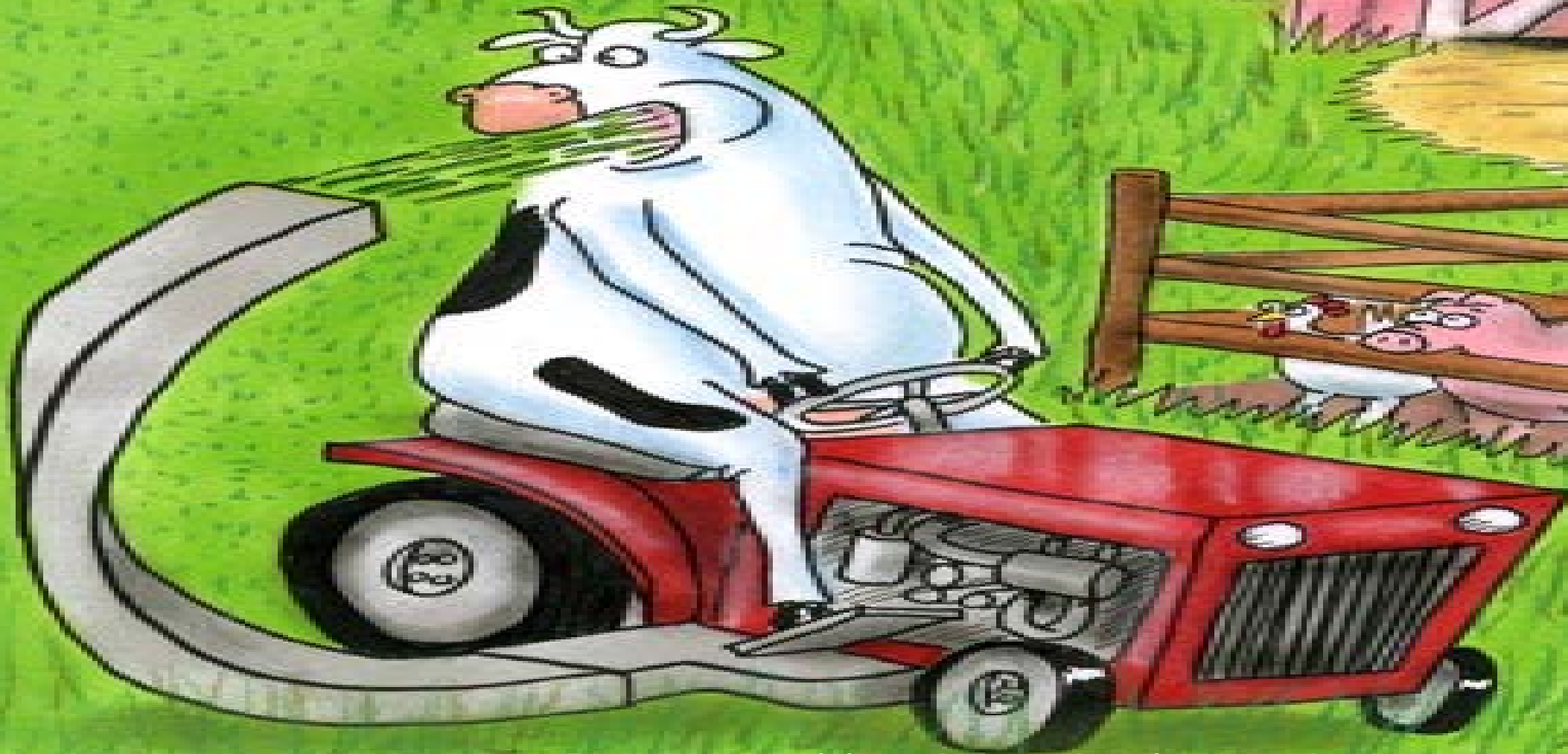


Unconventional Grazing Systems



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NRCS National Partnership Liaison

Reynolds



Unconventional Grazing Systems

What are they?

Why should producers consider them?

What are the benefits and risks?

Where to ask for help

WARNING: There is a difference between pasture and rangelands

So What Now!



Unconventional Grazing Systems

What are they?

