

# Grazing Practices Day ~ June 2008

An all-day grazing event took place at the Scot and Debbie Thooff farm near Lynd. The Thooff livestock operation includes a prescribed rotational grazing system, one in which pastures sections are grazed in a planned order. Their rotational plan leads to even grazing throughout the pasture instead of intensive grazing only on portions of it, which would happen if cattle were allowed to choose the best grass. The results are favorable for the environment since the grass cover on the pasture remains healthy. It is also profitable for the cattle operation because it helps in getting the best possible utilization of pasture grass.

The June 11 grazing day began with 9:30 a.m. registration and coffee followed by 10 a.m. introductions. The first speaker of the day, NRCS Grazing Specialist Lance Smith, explained opportunities that could be available through prescribed grazing plans developed in partnerships between pasture owners and conservation agencies. Smith's program was followed by a presentation from Ryan Walker of the University of Minnesota about extending the grazing season. Walker discussed how prescribed grazing can often extend grazing into drier months of the summer and fall. A lunch was served by the Lyon County Beef Producers. There was time during the lunch hour for Grazing Day participants to view displays and to discuss grazing ideas with conservation staff and others.

The afternoon started with a 90-minute field tour of the Thooff grazing system. Offering an opportunity to see the results of an established grazing plan. It was also an excellent point in the Grazing Day for in depth conversations about the questions and alternatives associated with the development of grazing plans. After the tour, there was an afternoon coffee break with additional time to review displays and ask questions.

The wrap-up portion of the program started with a review of ways landowners can obtain funding assistance for environmentally friendly grazing plans. Including federal conservation programs, state conservation programs, and agricultural best management practices low interest loans.

The grazing day was a learning opportunity for livestock producers, landowners, agribusinesses, educators, students, and anyone interested in pasture production methods that are both effective and favorable to the environment.

Sponsors include the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Lyon Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Southwest Minnesota Grazing Lands Initiative. Funding support is being provided by the Southwest Minnesota Cattleman's Association, Lyon County Water Plan, and area Resource Conservation and Development council grants.

