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USE GOATS TO MAKE MONEY AND LOWER COSTS

In some areas in Southeast Nebraska, weeds and brush are stealing profits in our pastures. Out west, leafy spurge, yucca, cedar trees, and musk thistle take a hold when pastures dry up. Overgrazing, given a certain set of weather conditions, can lead to decline of desirable pasture grasses and lead to competition from weeds and brush.

Turn a bad situation into something better when undesirable plants show up in a pasture. Some weeds are difficult and expensive to spray and kill. But they also might be your most valuable, untapped resource.

Well, leafy spurge, yucca, cedar trees, musk thistle, and many other weeds and brush, are the preferred feed of goats. There are many proud cow-calf operations farmers that would never 'lower' themselves to grazing goats. But maybe it's time we reevaluate our bias and figure out how to best use our grazing lands.

Earlier droughts out west have weakened grasses in many areas and led to an explosion in yucca, western ragweed, broom snakeweed, and all sorts of other plants cattle rarely eat. In our area, pastures have their own problems with cedars, thistles, buckbrush, and other weeds.

Spraying, digging, or bulldozing often is too expensive. But we need to do something to save our pastures, and goats eat these weeds.

I noticed a new business near Lincoln has started renting goats this year to acreages and farmers. There is an operation near Hebron that has the ability to bring in semi-loads of goats for flash grazing to clean up areas.

Set aside your pride and think about this for a second. Most grazing operations have enough weeds to add one goat for every cow and not need to reduce cow numbers. Many could add five to ten goats. If these goats eat your weeds, you save money on herbicides. Fewer weeds means more grass for your cattle.

Goat kids sell for fifty to one hundred bucks apiece during the November through March holiday season. Several operations in Saline County already sell sheep and goat farm direct to Hispanic and Asian immigrants in our community.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County
306 West 3rd Street, Wilber, NE 68465

Phone (402) 821-2151 • Fax (402) 821-3398 • e-mail: randy.pryor@unl.edu