- Generally a different or unusual management system.
 - Herding; invisible fence; ultra high density; bringing forage to the livestock; patterns of grass, forbs and brush to benefit one or more species.
- A different kind/class of livestock
 - White tailed deer, Caribou, Elk, Goats, Swine, Poultry, Other Exotics
- Multi-species grazing
 - FLERDs Combinations generally of livestock kinds based on forage eaten, markets available, profit, resource concerns or a combination of these and more
- May be one, two or all three of the items above.



Unconventional Grazing Systems

Why should producers consider them?

- ✓ Increased Profit
- ✓ Manage a resource concern (invasive plants, noxious (not toxic) plants, brush management etc.)
- ✓ Diversify operation
- ✓ Raise more salable product per acre (meat, milk, hair, wool, hunting rights, recreation, tourism, . . .)



Unconventional Grazing Systems

What are the benefits and risks?

Benefits:

- ❖ Increased profit potential in \$/Acre – more pounds of salable product (meat, milk, wool, hair, wildlife, recreation)
- ❖ May allow a niche operation with higher profit.
- ❖ Way of Life choice – sustainable, locally grown, organic, low input, etc.
- ❖ Biological solution to a biological problem – working with nature instead of against it.
- ❖ Provides additional conservation benefits – more wildlife, pollinators, clean water, soil health etc.
- ❖ Can simplify some portions of management – only one pasture to check vs. whole place

Risks:

- ❖ Increased management time, commitment and expertise needed – poor management = wreck
- ❖ Increased time investment to learn how to manage, at least initially
- ❖ May require infrastructure changes (fence and water)
- ❖ Coffee shop mafia will make fun of them and you.
- ❖ Must be feasible, acceptable and suitable for the geography and weather.
- ❖ Ensure markets, legal requirements are adequately dealt with
- ❖ May require a high initial investment.



Unconventional Grazing Systems

Where to ask for help

- ★ Producers who are already successfully doing it
- ★ State and National Center Specialists or National Discipline Leaders
- ★ Land Grant and other University Researchers
- ★ Other Federal and State Agency personnel



Unconventional Grazing Systems

There is a difference between pasture and rangelands

There is a significant difference between Pasture and Rangelands. They must not be managed in the same way.

Pasture:

- Pasture is in many ways a subset of cropland with forages planted and replanted at some interval.
- Intensively managed to maximize harvest efficiency.
- May have from 1- 6 main species
- Generally non-native plants or a mixture of native and non-native
- Assumed to be fertilized, sprayed, mowed, hayed and other things (intensively managed)
- If we screw it up – it is tilled or plowed and replanted. Replanted at some interval anyway.

Rangeland:

- ✓ Grasslands, shrublands or savannah mostly native plants.
- ✓ Ecologically managed with fire and grazing. Applying Fertilizer, Herbicides or other treatments is unusual or never done.
- ✓ Normally has more than 100 species with 10 or more comprising the majority of biomass production
- ✓ Generally always native plants or managed for native plants
- ✓ If we screw it up it may never recover and cannot be feasibly replanted or restored.



Unconventional Grazing Systems

So What!

- Solve a resource concern – maybe
- Increased profit – maybe
- Diversify operations – yes
- More work – probably (define work)
- Quality of Life options – yes
- Turning lemons into lemonade – maybe
- Niche operation options – if chosen yes



