



NCA Environmental Stewardship award winners Bob and Don Smith, Tribune, Kan., have made conservation a vital part of their beef and crop farming operations.

Cattlemen Care for the Environment

A new study detailing how beef producers care for the environment was released March 2 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The study was commissioned jointly by the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) and *Beef Today* magazine and partially funded by the one dollar beef checkoff.

The study will be used by NCA in checkoff-funded information programs to show consumers and thought leaders how cattlemen and cattlemen are stewards of the environment. According to the study, which covered farmers and ranchers with beef cow-calf herds, 83 percent of respondents practice rotational grazing, 82 percent say the condition of their

range or pastureland has improved the last 10 years, 74 percent use minimum or conservation tillage systems and 88 percent perform soil testing.

"This study proves what we as cattlemen have known for years and have only recently been telling the public — cattlemen must be good environmental stewards if we are to be successful businessmen," says NCA president Dan Koons, of Shirley, Ill. "It is clear when you compare these statistics to a similar survey we conducted four years ago that cattlemen are improving conservation practices in every category measured."

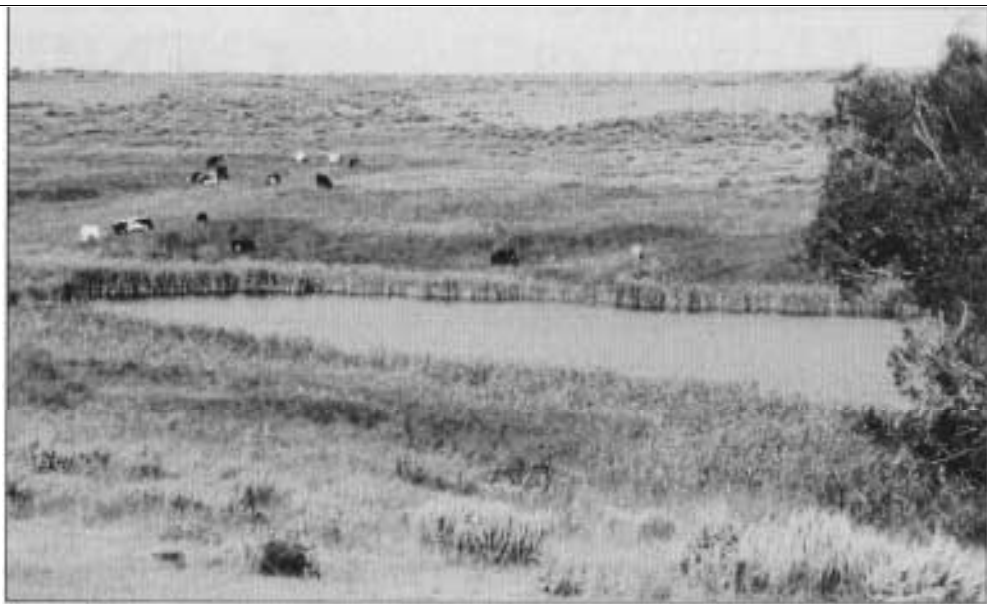
While some have tried to portray cattle and wildlife as not being mutually

compatible, this study proves otherwise. Eighty-seven percent of respondents said they have areas on their farms or ranches that support wildlife. During the winter months, many animals can count on cattle farms and ranches to provide forage; nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of respondents provide feed for wildlife in the winter. Sixty-two percent of producers leave legume or grass strips along fence lines between crop areas for wildlife. Thirty-eight percent say they even leave or plant small areas of grain crops just for wildlife food. Twenty-three percent delay hay harvest until after nesting season for waterfowl and upland game birds. These efforts continue to be fruitful — 63 percent of respondents report that wildlife populations have increased on their land in the last 10 years.

NCA will use the family nature of the cattle business to drive home the environmental messages, since the survey showed that four out of five respondents plan to hand down their business to children or other family members. Forty-two percent of those surveyed operate farms or ranches that have been in the same family for 50 years or more, and 12 percent of the farms or ranches have been in the same family for over a century.

Other highlights of the study:

- 84% fertilize their pasture or grazingland;
- 61% plant winter cover crops and green manure crops to control erosion;
- 72% mix legumes with grasses;
- 45% use natural pest control methods instead of/or to supplement chemical means.
- 41% of farms/ranches with more than 400 cows have planted trees in the past five years; and



Smith Cattle Inc improved rangeland

Comparisons to a similar survey completed in 1990 demonstrate the growing concern for the environment among beef producers. In 1990, 42 percent had man-made terraces, ponds or water containment systems on their farms/ranches; today that percentage has grown to 64 percent. Wildlife efforts also increased — 87 percent of respondents have areas that support wildlife, compared with 80 percent four years ago.

The study, conducted by Rockwood Research of St. Paul, Minn., was carried out in January 1994 and was based on questions of 400 randomly selected cow-calf producers in the top 31 cow-calf-producing states. To quality for the survey, a respondent had to own at least 30 brood cows and be the primary decision-maker on the farm or ranch. Total sample results are calculated with 95 percent confidence (plus or minus a 5 percent margin of error) that the sample reflects the population from which it was drawn. The margin of error is associated with the total sample results only.

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY APRIL 22

A checkoff-funded publicity packet to help cattlemen and cattlemen demonstrate how beef is an environmentally-friendly product is now available from the National Cattlemen's Association. NCA encourages you to be proactive in the celebration of Earth Day, April 22.

The packet, produced through the NCA public relations program that is funded by the Beef Promotion and Research Board, includes materials for working with the consumer news media, local civic or environmental groups and a new slick on "Cattlemen and Wildlife: The Conservation Connection," to be used as a newspaper advertisement, flyer or poster. To order a copy of the packet, contact NCA's Rae Price at (303) 694-0305 while supplies last.