlife conservation and management. The results of his research projects will continue to benefit the wildlife resources of Texas for many years to come."

It was announced at the dedication that the scholarship in Donnie's name at Texas A&M has \$20,000 in it and another \$5,000 is needed before it becomes endowed and then Texas A&M will match it with \$25,000. Contact Donnie Frels, Area Manager of the Kerr Wildlife Management Area (830/238-4483) for more information.

PlanIt Texas Field Day delights the crowd at Selah

PlanIt Texas, a project of HRM of TX, is an ongoing and highly successful collaboration among organized groups with conflicting agendas regarding land use and natural resources. This coalition has discovered ways to work together toward its mission to "seek a new path for resolving conflict over natural resources that is based on trust and respect, embraces private property rights and enhances our natural resources." The Field Day is part of an outreach program to share these discoveries with others.

by Pam Kelly

A morning drive in the Hill Country is a treat in itself. But as a black cloud darkened more of the western sky, I worried that rain might discourage the less dedicated from attending.

By the time I wound through the ranch road forks and turns and was greeted by Bamberger's HERE LIES MAN tombstone, I saw vehicles parked everywhere. Many had indeed acted on the urge to gather with like minds and learn more about the land.

Walking to the registration table I greeted two environmental activists there for their first time. That alone made my day. We were assigned group names and I was made an Eagle. I immediately felt superior to the Snakes and Hummingbirds.

Our shift was labeled, loaded on a wagon and bounced to the first station where Mike McMurry preached the glory of hooves and cowpatties and Pat Richardson the virtues of dung beetles. When the clouds burst, we darted to the safety of the Center, a great bunkhouse room spilling over with chatting participants.

Conversation flowed, the storm ended and we made our way to Billy Kniffen and his rainfall simulator. There I renewed my wish that he be cloned and stationed in every urban neighborhood. Anyone who views the simple lesson of water falling onto deep-rooted grasses versus bald ground can instantly get it.

Gordon Linam turned adults into kids as we jockeyed to examine the vials of "good water" bugs and "yucky water" bugs. Sybil Vosler and Lee Ann Linam informed and updated us on Texas non-game and endangered species, subjects with evolving status.

Balancing on the slope in a cedar brake, Christina Allday-Bondy clarified the confusion over what to cut and what to keep, once a volatile issue. Margaret Bamberger

tackled the challenging job of teaching about grasses and woody plants in fifteen minutes. (Longer workshops on grasses are scheduled this fall at Selah (830) 868-7303.)

Leading us down a path, Marcia Hermann introduced the Hill Country wildflowers. There is never enough time to meet and get to know flowers.

An abundant lunch awaited us at the Center. While we guzzled lemonade in the now bright sun, J. David Bamberger encouraged participants to apply what they

creative yet simple water systems. At the Wildlife Management station, we studied food plots and Terry Turney showed us devices providing water for wildlife. (Turney is from TPWD and was backup for David Langford (TWA) in case he was tied up with the legislature (which he was).

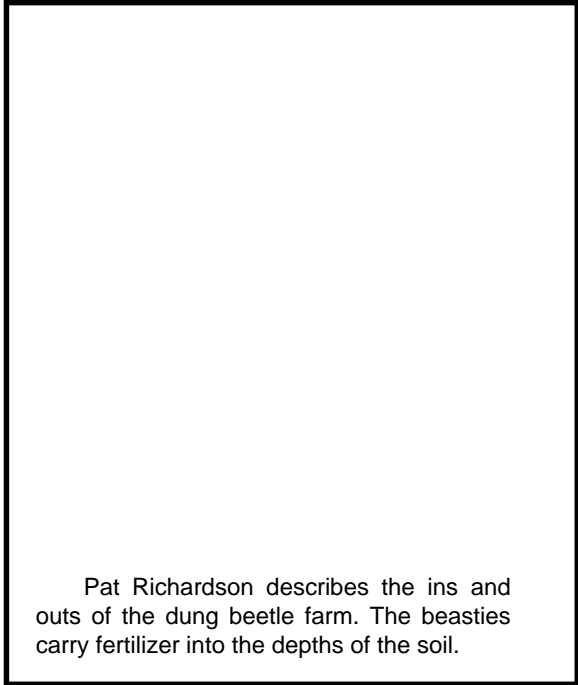
Gardeners, ranching families and urban real estate agents all eagerly soaked in the expertise and inspiration. More than once I recognized a twinkle in the eye that said, "I can do THAT!"

The Cowbird Control station was particularly inspiring. Choosing to be proactive, ranchers with grazing leases on Ft. Hood turned the need to reduce predation on golden-cheeked warbler nests into a collaborative effort, as opposed to a costly brawl. These savvy ranchers even organized school kids to construct cowbird traps. The success of the project was matched by the exuberance of Gil Eckrich (The Nature Conservancy) explaining it.

C. Wayne Henselka offered techniques for removing or enhancing brush, "depending on what you are trying to do." It takes effort to evaluate each piece of land on its own because there are no quick answers. But it is wiser than stereotyped actions of the past.

Already familiar with much of the information, I often thought, "I've already heard that." But observing the crowd made it clear that the experience was new to most. Either by ingenious design of the planners, or due to nature's unyielding interdependence, we observed repeatedly the connection that our species has with other species on this earth — and how we affect them, good or bad.

To the novice, it must have seemed normal that agencies and organizations and producers were working together. But for someone who watched with heartache the divisiveness of earlier years, I was proud of PlanIt Texas and all the people who bothered to attend.