Unconventional Grazing Systems

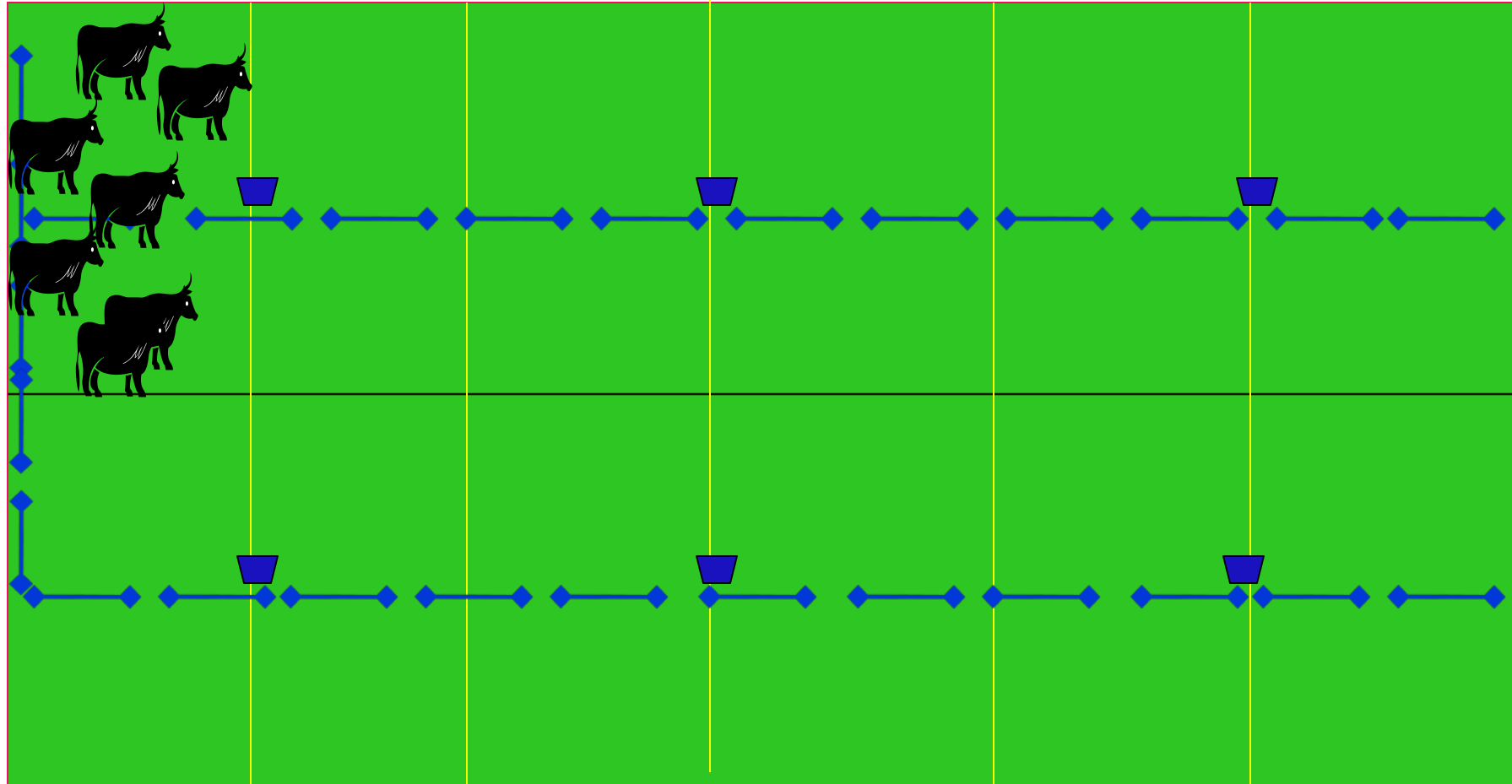
So What!

- Grazing lands provide significant ecological benefits if well managed for water quality, soil health, wildlife and much more.
- Many farm families are looking to add additional income using sustainable approaches.
- If done well these may provide opportunities for children or new farm families to enter agriculture.
- Provides an economic and ecological buffer as the landscape becomes more resilient.
- As management intensity increases there is a chance to continue conservation improvements.
- May keep fragile lands from being cropped.

