

Introduction



David Wedin, Director , Center for Grassland Studies

Welcome! Since July 1, 2023, I have been the new Director of the Center for Grassland Studies (CGS) at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL). For 25 years, I have been studying and teaching about grassland ecosystems and conservation at UNL. I may not have the expertise of prior directors concerning the beef industry and grazing, but the Nebraska Grazing Conference (NGC) is in good hands. Jerry Volesky continues with CGS as the Associate Director working with Extension, NGC, and IANR’s Beef Innovation Hub. I am very grateful that we have Daren Redfearn as our conference chair, Ashley Branting as our staff member coordinating logistics, and great sponsors and partners.

On June 22, 2023, University of Nebraska (NU) President Ted Carter shared an update on budget cuts facing NU with faculty, staff, and students across the four campuses. He presented a five-point vision for addressing these budget issues. His priority was *“a reinvigorated focus on student recruitment, with a goal of reversing our recent enrollment declines.”* Another priority was *“a stronger dialogue about our academic program array”*; in other words, invest in programs with high enrollments and reassess those with low numbers. How does Grassland Systems, the undergraduate major of the Center for Grassland Studies (CGS), measure up by these standards? Not well. Our recruiting and enrollment numbers are dangerously low. On the other hand, we are incredibly proud of our graduates. They have the skills and passion needed to meet the challenges of grassland stewardship in private rangelands, public lands, or graduate programs offering advanced degrees.

We have a great program, but we need more students! The number of college-bound high school students in Nebraska is shrinking, especially in rural and western Nebraska. This is a problem for UNL as a whole and for CGS in particular. How do we excite growing numbers of high school graduates in Lincoln, Omaha, and surrounding Midwestern cities like Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Chicago about grasslands? What resonates for them: grassland, prairie, rangeland, grazing land, pasture, meadow? Midwestern city kids may not have thought about rangelands and grazing, but many have heard about prairie conservation. For the last nine years, Walter Schacht and I team-taught the capstone course for seniors in our grassland program. We were gratified when the “prairie conservation” students and the “range management” students realized they need the same tools, such as grazing, seeding, prescribed fire and brush management, to sustainably manage both private and public grasslands. What is more rewarding, though, is to see these students get hired by NRCS, other agencies, or the private sector, or head off to grad school as fast as we graduate them.

As the new Director of the CGS, I am confident that Nebraska has the grazing operators, range managers, and grassland professionals needed to address our 21st century grassland challenges. Many attend the Nebraska Grazing Conference. I am also confident that this group, together with faculty and staff at UNL, have the wisdom and passion to inspire the next generation of grassland stewards and scientists. We would love to hear your suggestions and ideas as we build UNL’s Grassland Systems program. And, if you know any bright young people, please have them contact CGS and the recruiters on UNL’s East Campus. We’ll give them a tee-shirt, a scholarship, a home for four years, and a career.

Conference Schedule

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8

9:30 am —11:30 am Stress-free Livestock Management FIELD TOUR

Ruth Woiwode, Animal Behavior and Well-Being, UNL

Curt Pate, Curt Pate Stockmanship

Welcome Session

(*Daren Redfearn*, Moderator)

11:45 PM Registration (Refreshments in Exhibit Area)

12:45 PM Welcome and Opening Remarks, **Daren Redfearn**, Chair, Nebraska Grazing Conference

Opening Address

1:00 PM Role of Nebraska's Grazing Lands

Sherry Vinton, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Lincoln, NE

Former Leopold Award Winners

1:15 pm 2022 Leopold Conservation Award Recipient

Logan Pribbeno Family, Wine Glass Ranch, Imperial, NE

1:30 pm Producer Panel

Moderator: *Logan Pribbeno*, Wine Glass Ranch, Imperial, NE

Panelists:

