



# Boulder County Small Acreage Management Newsletter

Spring 2012

<http://www.extension.colostate.edu/boulder/acreage.shtml>

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### **From the SAM Coordinator**

It is typical Colorado weather. I planned on this newsletter focusing on the dry conditions and what happens, it rains. If I thought putting together a newsletter would bring us more precipitation, I'd get one out more often. We are well into spring but it certainly has been feeling more like summer. Both grazing management and weed management will be more difficult if we don't continue to get more precipitation.

If you do have access to irrigation water, you should utilize it. With the snowpack being below average and there being no spring runoff this year, the ditch companies may not have their full water allocations water. With the soil as dry as it has been, there will be quite a bit of loss in the dirt ditches getting to properties. Reservoir storage is good but that does not mean that the water will be released for use.

Let's hope that this rain is only the beginning of more to come

Thank you,  
Sharon Bokan  
Small Acreage Coordinator  
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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 [boco\\_small\\_acreage@colostate.edu](mailto:boco_small_acreage@colostate.edu) listserv, you may request subscription on the SAM website (linked in header above). 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 – THANKS.** Use the newsletter ad section for these purposes.

Currently, there are 212 subscribers to the listserv

## Weather Outlook

The NOAA forecasts for the next 30 and 90 days are showing that the most of the state will have warmer than normal temperatures. The Precipitation forecast is an equal chance of being wetter or drier than normal. Snow surveys indicate

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/>

Drought monitor indicates that most of the state is either abnormally dry or in some level of drought.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

## Coming events and workshops

An upcoming event that may be of interest is the Weeds 101 Workshop on May 17<sup>th</sup> in Barn A at the Boulder County Fairgrounds. Registration is due this Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>. The workshop will be taught by Dr. George Beck, Weed Science Professor at Colorado State University. For more details see the Colorado Weed Management Association website at [www.cwma.org](http://www.cwma.org)

There is also a DIY Energy Audit Workshop in September in Golden. For more information visit this website.

[www.ext.colostate.edu/energy/consumer.html](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/energy/consumer.html)

I hope that you will take advantage of these great events.

## 2012 Small Acreage Management Volunteer Program

Four new volunteers completed the 2012 Small Acreage Management (SAM) Volunteer program. Volunteers receive 24 hours of training in plant identification, weed and grazing management, pasture establishment and general small acreage management information. The volunteers are now ready to help take calls on small acreage issues including weed/plant identification. To leave a message for the volunteers, please call our main office number at 303-678-6238.

## 2012 Wildlife Master Volunteer Program

Four new volunteers completed the 2012 Wildlife Master (WM) training. They join 2 long time volunteers and me as Wildlife Masters. What is a Wildlife Master? They are volunteers that are trained to help the public with human/wildlife conflicts. They provide current information from Colorado State University, other land grant universities and state and federal wildlife agencies.

So if you have a skunk living under a deck, raccoon eating your corn, mice in the house or flickers pecking holes in your house, we can provide you with some solutions. To leave a message in the Wildlife Master voice mailbox, please call our main office number 303-678-6238.

## Weed Control during dry conditions Sharon Bokan

Weed control during dry conditions can be challenging. As the soil dries out, both desired plants and weeds compete for what soil moisture there is. Weed populations are usually lower during dry conditions and the plants that do grow are usually less vigorous. This year the cheatgrass is heading out at 6" or lower. Drought tolerant weeds such as kochia, Russian thistle and perennial weeds tend to be more of a problem. With sporadic precipitation events, there tends to be flushes of weeds that germinate after each precipitation event.

Use of light tillage can be good or bad under dry conditions. The tillage can eliminate weeds but it also causes the loss of soil moisture. Soil microbes that help break down herbicides are also affected in dry conditions. Soil microbes prefer moist conditions so dry conditions limit their effectiveness in breaking down herbicides. This means that the herbicide may remain in the soil longer and potentially harm non target plants.

Weeds build up a thicker cuticle (skin) during dry conditions in an effort to not lose moisture. This can make it tougher to get the herbicide to penetrate the leaf surface. The

plants may also be smaller and spindly with less leaf surface area to absorb the herbicide. Herbicides that depend on translocation (movement) of the herbicide from the leaf surface through the plants vascular system may not be as effective. Plant growth systems are altered in dry conditions so that the plant does not absorb or move the herbicides as effectively.

Irrigation or precipitation will help with weed control so if you can put off control until after there is moisture or you can irrigate that is the best. There may be adjuvants that you can add to help the herbicide be more effective. Please read the herbicide label for such adjuvants.

