

The Rimrock Report



The University of Arizona,
School of Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension Service



Volume 1, Issue 3

October 1 2008

Red, Blue, and Green

“Is it cold in here? Or is it just you?”

In this country radio hit by Joe Diffie, (Co-written with Danny Morrison and Kerry Kurt Phillips. 1991.) the singer asks his significant other if the temperature had actually dropped a notch or two, or if she was just letting him know he was history? OK, stay with me here, I know this sounds like a tangent, even for me. The following is an obvious over simplification, but we seem to be asking a similar question nowadays with regard to the earth’s climate. To summarize, the debate seems to boil down to (pun intended) a couple of questions: *“Is the earth really getting hotter?”* and *“Who’s fault is it?”* This issue is among those which originate as a scientific debate and then unfortunately become political. When such issues become political it often means that common sense and good judgment go by the wayside for a lot of us. Now, I am not going to attempt to discuss the science here



in this venue, this is going to be opinion, and the opinion is mine, so you can take it for whatever that may be worth to you. Like you, I have opinions and personal biases and these are based on a combination of education, experience and upbringing. So here is one to kick off this discourse: I don’t like the term “Global Warming”. I think it is an inadequate descriptor and has

become an emotionally charged word. I prefer “Climate Change” but even this term is being spun. Semantics aside, as a rangeland professional I am frequently asked by people I meet what I think about global warming, climate change, droughts, hurricanes, wildfires, ethanol... you name it. So, since I am often asked about it and since the June issue of Rangelands dealt with climate change, I thought this would be a timely topic for the Rimrock Report.

Sometimes being in the middle means you don’t really stand for anything, but I am not taking “sides” on this issue. I am actually a bit disgusted with both political sides. One

Inside this issue:

RED, BLUE, AND GREEN	2
WELCOME LISA GERBER	3
JOHN’S “PLANT OF THE WEEK”	4
THE VIEW FROM THE RIM	5
JUST ME TALKING	5

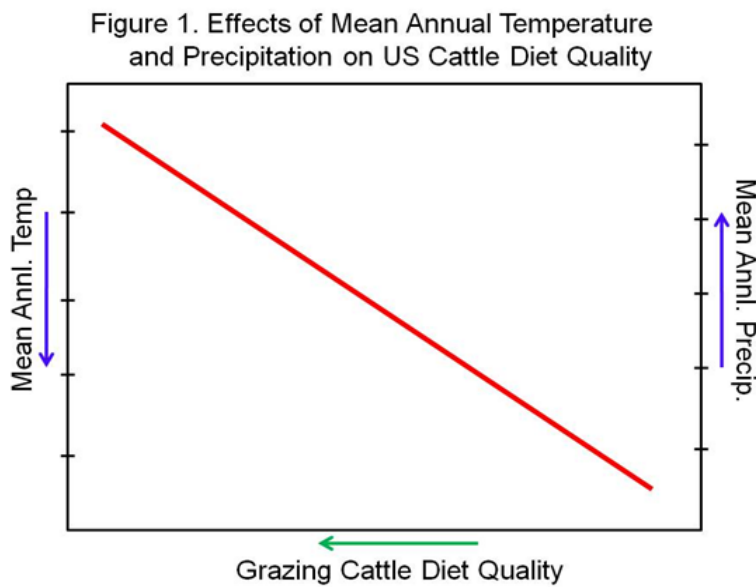
“Sometimes being in the middle means you don’t really stand for anything...”



Red, Blue, and Green, continued...

side wants to stick their head in the sand and hope it goes away, one side wants to use this as a political hammer with which to advance their agenda. I think both views are harmful and leave those of us who earn a living, directly or indirectly, from agriculture and natural resources square in the middle. I think there is credible science that the earth is absolutely getting warmer in many areas; there seems to be evidence of some cooling in others. I think that scientists who dispute the overall warming trends should be listened to and their work evaluated on its merit. I also think there are a lot of us humans on this planet, and to think we can all live here without exerting some effect is foolish. Bottom line is I think that we need to spend less time “debating” and more time working. Working on ways to deal with changes in the climate whether they be annual or multi-year droughts, La Nina, or “global warming”. Obviously, addressing the root causes of a problem are important; I am not dismissing the need for sustainable energy sources, fuel efficient vehicles, cleaner manufacturing technologies, recycling, carbon sequestration, etc... etc... What I am saying is that we in agriculture will still have to produce food, fiber, and fun in a warmer, drier climate or an ice age. We need to try and get past the politics and get down to working out the possibilities and preparing for what the future might bring.