Unconventional Grazing Systems

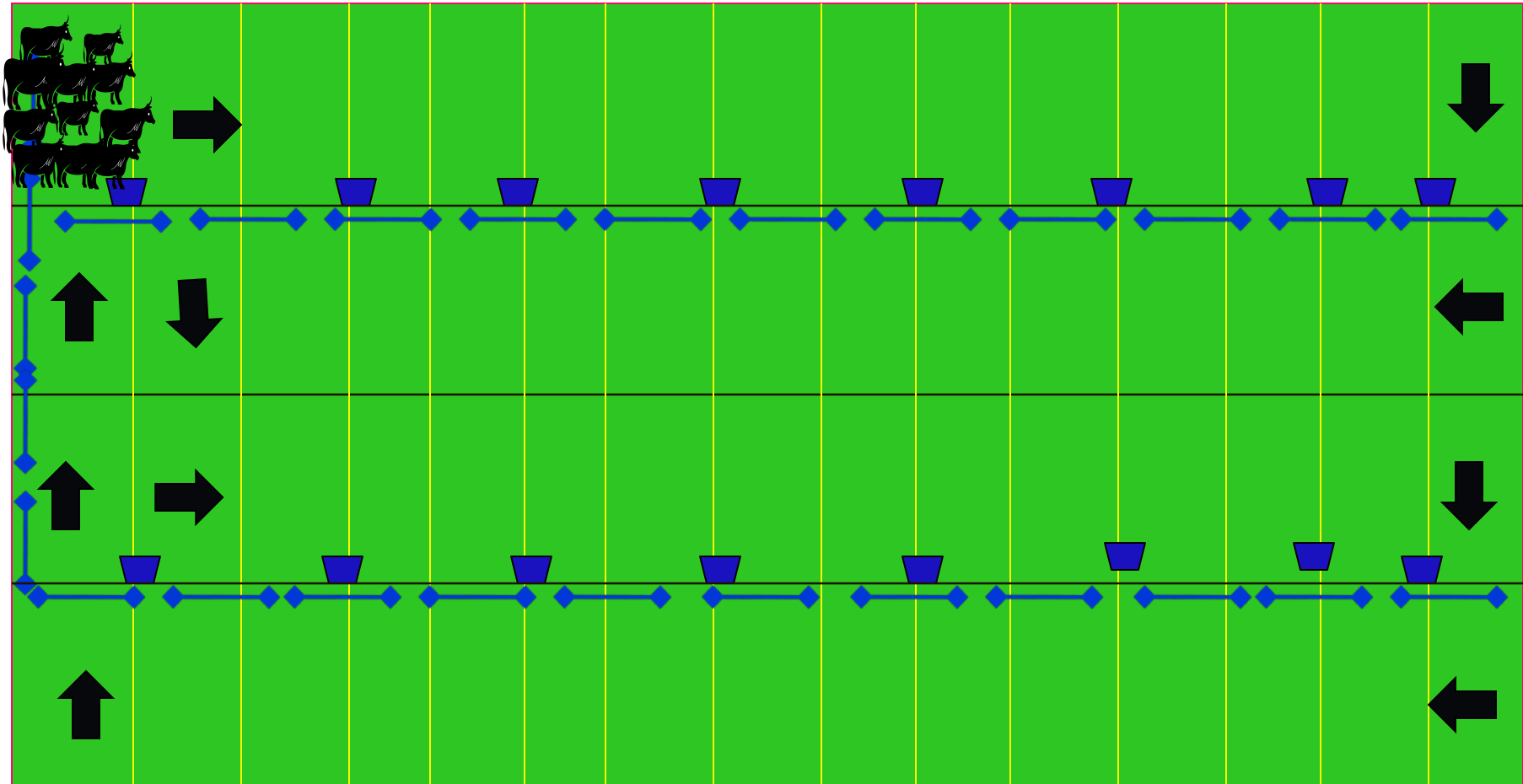
EXAMPLES Of Management Changes

Sample Design 1 perm. fence, several temp. fence, 2 pipeline, perm. Tanks; **MiG** 12 Paddocks



Black line is permanent fence. Yellow is electric temp or permanent.

3 perm. fence, several temp. fence, 2 pipelines,
perm. Or movable tanks



60 paddocks UHD

Can you see the paddock lines?





How about
now?

2 -> 52

Paddocks
About 65
Ac.

August 2008 During Drought near Princeton Iowa



2 weeks of rest.



NW Minnesota – note trees





NW Minnesota – note trees One year later with REST

White tailed Deer Grazing System Breeding Herd

Challenges:

- ✓ They are browsers not grazers
- ✓ They have full feed to maximize antler development
- ✓ Each animal is worth a large amount of money and that affects management considerations
- ✓ Balancing livestock:forage ratio

