

# Implementing an ISU Extension Master Grazier Certification Course

## Abstract:

Producers interested in honing their skills as graziers and pasture management specialists were able to attend classes in five Iowa locations over a three-year period. The courses were taught by ISU Extension specialists, Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, producers with experience in grazing management, and other experts.

## Investigators:

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*Thanks to the course, graduates of the program are engaged in ongoing grazing education and advocating the importance of grasslands in Iowa.*

## What was done and why?

The Certified Grazier Program was designed to build on the knowledge gained from earlier Greenhorn Grazing sessions, pasture walks, and other introductory grazing events, leading to adoption of management schemes that can have a positive long-term impact on grazing operations. These experienced grazing participants will assist ISU Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other grazing-related personnel in program delivery—serving as mentors, potential pasture walk hosts, and/or presenters for future Certified Grazier Programs.

Objectives of the program were to:

- Provide interested graziers the necessary knowledge and tools to observe and monitor the situation on their own farms and make informed decisions.
- Facilitate change in producers' production practices and develop their capacity to adapt current sustainable practices to their own situation.
- Facilitate mentoring of less experienced graziers by those who have completed the Certified Grazier Program.
- Provide the required training for grassland professionals to become American Forage and Grassland Council-certified, thereby completing the first steps to becoming an NRCS Technical Service provider.

## What did we learn?

The participants who received certificates indicated that they would provide mentoring support for future programs. This support includes:

- Serving as a host or presenter for the Certified Grazier and/or Greenhorn Grazing program
- Hosting and mentoring a grazing cluster
- Acting as an advisor for beginning farmers
- Hosting field days for ISU Extension, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Grazinglands Conservation Initiative, or NRCS
- Participating on advisory panels for conferences
- Serving as a guest speaker for FFA chapters or community colleges
- Collaborating on research
- Utilizing continuing education to further develop mentoring skills



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