Nancy Peterson, Plum Thicket Farms, Gordon, NE

Homer Buell, Shovel Dot Ranch, Bassett, NE

Tim Kalkowski, Kalkowski Family Ranches, Omaha, NE

2:45 pm Break / Exhibits

Emerging Issues in Grazing Lands Management

Moderator: *Charles Bicak*

3:15 pm *Jerry Volesky*, Beef Innovation Hub, UNL

3:35 pm *Gwendwr Meredith*, Grazing Lands and Social-Ecological Systems, UNL

3:55 pm *Cody Trump*, Sandhills Stewards Coordinator, Sandhills Task Force

4:15 pm *Rebecca Kern-Lunbery*, Feed Testing Product Manager and Strategist, Ward Laboratories

4:35 pm *Jeff Nichols*, State Rangeland Management Specialist, USDA-NRCS

4:55 pm *Alex McKiernan*, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition

Conference Schedule

- 5:15 PM *Questions/Discussion*
- 5:30 PM **Social / Exhibits**
- 6:15 PM **Banquet**
- 7:00 PM ***Curt Pate*, Curt Pate Stockmanship**
- 8:00 PM **Adjourn**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9

- 7:30 AM **Registration Opens / Breakfast Buffet**
- 8:20 AM **Welcome and Remarks**
Daren Redfearn, Chair, Nebraska Grazing Conference

Precision Livestock Management

Moderator: *Mitch Stephenson*

- 8:30 AM **Precision Livestock Exhibits / Other Exhibits**
- 9:00 AM **Precision Grazing Management: Opportunities and Challenges**
Yijie Xiong, Precision Livestock Management Specialist, UNL
- 10:00 AM **Virtual Fence and Other Technologies for Grazing Management**
Mitch Stephenson, Range and Forage Specialist, UNL, Panhandle Research, Extension, and Education Center
- 11:00 AM **Panel Discussion: Precision Grazing Technology – Where Are We?**
Travis Mulliniks, Range Cow Production System Specialist, West Central Research, Extension, and Education Center
Jack Keating, Corral Technologies
Ty Roseberry, Vence/Merck Animal Health
- 11:45 AM **Closing Comments**

Conference Schedule

Nebraska Grazing Conference Advisory Committee

Tyrell Anderson, Turner Enterprises, Inc., Oshkosh, NE

Jack Arterburn, Nebraska Extension, Rushville, NE

Ben Beckman, Nebraska Extension, Hartington, NE

Melody Benjamin, Nebraska Cattlemen, Lakeside, NE

Ron Bolze, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, Chadron, NE

Julie Elliott, USDA NRCS, Holyoke, CO

Chris Helzer, The Nature Conservancy, Aurora, NE

Shelly Kelly, Sandhills Task Force, Broken Bow, NE

Adam Kester, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Grand Island, NE

Dana Larsen, Broken Heart Livestock, Thedford, NE

Rob Mitchell, USDA ARS Wheat, Sorghum & Forage Research Unit, Lincoln, NE

Jeff Nichols, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Platte, NE

Rex and Nancy Peterson, Plum Thicket Farms, Gordon, NE

Brent Plugge, Nebraska Extension, Kearney, NE

Daren Redfearn, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

Mitch Stephenson, Nebraska Extension, Scottsbluff, NE

Jerry Volesky, Center for Grassland Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

Troy Walz, Nebraska Extension, Broken Bow, NE

Scott Wessel, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Norfolk, NE

- Coordinated by **Daren Redfearn**, Chair, Nebraska Grazing Conference; **Brent Plugge**, Nebraska Extension; and **Ashley Branting**, Center for Grassland Studies.
- Co-hosted by the Center for Grassland Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 203 Keim Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-0953, (402) 472-4101, grassland@unl.edu, and the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 202 Keim Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-0915, (402) 472-2811, agrohort@unl.edu, and our co-sponsors.
- Proceedings edited by **Ashley Branting**, Center for Grassland Studies.
- Cover by **Ashley Branting**, Center for Grassland Studies.

