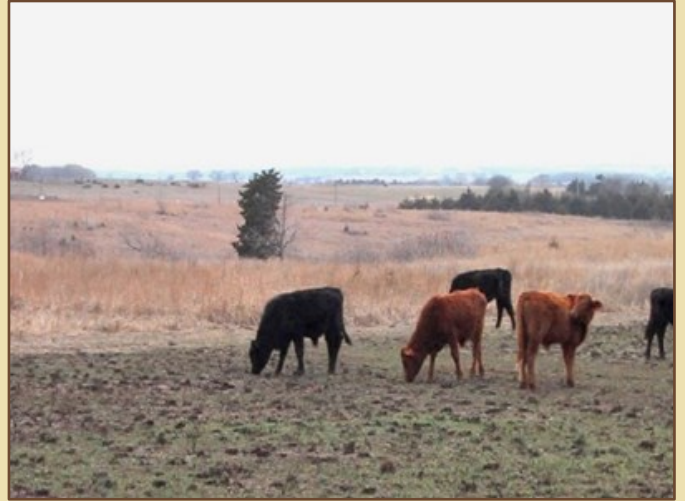




Patch Burn Grazing System

PURPOSE:

Patch burn grazing is defined as the application of prescribed fire to focus livestock grazing on a portion of a single grazing unit where the objective is to increase the diversity and structure of the vegetation in a way which benefits wildlife and maintains livestock production. As different patches are burned through time, a shifting mosaic of vegetative structure is created which assures year round habitat requirements are met for a wide range of grassland dependent wildlife. Benefits include suppression of woody plant encroachment, maximizing utilization of forage, interruption of parasite cycles and habitat, and preserving nesting cover and encouraging annual forb growth and mobility for wildlife. Annual burning of an entire pasture followed by intensive early stocking may leave little cover for ground nesting birds. Burning only a portion of the acreage annually, in a rotational manner, can maintain production and economic benefits while preserving critical cover for grassland dependent wildlife.



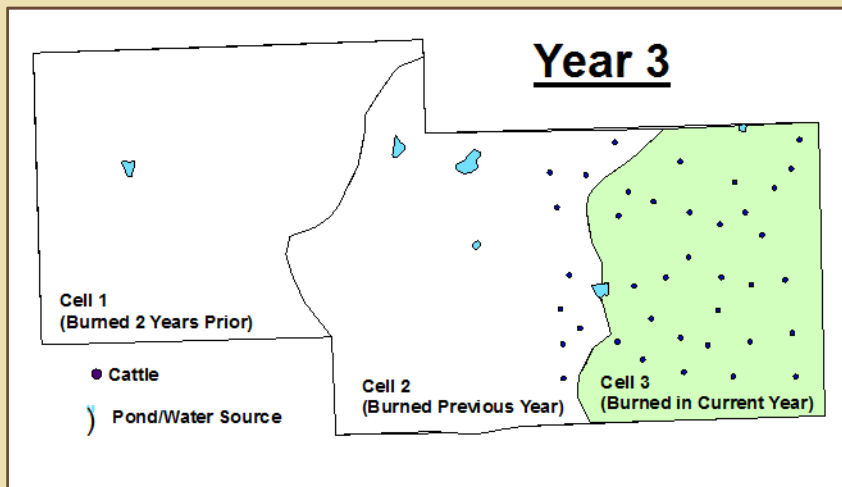
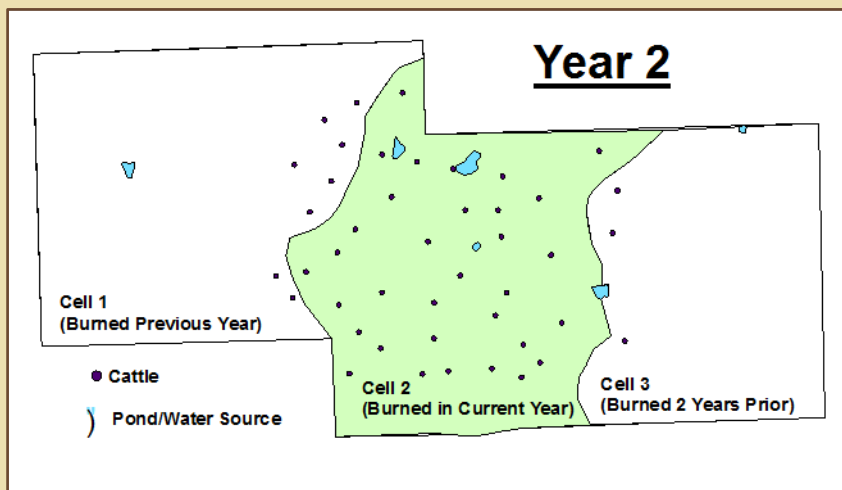
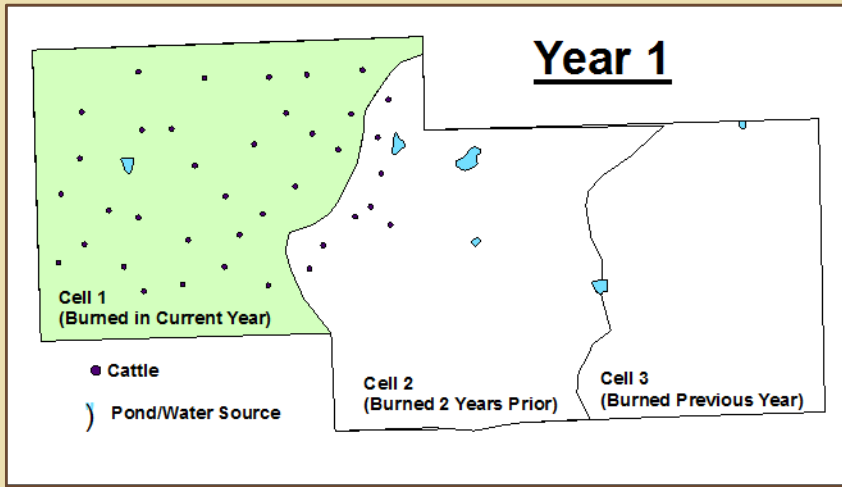
SPECIFICATIONS:

