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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management

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Excellence in Range Management Area III Award Winner: Rohrbach Cattle Ranch

The 2021 Area III Excellence in Range Management award winner is the Rohrbach Cattle Ranch. The ranch is owned and operated by Jonathan and Sheena Rohrbach along with help from their son Jadon. The ranch is located in the heart of the prairie pothole region, where ducks greatly outnumber cattle on a per acre basis.

The ranch was started in 1923 by Jonathan's grandparents. Most of the operation is native prairie, with less than 400 acres of tilled land. This cow-calf operation is located near Roscoe, SD in Edmunds County.



Rohrbach family; Jadon, Jonathan, and Sheena (Photo by Heidi Becker)

Their goals and objectives include restoring the land to its pre-Lewis and Clark glory, making a profit with low inputs, drought-proofing the land, and keeping residue to reduce evaporation. They work towards accomplishing their goals through focusing on rest and recovery, controlling flies through grazing management, increasing plant diversity, integrating livestock on cropland, and conserving moisture for drought years.

The Rohrbachs have been able to intensify their rotational grazing system through cross-fencing and water development. They've also transitioned some of their hayland to grazing lands as well. Through their rotational grazing, they've been able to increase plant diversity in their pastures. They rotate through their pastures quickly – moving cattle every 7 to 10 days – which allows the cattle to stay ahead of the flies. In fact, they haven't had to treat for flies in the past 8 years. Additionally, they have noticed an increase in their dung beetle population. Their change in management has also enabled them to increase stocking rate.

The Rohrbach Cattle Ranch was nominated by Eric Rasmussen, District Conservationist in Ipswich, SD. The Rohrbach Family was featured in the Grasslands Planner and have an "Our Amazing Grasslands" video; just search "Our Amazing Grasslands Rohrbach Family" online to watch!