Sponsors and Exhibitors

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Speaker Biography

Ruth Woiwode

Animal Behavior and Well-Being, UNL



Ruth Woiwode is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist of Animal Behavior, Handling, and Welfare at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research focuses on the impact of routine handling practices, handling facility design, and handler training and experience level on animal performance and welfare. She has devoted a great deal of time to evaluation and validation of instruments used to score animal behavior, welfare, and handling. Ruth co-chairs the UNL Livestock Emergency Response Preparedness team, training Nebraska First Responders to effectively manage livestock traffic accidents and catastrophic weather events involving livestock. She serves on the Nebraska Feedlot Safety Advisory Board, the UNL Beef Innovation Hub Faculty Advisory Committee, and the North American Meat Institute Animal Welfare Committee.

Curt Pate

Curt Pate Stockmanship



For more than a decade, Curt Pate has conducted demonstrations and clinics on stockmanship, colt starting and ranch horsemanship throughout North America and Europe. A nationally recognized stockmanship instructor, Pate teaches techniques on how to put the proper pressure on cattle at a different angle and at varying amounts to help move them comfortably and without a negative experience – for the stockman or the livestock.

‘Sometimes you cannot see pressure or understand its effects until it has created a problem. When you force cattle to go into a pen, they may get excited, go on the fight, and become dangerous or very difficult to work. Negative pressure creates stress, positive pressure creates contentment,’ Pate says.

An avid environmentalist, Pate is passionate about grazing animals to improve the environment as well as for a profitable farm business.

‘We need to utilize the Earth’s resources in a way that works like a good ranch, combining Mother Nature with technology then adding common sense and integrity. With the growing public scrutiny of livestock production, improving our livestock handling practices will help the sustainability of the cattle industry,’ Pate says.

Featured in many programs on RFD-TV, such as *NCBA’S Cattlemen to Cattleman*, Pate currently travels the U.S. as the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s leading spokesperson on cattle handling. He is also the co-author of the book, *Ranch Horsemanship*, published by *The Western Horseman*, and had a cameo role and served as a consultant on the 1998 Robert Redford film, *The Horse Whisperer*.

Speaker Biography

Daren Redfearn, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Agronomy & Horticulture, Lincoln, NE



Daren Redfearn is a Professor of Agronomy and Nebraska Extension Forage and Crop Residue Specialist. Dr. Redfearn is a member of a multidisciplinary team focused on enhancing and developing forage-based beef production systems. His research and extension program emphasizes annual and perennial grass management, converting cropland to forage production, and evaluating forages that can be integrated into economical and resilient crop-forage-bioenergy agricultural production systems. He also serves as Co-Leader for the Water & Integrated Cropping Systems Hub responsible for guiding development of cross-disciplinary research, educational, and outreach programs that expand and disseminate knowledge and tools that inform decision-making to minimize inputs, optimize economic yields, and protect human health and environmental quality.

Logan Pribbeno, President, Wine Glass Ranch Inc.



Logan is the 5th generation at Wine Glass Ranch in Southwest Nebraska. Where he resides with his wife and two daughters.

He studied Economics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Following that he pursued a short career with a financial consulting firm in the Silicon Valley of California. He is also a graduate of Texas A&M's TEPAP program, Ranching for Profit School, and was a Nebraska LEAD fellow with class 35.

At Wine Glass Ranch they have been using adaptive multi-paddock grazing for nearly 30 years; having grazed groups as large as 3,000 in one herd. The grazing of cover crops was first implemented in 2015 on their dryland farm ground.

Speaker Biography

Sherry Vinton *Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture*



Sherry Vinton was appointed as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) in January 2023 by Governor Jim Pillen.

As NDA Director, Vinton oversees all programs of the agency including animal disease traceability programs, regulatory programs for plants and animals, food safety and consumer protection programs, and the promotion of Nebraska agriculture and ag products.

A lifelong Nebraskan and livestock producer, Vinton brings a wide range of experience, leadership, and knowledge to this position.

Vinton is a fifth-generation rancher on a family ranch south of Whitman in the Sandhills of Nebraska. The Vinton family runs a cow-calf operation where they raise Angus cattle that graze on native pasture, irrigated alfalfa and sub irrigated prairie hay. Vinton attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she studied accounting and currently manages the business end of the family ranch.