Pat Richardson describes the ins and outs of the dung beetle farm. The beasties carry fertilizer into the depths of the soil.

learn to what they have. J. David and Margaret have made a gift of their lives by using their resources to teach and encourage others to appreciate and care for our unique planet. Peggy Sechrist reviewed the history of PlanIt Texas, along with past tensions among its member organizations. The field day was testimony to how PlanIt Texas has helped to smooth those ills.

After lunch, Dick Richardson explained the recovery and retention of precious water, absent so long from the ranch. We visited a flowing spring and viewed

Rangeland Ecology & Management Extension learns the truth about Holistic Resource Management of Texas

by C. Wayne Hanselka

The underlying major concern of rangeland manager producers in Texas is economic sustainability. This includes maintaining ownership of the land and improving the resource as major goals. Other goals of course, include maintaining the family lifestyle, maximizing profit, and avoiding catastrophic losses. There are also increased concerns by the general public about environmental and natural resource sustainability and economic viability of rural America, thus heightening awareness of the importance of grazinglands in Texas. Success in meeting these goals depends upon the ability of the land manager to select the right thing to do and make appropriate adjustments as constraints and opportunities change. Climatic, biological, financial, political, and other risks have to be managed in this process. Various alternatives need to be identified and their possible outcomes, based upon available research and practical experience, projected.

Many range and/or pasture-based firms are currently technically insolvent whereas others have debts equal to a large proportion of their assets and are facing severe financial stress. However, managers that can adapt to changing conditions and become better managers can overcome many of the constraints. Better use of scientific information and new approaches to business, rangeland and beef cattle management will be necessary. Successful transfer of technology from research to ranch application requires an understanding of actual ranch needs in relation to ranch goals (strategic, tactical, and operational) and available ranch resources. Most technology transfer assumes "good" management that can adapt technology and a ranch goal of maximizing profits. However, this is often not the case. Traditional ranch management tends to emphasize specific resources, enterprises and/or managerial functions while overlooking or neglecting some opportunities.

Extension education has largely fol-

lowed traditional thinking. Extension Specialists and Agents take research obtained from reductionist science and apply it to issues and problems identified by producers. This often would not pass many of the testing guidelines. Advice is often encyclopedic with the producer left to sort through the options and integrate it into a management strategy. Unfortunately, most Extension clientele only want cookbook answers and a list of options or recipes is the easiest and best way to answer such inquiries.

As stated above however, a more comprehensive approach is necessary if rangeland and rangeland-based enterprises are to remain sustainable. Educators have to understand the "whole", and to discuss goals and processes with each client if information is to be transferred and logically adapted.

There has been a long history of philo-

"Unfortunately, most Extension clientele only want cookbook answers and a list of options or recipes is the easiest and best way to answer such inquiries."

sophical differences between the range profession, academia, and proponents of HRM. Wounds are deep and animosities remain to this day. In an effort to clear up misconceptions and to provide a better understanding of Holistic Resource Management as well as to enlarge our thinking toward sustainable rangeland management, the RLEM Extension Program Unit recently participated in an HRM workshop provided by Ms. Peggy Sechrist. The Unit (Seven Specialists, the RLEM Department Head, one Associate, and three Assistants) is officed at Strategic locations throughout the Western two-thirds of Texas. Each is responsible for Rangeland Extension programming in a particular region of the state working with County Extension Agents, land managers, and other partners. The workshop was held in conjunction with the Unit's

annual program planning retreat in late May and was held at La Copita Demonstration Ranch in Jim Wells county.

Objectives of the workshop were to: 1) acquaint the RLEM Program Unit with a working knowledge of HRM; 2) strengthen the process of integrating "Holistic" thinking into Extension Range Management programming; and provide a forum for discussion of pros and cons of HRM and Extension Education philosophy. The workshop met it's objectives as expected. There was much give and take between the participants and Peggy. Some questions of controversial points led to discussions of various tools and their use. The example of the 2700 acre La Copita Ranch was a valuable laboratory for exercises and examples of points made in the classroom. In fact, as it developed, the ranch was used as an example for a draft HRM plan and the planning process. The property will be managed holistically as our plans develop.

Extension faculty now have a clearer understanding of HRM and will be using elements of the process in their programming. Some discussions have also occurred as to the possibility, or if there are any problems or procedures involved, for Extension Specialists to becoming more qualified and/or approved as HRM educators in Texas.

We believe the only way to do more than an adequate job of providing information to those who need it and educating the public is to network with others of similar interests. Personnel, time, and resources are limited for all so we must be as knowledgeable as possible and to share concepts, work, and resources. This workshop was an important step in that direction.

C. Wayne Hanselka is Associate Department Head; Professor and Extension Program Leader for Rangeland Ecology and Management. He is also on the HRM of TX Board of Directors.



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Inside this issue:

- Keys for cow/calf operations—p 1
- From the President—p 2
- Events/Announcements—p 3
- Dormant season planning—p 4
- Plant Texas field day—p 6
- Extension Service & HRM of TX—p 7

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Working to provide encouragement and support of holistic management in Texas

Holistic Resource Management of Texas, Inc. is a non-profit organization made up of ranchers, farmers, public land managers, educators, conservationists, and others who are interested in finding financially and ecologically sound ways to manage land.

*Categories of membership: \$20—Individual Member; \$35—Family Membership (2 people); *\$100—Active Member; *\$250—Sustaining Member; *\$1,000—Lifetime Member. *Includes one textbook/workbook set
An annual membership fee entitles you to:*

- *Four editions of the HRM of Texas, Inc. Newsletter*
- *The privilege to vote for and serve as director of HRM of Texas, Inc.*
- *The opportunity to participate in management clubs, field days, practitioner panels and other educational opportunities to assist with the application of Holistic Resource Management.*

Please complete, detach and return the form below with a check for your dues.



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