



# A F C COOPERATIVE FARMING NEWS

SERVING SOUTHERN GROWERS SINCE 1939

## NEW GRAZING SYSTEM

# GOOD FOR MAN AND GOOD FOR THE COWS

by Julie A. Best  
November 2004

Bennie Mae and Joseph Johnson of Russell County have spent a lifetime improving themselves and their property. The Johnsons own a small farm near Hurtsboro. The Johnsons did public work for a number of years, but now they have retired and enjoy life on their small farm. They plant a garden and have a few head of cattle.



Joseph Johnson's new grazing system has made his cattle more manageable. Here, Johnson's black Angus bull responds to a little hand-fed corn.

Originally, the Johnsons' cattle operation consisted of one large 37 acre pasture and a pond. The cattle did well in the pasture, but they sure were hard to handle. Mr. Johnson says, "When the cattle were in the open pasture, I had to run them down with my tractor. I dreaded trying to gather them up when it was time to worm them or do any other type of maintenance."



Johnson and John Curtis, right, Russell County NRCS District Conservationist, assess the pond. The pond is still used as a water source in one pasture. Since the cattle are rotated among four pastures, there is not as much stress on the banks of the pond.

Through the Outreach Program of the Russell County Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Johnsons heard about programs that would benefit their cattle operation. After talking with the NRCS field staff, the Johnsons decided to install a grazing system for their cattle.

The grazing system called for dividing the single pasture into four pastures and providing a water source for each paddock. The first step was to install the cross fencing. "I learned how to do fences years ago," says Johnson. "That was not anything new to me." What did prove to be difficult, however, was to get all those post holes dug. "I just rented a post-hole digger and that made the job much easier," says Johnson. He used his tractor to stretch the barbed

wire. Once the new cross

fencing was installed, Johnson could contain the cattle and install a new fence around the perimeter. The Johnsons received State Cost-Share Funds to install the fencing.



**Bennie Mae Johnson thinks the cows look better since installation of the grazing system.**

they needed some way to get the water to the troughs," said John Curtis, Russell County NRCS District Conservationist.

NRCS told the Johnsons about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary program administered by NRCS that provides assistance to farmers who want to install conservation practices that would improve the soil, water and related natural resources on their land.

In their original cattle operations, the cattle got water from a pond that was dug in 1955. The banks had eroded, and with the new cross fencing, the pond was no longer accessible to all four pastures. There was a good well on the property. When the pump broke several years ago, the Johnsons hooked up to city water for household use. "They had a well, but

they needed some way to get the water to the troughs," said John Curtis, Russell County NRCS District Conservationist.

The Johnsons applied for and received EQIP funds to install a new pump, to run water lines to the pasture and to install water troughs in three pastures. Johnson says, "I used my tractor to install the pipelines. I had an old farm plow that I rigged up and put behind my farm tractor that would dig a trench just wide enough to lay my pipe down. I did everything I could to keep from using the shovel!"

Now there are four pastures with water available to each paddock, one pond and three troughs. "That is so nice," says Mrs. Johnson. "All these years we've had the cattle in just one pasture."

By moving the cattle from pasture to pasture, they keep the pasture grazed down. "It looks like it's been cut," says Johnson. "I cut the cows off and give the pasture time to grow again. I've got so much grass. It's been a big help."

The Johnsons can see the benefits of the EQIP program. It has made their cattle easier to handle.

"When I need to move the cattle, I just get some feed and they go right over there into the pen. The program really has helped me," says Mr. Johnson.



**Installation of cross fencing and water troughs improved the cattle operation on the Johnsons' farm.**

In this instance, the Johnsons have not only made life better for themselves, but life seems to be better for the cattle as well. "The cattle look better," says Mrs. Johnson. The Johnsons are convinced that the cattle look healthier because they have adequate grass, and, because the cattle are easier to handle, they can take better care of them.

For information about conservation programs that may be beneficial to you, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office.

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