Vinton is a leader in Nebraska agriculture who knows the importance of the industry for the future of our state. Her passion for farming, ranching, and nature makes her the perfect advocate for agriculture, someone who will stand up for farmers and ranchers, promote and grow Nebraska agriculture, increase market access for Nebraska ag products and add value to the commodities we produce.

Vinton's experience on various agricultural organizations and advisory committees at the local, state, and federal level serves Nebraska well. She was appointed to the Cattlemen's Beef Board in 2012 and represented Congressional District 3 on the Nebraska Environmental Trust board for 14 years after her appointment in 2007. Vinton also served as treasurer and mentor for the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition and is a member of the Agriculture Builders of Nebraska.

Starting in 2019 and just prior to becoming NDA's director, Vinton served as Vice President of Nebraska Farm Bureau. She was also a member of the Board of Directors of Nebraska Farm Bureau for 6 years.

Vinton and her husband, Chris, have three married children (two who work on the ranch, and one who farms in northeast Nebraska) and 10 grandchildren.

Speaker Biography

Nancy Peterson

Plum Thicket Farms, Gordon, NE



Nancy Peterson grew up on a ranch in the Colorado mountains along with four brothers and 700 cows. She graduated from the School of Veterinary Medicine at Colorado State University in 1979 and went back home to practice. She started a mixed animal practice that was 85% cow calf and strived to deliver good herd health medicine. Her focus was on improving production for her clients.

Nancy married Rex Peterson and the couple have three children, the oldest of whom farms/ranches with them. Their second son went to West Point and served in the military until his career was derailed by wounds suffered in Iraq. Their daughter is a nurse practitioner serving in Colorado Springs.

In 1996, there got to be more skiers than cows in the Steamboat Springs area, and the Petersons elected to move to the Sandhills where the opposite is true. Nancy practiced in Rushville for a year until they were able to locate and purchase the ranch they have owned since 1998. Plum Thicket Farms LLC can run 280 to 300 cows and farms 2300 acres. Cows graze all the farm ground at some point during the year, whether it is an annual forage crop, cover crops, or crop residue. Their son, Pat runs the farming enterprise while Rex and Nancy handle the cattle (with a lot of help from Pat as we age.)

Homer Buell

Plum Thicket Farms, Gordon, NE



Homer Buell is a fourth-generation co-owner of Shovel Dot Ranch along with his wife Darla, and his Son Chad's family. He returned to the family ranch in 1971 after his graduation from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. He has been an advocate for agriculture and the cattle industry through his service in trade organization leadership roles. He is a former President of the Nebraska Cattlemen's Association and the Nebraska Hereford Association as well as holding many positions within the National Cattlemen Beef Association in his 14 years of board service. He has been President of the State 4-H Foundation, Campaign for Nebraska, Committee Chair, Sustainable Animal Production Systems, and Chairman of the Rock County Community Fund. My hobbies have been team roping and golfing.

Speaker Biography

Tim Kalkowski

Kalkowski Family Ranch, Omaha NE



Tim is a native of Bassett, NE and a graduate of Rock County High School. He earned a finance degree from the University of Nebraska and is currently a Regional President/Senior Loan Officer for First State Bank Nebraska.

Agriculture has always been a cornerstone and passion of Tim's life. He helps manage the Kalkowski family ranches in Lynch, NE where conservation and stewardship are the foundation of the operation and were also the basis for receiving a Leopold conservation award in 2010. Tim has served on many boards and committees. He currently serves as President of the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, is a member of the Lancaster County concentrated animal feeding operation working group, the USDA State Technical Committee for NRCS, and Pius X foundation board, and is also involved with his church community. Tim and his wife were co-chairs of the 2016 Cattlemen's Ball. Tim has done speaking engagements on rotational grazing and generational transition. He is married and has two children and currently resides in Lincoln, NE.

