

2022 SD Section Annual Meeting Held in Cottonwood/Wall

The SD Section of the Society for Range Management held their annual meeting in Cottonwood and Wall on October 12, 2022. This was the first in-person meeting since COVID, and it was great to be back together! Section members gathered in Wall for registration before carpooling out to South Dakota State University's Cottonwood Field Station.

At the field station, Section Vice-President Jamie Brennan introduced SDSU's new precision ranch management program, equipment, and projects. On hand to speak about their research projects included Dr. Hector Menendez, and Master's students James Bolyard and Logan Vandermark. Hector and Jamie showed the group some of their new "toys" – precision feed management systems. The first was a precision feeder system that feeds animals a programmed amount of supplement (cake) everyday using a RFID ear tags. The second used the RFID ear tags to monitor how much hay a cow was eating. Both systems collect and save data so users can determine intake and feed ratios later. The researchers also showed their new "cow burp analyzer" – a system that measures the amount of CO₂ and methane that a cow emits.

Next, Logan took us to a nearby pasture, where he demonstrated a virtual fence system. He had set up a



Logan demonstrates the Vence collars and virtual fence system. (Photo from Tom Nadgwick)

fence in the software earlier. He explained how the fence worked with the Vence collars. With this system, cattle wear collars that utilize GPS to determine location in the pasture. The animals are warned by the collar when they are getting too close to the fence with an audible beep, before a short electrical stimulus is emitted – somewhat similar to invisible fence systems used for dogs. The collars can be monitored in a web app or phone app, which helps determine animal location. The software also allows the user to "set up" and "take down" fences or move animals from pasture to pasture.

The last new technology the researchers touched on was their precision scales. These monitor animal weight when animals are drinking. Weights can be monitored throughout the season to determine animal gains and performance.

After the outside tour – in the cold wind – the group went inside to listen to James explain his project working on beaver dam analogs. He had placed a few along the Cottonwood Creek – which runs through the research station. He explained the reasoning behind using beaver dam analogs, as well as some other sites he is working on through his research project as well.



Hector Menendez explains the system that measures CO₂ and methane. (Photo from Tom Nadgwick)

Logan took a little more time to explain how the virtual fences worked, and some of the findings from his research. Then Jamie ended the morning explaining some of the results from the precision feeding trials and cattle weight data.

After lunch, the group had their annual business meeting at the Three Amigo's Restaurant in Wall to elect new officers and talk over the previous year's events. Officers for 2023 are Jameson (Jamie) Brennan – President, Tyler Swan – First Vice President, Krista Ehlert – Second Vice President, Sandy Smart – Secretary, and Jeff Vander Wilt – Treasurer. Directors will be Jessica Michalski, Mitch Faulkner, and Tom Nadgwick. Out going officers/directors were Carmen Drieling – president, and Tanse Herrmann – director.



Tornow Ranch – Area III ERM Winner. (Photo from Emily Helms)

After the business meeting, a banquet was held to honor Excellence in Range Management (ERM) winners and hand out other awards. The awards portion of the night was kicked off with Jonathon Neuharth giving his winning presentation from Rangeland Days. He will go on to the International Meeting to compete in the High School Youth Forum. Plaques were handed out for out-going presidents and directors from 2021 (since there was no in-person meeting last year). Matt Odden was the outgoing president, and Matt Stoltenberg was an outgoing director. Emily Helms was awarded the Top Hand Award for her education, outreach, and leadership.

ERM awards were given to four ranches across SD. Area

III winner was the Tornow Ranch from Murdo (nominated by Ryan Willert). Area IV winners were Chuck and Koreen Anderson from Lemmon (nominated by the Perkins County Conservation District). Tracy Rosenberg Abbey Grasslands of the Prairie Coteau from Marvin SD won for Area I (nominated by Krecia Leddy). Nickelson Farms of Frederick from Area II (nominated by Derek Barondeau).

The evening ended with the Crazy Auction – where bidders raised over \$1,500 for youth activities.



Chuck and Koreen Anderson – Area IV ERM Winner (Photo from Emily Helms)