## **Pasture Management during dry conditions**

### **Sharon Bokan**

Pasture management is always important but during a dry year, it is even more important. It is vital that the health of the grass be protected. During dry years, grasses will produce less leaf area and root growth. It is vital that the roots be preserved so that when moisture is received again, the plant can begin recovery. With less root growth the plants can take in less nutrients and water thus causing less leaf growth. With less foliage, the plant does not have much leaf surface area to photosynthesis and produce energy for continued growth and to store for winter survival.

Grazing management is very important every year but especially during dry conditions. Allowing horse's unlimited access to pastures during dry conditions will weaken plants even further than just the dry conditions alone. It is even more important to follow good grazing management techniques and keep animals off the pasture when the grass is too short. Overgrazing during drought causes more damage to plants and slows recovery or causes plant death. Please see the resources listed

below on setting up grazing management systems.

You may also want to consider more supplemental forage for your animals. With the droughts in southeastern Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas, hay prices are high. This means more money out of your pocket.

## **Wildlife and drought**

### **Sharon Bokan**

While our attention to the dry conditions will be mostly on our own pastures, the dry conditions are also affecting wildlife and this will eventually affect us. We have already started to see some of this with the bears coming out of hibernation and heading into towns and cities looking for food. The dry conditions have caused their normal food sources to be limited or nonexistent this year.

If dry conditions continue, we may see more conflicts between humans and wildlife. Bears will come into towns looking for garbage, fruit tree, bee hives, and bird feeders for food. Raccoons will be seeking out your sweet corn, pet food and uncleaned grill. Deer and elk will seek out irrigated pastures, fields and hay stacks. They may also graze more frequently along roadsides causing more vehicle accidents. If you don't want to attract wildlife to your property, the Wildlife Masters can help you with methods to exclude, deter or repel them.

## **Agricultural Energy Audits**

### **Cary Weiner**

An energy audit is a systematic review of a consumer's energy use intended to uncover inefficiencies and cost-effective improvements for the consumer's consideration. When applied to agriculture, an audit can look at the energy use of buildings and other structures as well as field operations. For example, an energy audit of an irrigated corn farm may include an analysis of the lighting, heating, and cooling of non-residential structures and an analysis of irrigation pumps and motors, tractors, and

tillage, pesticide, and herbicide application practices.

Agricultural energy audits can be composed of both phone and field visits, with the field visit lasting four hours or more. The consumer receiving the audit will typically supply at least one year's worth of utility bills to the auditor for analysis, share any energy-related concerns with the auditor, and may or may not accompany the auditor throughout the field audit. The consumer should provide as much information as possible to the auditor regarding energy-related equipment and operational practices in order for the auditor to conduct the most informed analysis.

The agricultural energy audit will result in a written set of recommendations for energy upgrades that the consumer can use to make decisions. The cost of each upgrade is provided, as is the annual savings expected from the upgrade. Simple payback periods are often provided as well. For example, the audit report may include a recommendation to upgrade lighting in a barn from metal halide to T5 fluorescent at a cost of \$6,000 and expected annual savings of \$2,000 for a simple payback period of three years.

The Center for Agricultural Energy (CAE) at Colorado State University conducted eight comprehensive agricultural audits in 2011 with results forthcoming. The CAE has also received funding from USDA to conduct 50 irrigation efficiency audits throughout the state over the next two years.

#### **Funding for Agricultural Energy Projects**

Funding for agricultural producers in Colorado to undertake energy projects is available from a number of sources, and can include funding for audits as well as energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) has

been providing cost-share funding for energy audits and improvements at qualifying agricultural operations and rural small businesses.

USDA also offers Value-Added Producer Grants that may be used for planning activities and working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy. Local USDA-Rural Development offices can be contacted for more information on these funding opportunities.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service under USDA has been providing cost share for agricultural energy audits conducted by pre-approved technical service providers under its Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) program. Conservation Innovation Grants through NRCS may also be available to assist in the implementation of agricultural energy projects.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture has provided funding through its Advancing Colorado's Renewable Energy (ACRE) program for biofuels development, biomass conversion, wind, and solar projects. Funding for agricultural energy projects may also be available through one's local utility and/or the Colorado Governor's Energy Office. In addition, agricultural producers may be able to take advantage of the federal government's tax credits for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

#### **For More Information**

As funding opportunities can change rapidly, it is best to contact the agency from which funding is to be solicited before undertaking an agricultural energy project. For general information on agricultural energy programs, and to potentially receive an audit, visit the Center for Agricultural Energy website at [www.cae.colostate.edu](http://www.cae.colostate.edu).

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General Public, Individual: 25 cents/word

General Public, Business/Show: 30 cents/ word

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Quarter Page Ad: \$50.00

Half Page Ad: \$80.00

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**Email Sharon Bokan for more details**

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