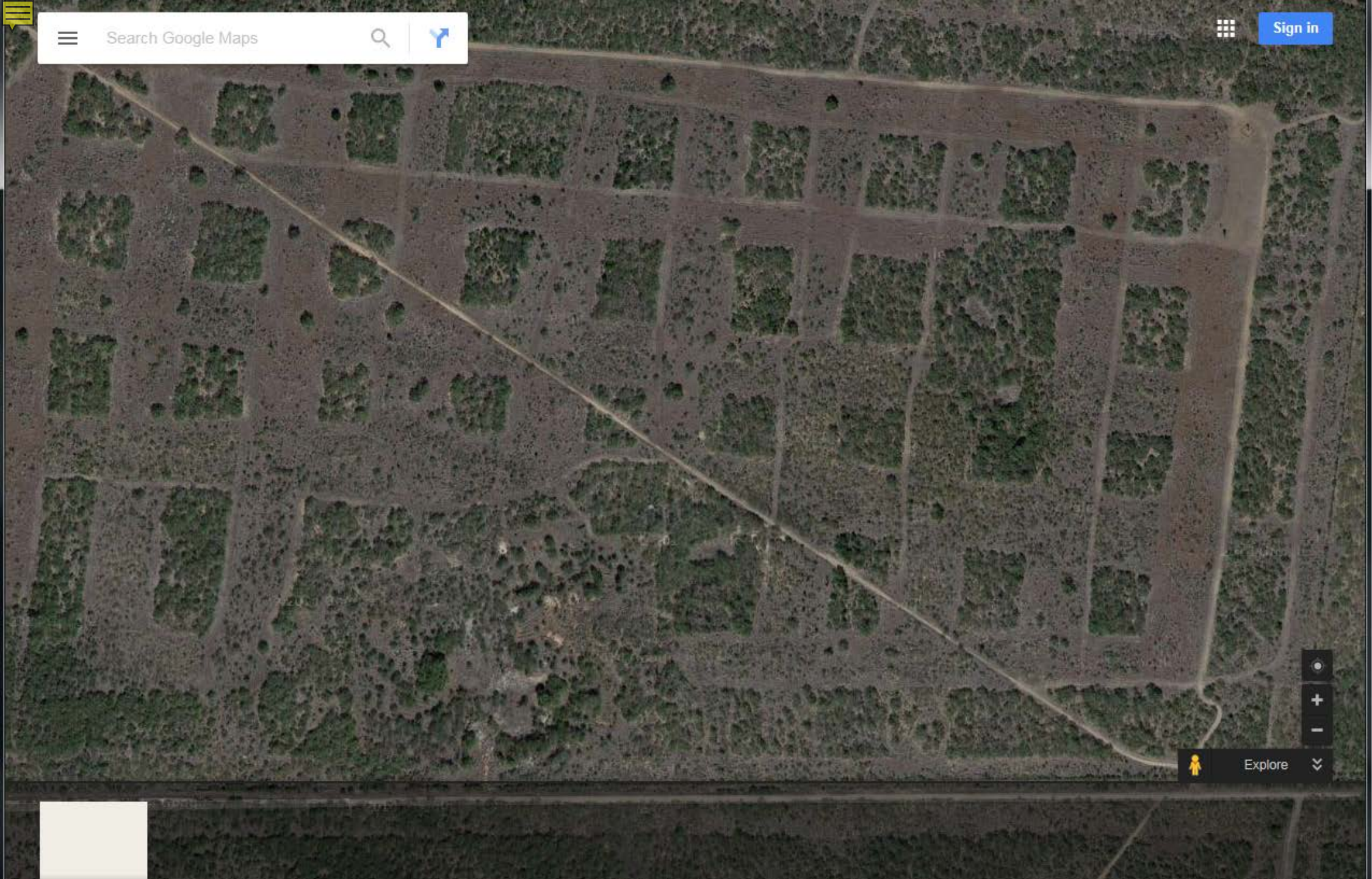


Legend

- ⊘ watertanks
- ⊕ pipelineGPS
- ✂ As Built Fence
- Consplan-t7953
- Butler Co - Townships
- Butler Co - Section Lines



Brush Patterns for Wildlife





Unconventional Grazing Systems

EXAMPLES
Of Kind/Class of
Livestock Changes



Browse Type	Crude Protein %	Neutral Detergent Fiber	Calcium	Phosphorus
Multiflora Rose	18.2	34.5	.99	.32
Black Locust	23	44	1.26	.21
Honeysuckle	16	34.5	1.21	.3
Brambles	17.1	24.5	.23	.84
Greenbriar	16.1	39.5	.6	.18
Trumpet Creeper	16.7	43.1	.42	.22
Hackberry	14	41	4	.13
Sumac	13.7	77	n/a	.2
Alfalfa, full bloom	14.0	55	1.53	.27
Fescue, tall, early bloom	20.2	62	.38	.26







Some animals are worth a great amount of money. Grazing is a great way to get out and get some neck exercise.