- Divide grazing unit into 3 or more units by establishing firebreaks, either natural or man-made.
- Burn approximately 1/3 of the pasture annually, rotating each year.
- Fire-return interval, for each unit, should be once every 3 years.
- Stock according to total acreage of pasture, burned and unburned.
- Follow rotation schedule, reduced use by livestock on unburned units is critical to the grassland system's ability to recover from intensive grazing in years when burned.

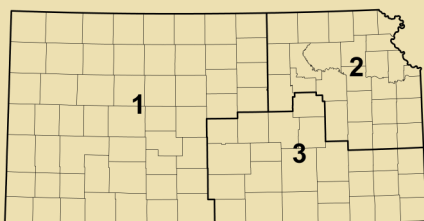
CONSIDERATIONS:

- Burned unit will receive the heaviest grazing pressure, while unburned areas are underutilized which allows for recovery.
- Consider location of livestock water sources when establishing cells, having a water source available in each cell will reduce the likelihood of trailing and subsequent erosion.
- Utilize natural firebreaks to divide cells when possible. Creeks, bluffs, roads and trails work well. However, do not rely on them to replace firefighting equipment and a prescribed burn plan.
- Embrace the variation patch burn grazing mimics. Units will vary in plant structure and diversity due to the fire and grazing interaction. Keep in mind this diversity is what provides the necessary habitat requirements for wildlife. For example, the unit which hasn't burned for 2 years will provide dense nesting and escape cover while open brood rearing cover with abundant forbs and insects is provided in the unit which hasn't burned for 1 year.
- Burning during different seasons of the year mimics the variation of when fires historically occurred. This can also expand the burning window allowing time to accomplish yearly burns.
- Forage can be "banked" in unburned cells for use during droughty conditions.
- Cattle trailing is diminished since year to year movement is disrupted by burning pattern. It has been observed that old cattle trails tend to heal as units are rested allowing grasses to grow in the trails.
- Coordinate with neighbors to prevent unwanted fires from interfering with your burn rotation.

Increased grazing intensity coincides with the most recently burned unit. Unburned areas receive rest from livestock grazing, therefore allowing recovery while providing quality nesting and brood-rearing habitat.



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