Jerry Volesky

Associate Director Center for Grassland Studies, University of Nebraska



Jerry Volesky is Associate Director of the Center for Grassland Studies and a Professor and Range and Forage Specialist with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln West Central Research and Extension and Education Center located in North Platte. He has been with UNL for 28 years. His responsibilities include conducting grazing management and forage systems research on native range and seeded pasturelands in central and western Nebraska. Extension responsibilities include development and delivery of range and forage management programming for both adult and youth clientele in Nebraska.

Speaker Biography

Gwendwr Meredith

Assistant Professor and Rangeland Social Scientist, University of Nebraska



Gwendwr Meredith is an Assistant Professor and rangeland social scientist at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. She has affiliations with both the Center for Grassland Studies and the Center for Resilience in Agricultural Working Landscapes. Her research interests include such topics as perceptions of land cover change (e.g. woody plant encroachment), determinants of rural health and well-being, social learning within collaborative management projects, utility of regenerative ranching practices, and nutrient circularity between crop and livestock systems. Gwendwr holds a BA degree in animal behavior, ecology, and conservation from Indiana University – Bloomington and a PhD in human dimensions of ecosystem science and management from Utah State University.

Cody Trump

Sandhills Stewards Coordinator, Sandhills Task Force



Cody Trump grew up ranching in the sandhills near Merriman Nebraska. Here he spent his summers riding across the sandhills, moving cattle, and going to brandings. Some of his earliest jobs were spent working on ranches in the area. He also spent two summers working for the fish and wildlife service, which helped grow his desire to work in a mutually beneficial field for both ranching and wildlife. After graduating high school, Cody went to Chadron State College, where he received a bachelors in Rangeland Livestock Management and minored in agribusiness, animal science, and equine management. He and his wife currently live near Chadron, Nebraska where he runs the Sandhills Stewards program for the Sandhills Task Force.

Speaker Biography

Rebecca Kern-Lunbery

Feed testing Product Manager and Strategist, Ward Laboratories



Rebecca Kern-Lunbery is the Feed Testing Product Manager at Ward Laboratories, INC. In her current role, she reviews feed testing data for quality and accuracy, and consults with forage and livestock producers among other duties. Being passionate about producer outreach and education, she presents at producer meetings, collaborates with state extensions, coordinates educational webinars, and writes editorials regularly for *Progressive Forage*. She began her career as a technician at the US Meat Animal Research Center and continues to collaborate with research scientists. Her work has been published in *Animal Genetics*, *Gene*, and *Livestock Science*. Currently, she is the President of the NIRS Forage and Feed Testing Consortium. Rebecca is a professional member of the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists and holds a Master of Animal Nutrition from the University of Wyoming as well as a Master of Business Administration from Texas A & M University Corpus Christi.

Jeff Nichols

State Rangeland Management Specialist, USDA-NRCS



Jeff Nichols is the State Rangeland Management Specialist for the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska. His career spans 35 years with most of it being in the west-central portion of the state. His current role is to provide technical leadership to the 77 NRCS field offices on grazing, forage, and seeding related practices. Nichols is passionate about keeping prairies intact and a viable economic resource for livestock producers and the other services that grasslands provide. He has been active in promoting the use of prescribed fire and other management techniques to control invasive woody species encroaching on grasslands. Nichols holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. He and his wife Diane, along with their children reside on an acreage near North Platte.

Speaker Biography

Alex McKiernan

Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition



Alex McKiernan runs Robinette Farms and Cheney Conservation with his wife and daughters where they raise and sell produce and grass finished beef to Lincoln and Omaha retail customers, as well as custom graze mixed grasslands in Lancaster and Pawnee Counties. He has been a Board member for the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition for 2 years and will soon begin a new role in the organization as the State Grasslands Coordinator with funding from Nebraska Game and Parks' recent America the Beautiful Challenge grant award. The goal of the State Grasslands Coordinator is to help the many grassland conservation organizations in the state streamline their communication and efforts so conservation work can be complementary and meet the many diverse needs of our grasslands and stakeholders.

