

Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter



Winter 2020

<http://boulder.extension.colostate.edu/natural-resources/>

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From the SAM Coordinator

It's been a while since we've had precipitation, so today's snow is welcome. I do hope that you will all be safe this winter whether walking or driving. A little extra time to be safe beats the hassle of dealing with insurance or being in a cast or on crutches.

I'm finishing up some end of the year statistics and have begun thinking about programming for this year. I will be doing another series of evening talks that I will send out soon.

Stay safe and warm.

Thank you,

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SAM Newsletters Online

View previous newsletters via the SAM link above.

SAM Email Listserv

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time and are not subscribed to the Small Acreage listserv, you may request subscription by contacting the Small Acreage Coordinator sbokan@bouldercounty.org. This quarterly e-newsletter and other timely info will be distributed via this email listserv.

Subscribers may use the listserv also as a SAM info gathering mechanism. For example, you may inquire about who is available in the area supply hay, to perform swathing/baling, etc. The listserv is not a marketplace, however. Because it is hosted on the CSU server, **NO COMMERCIAL EMAILS ARE ALLOWED. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SELL ANYTHING VIA THE LISTSERV – THANK YOU!** Use the newsletter ad section for these purposes.



Weather Outlook

The NOAA forecasts for the next 30 and 90 days are showing that the state will be above normal in temperature and the state about normal in precipitation.

https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/tools2.php

If you have not checked out NOAA's website, they have a lot of good information beside their predictions. There are sections for children, their publications and preparing for various weather conditions. <https://www.weather.gov/>



Coming events and workshops

Healthy Grasslands Expo

Save the date for the Healthy Grasslands Expo on Thursday, February 2, 2020 at the downtown Denver Sheraton. This is a public session being held in conjunction with the Society for Range Management 2020 Annual Meeting. The speakers will be covering the importance of healthy grassland both locally and globally and the indicators to be able to tell if a grassland is healthy. Speakers include Dr. Fred Provenza a well-known researcher in plant animal interaction, Bobby Gill with the Savory Institute and Dr. Pat Shaver – Oklahoma State University and Jeff Herrick USDA – ARS. The cost is \$60.

Register at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/healthy-grasslands-expo-tickets-89857017759>

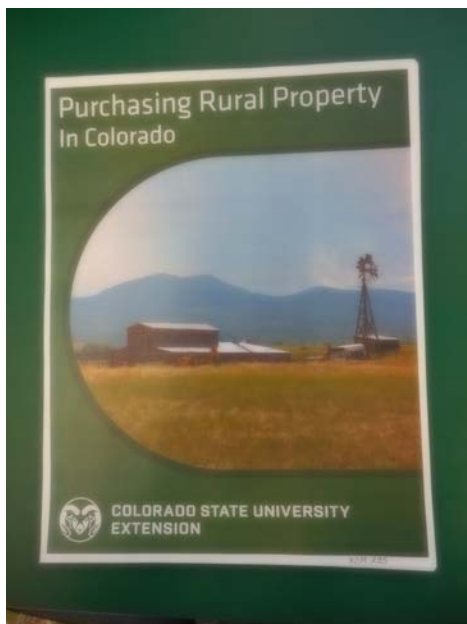
New Resource Available

There is a new resource available to prospective rural property purchasers. CSU Bulletin XCM 235 "Purchasing Rural Property in Colorado" is now available online at

<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/natres/xcm235.pdf>

This bulletin provides a list of things to consider before you start looking for a property and due diligence items to research before purchasing a property. Using the information will help you decide what you really want in a property and

make sure that you don't discover something about the property after you have purchased it.



Winter Small Acreage Tasks

Winter weed management

With the snow that's falling while I am writing this, winter annual weeds will be germinating before too long. While there is not much that you can do in the winter, you can still do mechanical management on the prickly lettuce plants, small cheatgrass seedlings and rosettes of thistle and knapweeds. You can hoe or undercut the plants and pop them out of the ground when the ground is not frozen. You can still remove any flower stalks that still have flowers or seeds and dispose of them.

Most annuals and perennials haven't germinated yet or are dormant now, so you'll need to wait until they start growing again in the spring. You can remove any flower stalks and seeds that remain so that you are not adding any more seeds to the soil or spreading them around

You can't do any spraying now as most herbicides need to be used when a plant is actively growing. Always read and follow the

label on the herbicides whether you use an "organic" or "synthetic" herbicide. They are both meant to kill plants and you want to be sure you kill your weeds and not your forage plants or injure yourself. The label provides information on any surfactant needed, personal protective equipment, timing of spraying, grazing or haying restrictions, location of spraying (i.e. up to water's edge) and lots of other important information.

Winter pasture management –

Animals can be out grazing now but make sure that they are not out when the ground is wet or icy. They should also not be grazing the plants all the way to the ground. You need to maintain a stubble of at least 3 – 4" all year. Grazing lower than this removes stored energy that the plants will need in the spring to start growing.

