

## Local Research



Cattle grazing with collars in Box Elder County

### PHRAGMITE GRAZING RESEARCH: VIRTUAL FENCING

Changing climates and extended drought conditions in Utah have created a need for producers to find innovative ways to find and utilize alternative forage sources. Phragmites is a wetland invasive species that causes dense mats of vegetation in open water. Once established Phragmites will eliminate native vegetation by causing changes in the biotic and abiotic environment. Thick stands of Phragmites create impenetrable conditions that are unsuitable for many of the wetland species which prefer open water habitats. Grazing has been proven as an effective tool in reducing and managing Phragmites, it is also a valuable feed resource for cattle and can mitigate loss of forage during drought conditions.

One of the obstacles encountered when grazing Phragmites is fencing. Permanent fencing is costly and has a reduced operational life span in aquatic conditions. Moreover, it has been difficult to establish pastures using permanent fence. Phragmites have continued to spread and becomes increasingly costly and difficult to manage and treat. This project addresses the question of whether virtual fencing can be used as a tool to increase flexibility in management when grazing Phragmites, we will also be examining the economic costs and benefit compared to traditional fencing.

USU Extension- Box Elder County is working with a variety of partners and landowners to improve habitat and increase invasive species management across private lands within the Lower Bear River Watershed. This research aims to improve watershed health, mitigate wildfire risks, increase water quality/quantity, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and increase resiliency and sustainability of our natural resources. As data is collected,

we look forward to sharing results with our community. In addition to USU Extension's research, there are other organizationa and universities with other unique projects relateds to virtual fencing. This includes companies with emerging technology. See resources below.

For inquires on this reaserch project contact the Box Elder County Livesrock and Grazing Extension Agent: Ashley Longmore at 435-695-2542 or email [ashley.longmore@usu.edu](mailto:ashley.longmore@usu.edu).