Mitch Stephenson

Range and Forage Specialist, University of Nebraska

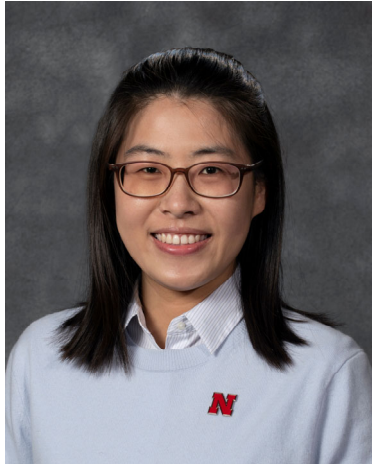


Mitch Stephenson is an associate professor and range management specialist at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Panhandle Research, Extension, and Education Center located in Scottsbluff, NE. Stephenson's research is focused on better understanding spatial and temporal relationships between plant production and precipitation in the Nebraska Sandhills and how this influences plant communities and cattle grazing behavior. This research has led to an interest in evaluating the effect of grazing management on ranch variability in rangeland health and productivity. Other research has focused on targeted grazing strategies to better manage cheatgrass within perennial grass/cheatgrass systems and opportunities to use precision livestock management tools to better manage grazing on extensive landscapes.

Speaker Biography

Yijie Xiong

Precision Livestock Management Specialist, University of Nebraska



Dr. Yijie Xiong is an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Animal Science and Biological Systems Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). She shares a split appointment with Animal Science (75%) and Biological Systems Engineering (25%). Her program focuses on the development and delivery of precision animal/livestock management strategies to advance animal food production systems' efficiency and sustainability while addressing critical environment and animal welfare needs, emphasizing beef cattle production systems. This unique focus evolved from her experience in controlled-environment agriculture for intensive agricultural animal production systems, with specific topics including instrumentation and environmental control in animal housing, measurement and evaluation of controlled environments, animal welfare, and precision livestock management. Yijie joined the UNL August 2020. Since then, she has been developing her peer network in sister departments with like-minded researchers and is uniquely focused on developing, delivering, and promoting research-based extension programs for producers. Dr. Xiong obtained her B.S. from China Agricultural University in Beijing, China, and her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL, USA. Her graduate and post-doctoral training included a rich set of experiences related to the U.S. swine and egg industries, including instrumentation design and development, housing systems, transport conditions, and interior monitoring of livestock and poultry facilities. She will share current work at the UNL focused on beef cattle sensing technologies and precision grazing management applications with us during the conference.

Travis Mulliniks

Range Cow Production System Specialist, West Central Research, Extension, and Education Center



Dr. Travis Mulliniks is Range Cow Nutritionist and Extension Specialist at the University of Nebraska and located at the West Central Research and Education Center in North Platte, NE. He grew up on a cow-calf operation in eastern Oklahoma and received his BS degree in Animal Science from Oklahoma State University. In addition, he earned a MS and PhD in Range Nutrition from New Mexico State University. Dr. Mulliniks' research and extension objectives consist of developing an applied cow-calf research program that emphasize economically viable management options through enhanced efficiency and nutritional management in beef cattle production.

Speaker Biography

Jack Keating *Corral Technologies*



Jack Keating is the Founder and CEO of Corral Technologies. Jack and his team at Corral have developed a virtual fencing system that allows producers to remotely move, track, and contain cattle. By using Corral's system, producers can implement the best grazing strategy for their operation. Jack grew up ranching in northern Nebraska on his family's operation. From his experiences digging post holes and moving cattle he decided that there had to be a better way to fence. Jack started Corral to help ranchers everywhere take their minds off fencing and move toward looking at how to become better land managers.

Ty Roseberry *Range Cow Production System Specialist, West Central Research,* *Extension, and Education Center*



I am Ty Roseberry a Senior Territory Manager for Merck-Vence. I grew up ranching in the Sandhills of Northern Nebraska running a mostly Black Angus cow-calf operation. I attended the University of Nebraska where I studied Ag Business and played baseball for the Huskers. I graduated in 2020 with my bachelor's degree and now reside in Papillion, NE.