Reseeding – You can continue to reseed any areas that need it.

Water – Ditch companies are having their annual meetings now. Getting to know who is on your ditch and any plans that they have for improvements or ditch cleaning is important so be sure to attend the meeting. When you have a problem, you need to know who to talk to and it's best to have an established relationship with them.

Plans and priorities – Continue to refine what you want to do on your property and get all those winter projects done.

Voles

Voles are small mouse-like rodents. They look like a mouse but have stocky bodies, short legs and a shorter tail. They nest underground under shrubs and other cover.

The damage that a landowner might notice is dead trees, perennials or shrubs, "raceways" in turf grasses and pastures. Voles can also girdle

the bark of young trees and shrubs, and damage roots. So, if you have young trees dying or branches on shrubs that have died, check for girdling at the base or damaged roots. Grasses will recover from the damage, but trees and shrubs may not depending on the amount of damage.

What can a landowner do to minimize the damage in the future? Homeowners need to identify their plants of highest value and protect them. They can either exclude the voles using hardware cloth (with openings less than ¼”), the use of repellants or trapping. Use the hardware cloth to form a cylinder around the base of trees and shrubs and if you can bury it underground a couple of inches. Repellants may help but you must reapply them periodically according to the label. It is also good to use different repellants periodically so that they don't get accustomed to the smell and just ignore it.

For turf grasses, mowing the grass shorter in the fall will not provide the voles a place to hide from their predators making them easier prey. They like to nest under junipers so limbing them up a little so that a fox, coyote or cat can get under them will also help. Toxicants and traps can be used but you need to be careful so that you do not trap or poison other animals. You can use the same toxicants and traps that you would use for a mouse. If you live on a small acreage, you could install perches for raptors to help lower your population.

When we have winters where the snow sticks around for a while, we tend to have more damage. The voles tunnel through the snow avoiding being caught by their predators. In areas where fox and coyote populations are down, you will see more damage. If your property backs up to an open space or park, you are likely to have more of a problem. There is only so much you can do when you are in this situation.

For assistance with wildlife conflicts, contact the Wildlife Masters by calling 303-678-6238 to leave a message in the voice mailbox.



Winter Wildlife Management

As temperatures drop, wildlife may decide to use your home as their winter home. Most of us do not want to share our home with wildlife so we need to make sure they can't get in. Exclusion is the best way to prevent conflicts with wildlife. Repellants are of limited use and must be reapplied frequently.

Rodents, especially mice will find their way into your house through any opening larger than ¼”. Check around your foundation for cracks or other openings that are ¼” or larger. You can stuff steel wool into these openings to keep the mice from entering. You can hold the steel wool in place with some of the expanding spray in insulation. You can't just use the insulation as the mice will just eat through it. Check under sinks and the foundation for areas where pipes and conduit enter the house or various house floors. Mice can easily climb pipes and go from your crawl space to your upstairs bathroom or kitchen. In the kitchen, store foods in mice proof containers.

Other wildlife such as squirrels and raccoons will look for damaged areas around your home and other buildings. Check for damaged shingles, siding or vents that they can use to make their

way into your home. Repair these areas so that the animals cannot break through these areas and enter your attic. Squirrels mate over the winter and will have their first set of young in January and February so you don't want them to be doing this in your home. If you do get squirrels in the attic with young, it's best to wait until the young are weaned, in 6 – 8 weeks, and then use a one-way door to let them out and then have the area repaired.

Rabbits and rats will burrow under your deck, chicken coop or shed. To prevent them from doing this you will need to install hardware cloth from the bottom of the structure and bury it at least 12" underground so that they cannot burrow under the building.

Don't attract wildlife by leaving spent bird feed or chicken feed on the ground, clean up areas frequently. Keep feed grains, chicken feed and bird feed stored in rodent proof containers in the garage or barn to prevent rodents from accessing the feed.

Protecting your hay from winter wildlife damage

From News release from Colorado Parks and Wildlife

While not everyone needs to be concerned with wildlife damage to their hay supply, there will be some that need the following recommendations from Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Deer and elk will seek out easier sources of forage in the winter and may consume significant quantities of hay in a hay stack. Farmers and ranchers need to provide protection for the stacks to minimize wildlife damage. While elk can safely consume hay, it can be a problem for deer. The deer's digestive system is not designed to break down hay. Deer are browsers which means they tend to

consume more shrubs than grasses. Hay stacks can be protected with fencing. The best fencing consists of stout wooden posts with woven wire built to a height of at least 7-8 feet to compensate for snow build up plus the height of the reach of the deer and elk.

If you are experiencing problems with deer and elk damage to your hay stack, contact your local Colorado Parks and Wildlife service center to obtain assistance.

Place your SAM related classified ad or print advertisement here!

Classified Advertising Rates are as follows:
General Public, Individual: \$5
General Public, Business/Show: \$10

Email Sharon Bokan for more details
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