The good news is that there are already a lot of people doing just that. I read an article in American Way magazine (in flight publication of American Airlines) a year or so ago that highlighted several entrepreneurs who had developed or promoted “green” technologies that resulted in successful businesses, i.e. they used old fashioned American ingenuity to produce an environmentally conscious good or service that was in demand, and by so doing created jobs and made money. For instance I found a company in California that produces a packing peanut-type product from recycled paper sludge. When you finish unpacking, you can use them for fertilizer in your flower beds. There is an ethanol company in Texas that uses feedlot manure to fuel the boilers in its production facilities. In addition to ethanol and distillers grains, it produces an ash that can be used for paving. Even though these may not make headlines, I am sure you can think of others.



Scientists are also not just generating data and pointing fingers. There are some budding George Washington Carvers out there devising ways to use a variety of natural products in a multitude of ways. I have been encouraged to hear environmental scientists proposing economically viable solutions to problems relayed to climate change. And to carry on the theme from the previous Rimrock Report, diverse groups are combining knowledge and abilities to produce useful and thought provoking research in this field of study. For instance, I am fortunate to be working on



Red, Blue, and Green, continued...

a paper with colleagues from the Biology and Animal Science depts. at Kansas State as well as Environmental Science at the University of Maryland. In this study, we analyzed the diet quality of grazing cattle from across the US over a 15 year period (~20,000 samples from >3000 sites in 43 eco-regions). To no surprise, generally speaking diet quality was lower in hotter drier regions and years (Figure 1). What this dataset gives us the ability to do is analyze the effects that differences in regional changes in climate may have on the ability to produce forage and livestock. We can model these changes and ask questions such as: Would a less productive Southern Great Plains be offset by a longer growing season in the upper Midwest? Would a shift to seasonal grazing with growing cattle instead of cow calf production make sense in some locales? How would these occurrences fit into the economics of beef production in the US? It is a powerful dataset and should be a very useful paper.

Red, Blue, and Green. What exactly did I mean by that title? Was it a direct reference to politics? Was it a metaphor for “agreeing to disagree” and still accomplishing a task? I’ll let you all figure that one out. Ok, I have probably belabored the point by now (which my kids accuse me of quite often...) so I will stop opining and let you go... well while I am at it, just one last opinion: Poker is not a sport.

Welcome Lisa Gerber

I would like to introduce the newest member of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension team located here in Cottonwood: Lisa Gerber. I asked Lisa to tell you all a little bit about herself.

Hi,

I’m Lisa Gerber and I’m really excited to be the new Office Specialist for the V Bar V Ranch. I moved to Cottonwood 3 years ago after spending most of my life in Southern California. The majority of my work experience has been in the medical device manufacturing industry in various Operations and Supply Chain positions. Shortly after moving to Cottonwood, I joined the Master Gardener program and earned the bulk of my certification hours working the desk at the Extension Office. Having lived in the suburbs all my life, I’m really looking forward to supporting and learning about the V Bar V Ranch, 4 H, and related Extension Center programs!



John's Plant of the "week"

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; so Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, retain that dear perfection which he owes without that title. Romeo, doff thy name, and for that name which is no part of thee take all myself.' From Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, 1594.

What *is* in a name? I have spent the better part of my first few months here at the V Bar V, on my knees trying to identify plants, while doing transects. Most plants have common names. Blue grama is the same blue grama that grows in North Dakota. I know a globemallow that grows in North Dakota, but it is really different than the globemallow that grows here, but close enough to be able to identify. Now pine dropseed and black dropseed and some of the muhly grasses are not common to me. Add to this a year of frequent precipitation and there is soon an abundant number of annual forbs and grasses growing over and above what might be common. So many names to learn.

