

March 31st, 2010

KRVN Resource Report

Five, four, three, (silent two, one)...

I'm Mike Clements, Manager of the Lower Republican Natural Resources District in Alma, NE, and this is the Natural Resources Report.

Prescribed burning is a technique used to improve grasslands. It suppresses certain undesirable plants, and improves the environment for the better plants. A prescribed burn uses skillfully applied fire to remove fuels of a forest, prairie or pasture. It is done for a specific purpose, under predetermined weather conditions.

Chemical and mechanical brush control is expensive. Under certain conditions, prescribed burning is a more economical, viable and effective brush control alternative. Prescribed burning is also an effective method to improve distribution of livestock. It removes old growth from plants and reduces the animals' preference for certain plants through proper timing and intensity. Prescribed burning also can stimulate growth by reducing competition and removing excessive plant residue. When done properly, control burning produces a "cool" fire that suppresses many undesirable plants through proper timing and intensity of the burn.

Fire intensity and intervals are important. Controlled burning is done at the end of the dormant season or just as desirable grasses are beginning spring growth. Native warm-season grasses should be burned when their spring growth is one to three inches tall. Fine fuel is dormant grasses, forbs and other plants that will carry the fire. Before burning, most grassland needs to be deferred during the previous growing season long enough to produce sufficient, evenly distributed fine fuel.

A fire plan should always be worked up before the burn is begun. Factors to consider include the amount and distribution of fine fuel, desired weather conditions, preferred wind velocities, direction to burn, and the location of highways and building. After the burn, the pasture should be deferred for awhile, depending on range conditions and the producer's goals for improvement. For more information on rangeland management, contact your local NRCS office.

Thank you for listening. This is Mike Clements, keeping you informed about your natural resources.