**Photo with
Permission of
Trophy Whitetails.net**





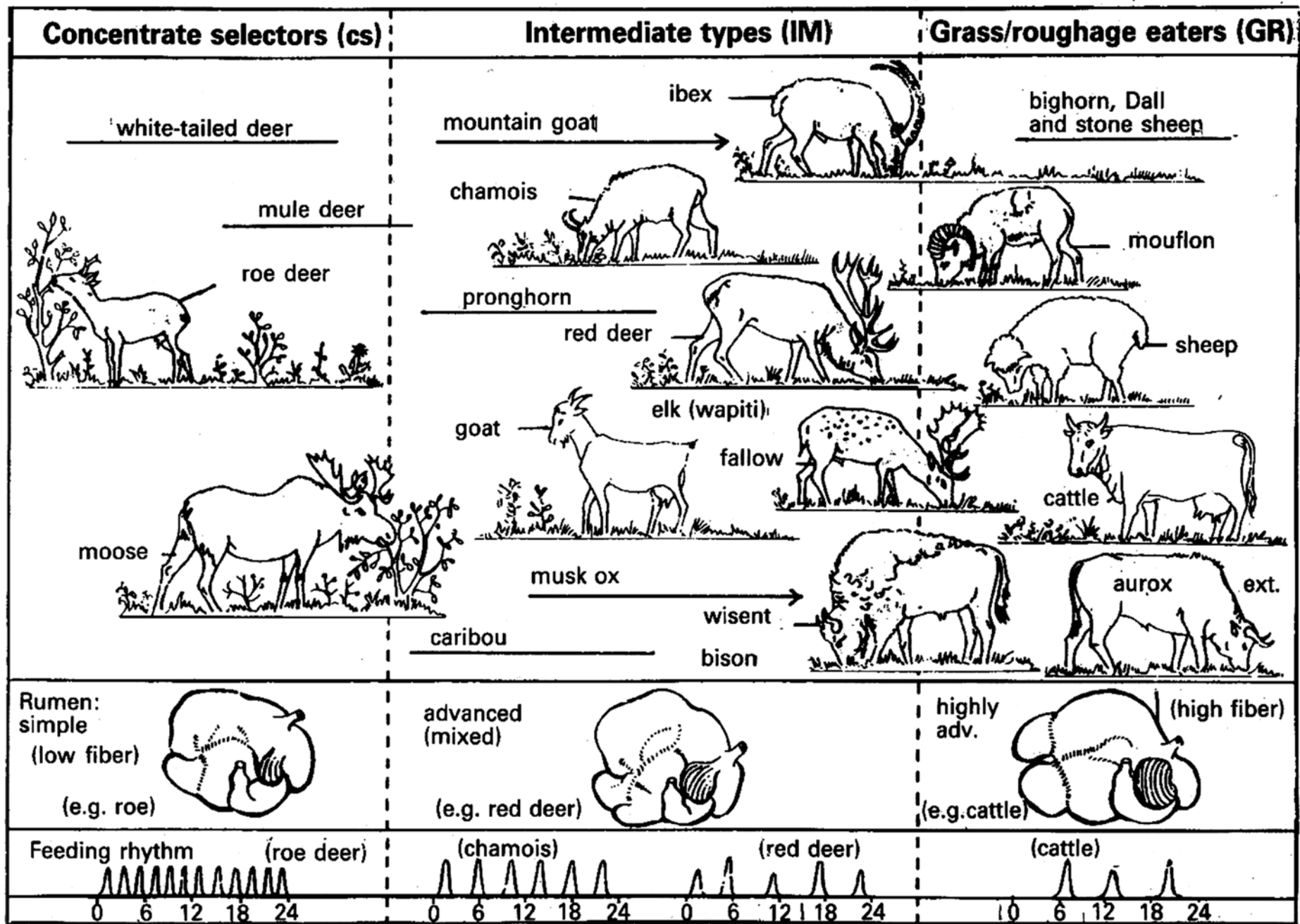


Unconventional Grazing Systems

EXAMPLES Of Multi-species

RUMINANT FEEDING TYPES

(HOFMANN)







Can and should we manage grazing system for non livestock in ways that enhance income, improve resource conservation and keep our ecosystems healthy?







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