One plant in particular has been difficult to identify. I have come across this plant again and again, since the end of June. I began to fondly call it Unknown #16. Yes, there were 15 before it. Most of the previous unknown plants I was able to identify or they were not found as frequently. Even though its name is Unknown #16, I know it well. I have tried to be patient, with full knowledge that this plant would eventually flower (flowering plants are easier to identify). It just seemed to be such a slow growing plant, each week I would look for the sign of flower buds, but each time nothing would appear. Finally, it is time. It is now in full bloom.

An extension agent that has been in Arizona some years longer than I, said, "That is Goldeneye, there will be lots of those this year." Well, I already knew there were lots, but it's name is Goldeneye? Great, now I have a name to go with the plant, but being a plant person I really want to know the scientific name, you know the binomial nomenclature. So I pull my Arizona Flora off the shelf and flip to the Index and there it is Goldeneye page 900. On page 900 I learn that it is in the *Viguiera* genera and there are 8 species listed. I dive right into the key (because now I have a flower) and number one of the key asks about the pappus on the achenes. Argh! To those unfamiliar, that means what does the seed look like? I get the microscope out and look at the 2-3mm immature seed to determine if it has hairs or not. Four steps in the key later I have my answer, *Viguiera annua*, one of three annual *Viguiera* species in Arizona. Here is a picture of Unknown #16, aka Goldeneye, aka *Viguiera annua*. But wait, I decided to look on the USDA plants database and they call it *Heliomeris longifolia* (B.L. Rob. & Greenm.) Cockerell var. *annua* (M.E. Jones) Yates longleaf false goldeneye. So, while you are driving around central and northern Arizona the next few weeks, enjoy the Goldeneye covered hill-sides. and ponder this, what *is* in a name?





The view from the Rim

From the “*I guess it all depends on your perspective*” department:

A young preacher moved to town and soon tried to start up a friendship with a cranky old rancher who lived by himself at the end of a dirt road. One Sunday afternoon the preacher went out to see the old man. The rancher invited him to sit on the porch and have a glass of iced tea. The old man wasn't much on conversation so the preacher asked about the weather, cattle prices, how the grass was doing, etc... He finally remarked as he looked out over the straight tight fences, painted barns and green pastures, “*Well sir, this is sure a fine place that you and God have here!*” To which the rancher replied, “*Yeah, you should have seen it when God had it by himself...*”

anonymous

**The University of Arizona
School of Natural Resources
V-V Ranch
2657 S Village Dr
Cottonwood, AZ 86326**

**Phone: 928-646-9113 x18
Fax: 928-646-9108
Cell: 928-821-3222
E-mail: dougt@cals.arizona.edu
Web: <http://cals.arizona.edu/aes/vbarv/>
Note: Please email me if you would like to be added to the “mailing” list for this newsletter.**

Just me talking...



Well, it has been a good monsoon for a lot of us here in central Arizona, but I guess typically spotty. Based on Yavapai County rain gauges on or near the V bar V, as of late September we have had about 25-30 % above the previous 8 years average precipitation on the western, lower elevation part of the ranch and about 6% above on the eastern, higher elevation end. Again, this depends on exactly where you are; we have some tanks that did not catch water and some places where the grass is “stirrup high”. The Arizona Section SRM Summer meeting in August was outstanding. The planning committee, the local hosts, and the UA/ASU students combined for a fun and educational couple of days. The chuckwagon dinner alone was well worth the trip. Even the music was “aromatic” (you had to be there). I particularly enjoyed the music; getting to play some old tunes with new friends and a certain 19 year-old before he headed back to college was priceless. About 200 people turned out for the annual Ranch Explorers Day at the V Bar V, also in August, to learn about technology in ranching and range management. Football, fall monitoring, and cow works are underway. Deer and elk hunters are out in force. So I guess all in all, things are rolling right along. I got to spend a day at the ranch recently working with a group of Mingus Union HS FFA students building another round of wildlife escape ramps. If you give 10 teenage boys each a can of spray paint in green, grey, and brown what do you get? ...Camo. But I'll bet camo escape ramps will work just as well as solid colors, and the guys had a large time.



Till next time... Doug