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32 Amazing Grazing webinar and workshop series improves producers understanding of pasture ecology.

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Abstract: Grassland stewards are seeking a better understanding of the complex interactions occurring in their pastures. Information is readily available to assist producers but each farm provides its own unique challenges and opportunities. A diverse scope of knowledge and skills are required to build resilient grazing systems. To address this need Amazing Grazing conducted a webinar series (April 2023) followed by on-farm workshops in July/August 2023. Webinars were held on consecutive Wednesday evenings with 237 average number of registered attendees and 78 average number of actual participants. Topics covered during the first webinar were pasture ecology basics, plant growth principles, livestock forage demand and grazing management principles. The following week covered pasture layout and design, pasture renovation techniques and pasture soil health concepts. The final evening featured topics on electric fence basics, grazing systems for horses and small ruminants and a synopsis. NC Extension Livestock Agents assisted in the sight selection and execution of workshops (n = 8) that were held on working farms. These events provide the opportunity for hands-on instruction to demonstrate the concepts covered in the webinar series. Total workshop registration was 196, with 148 evaluations completed. Participants were 72% farmers, 1% extension agents, 10% Soil and Water Conservation District Employee, 7% NRCS employee and 10% other. The total number of pasture hectares grazed by participants was 3,217 with 1,257 ha as hay. Livestock inventories for attendees were 4,323 beef cattle, 1,366 sheep, 455 goats and 51 horses. Attendees were asked about their pre- and post-workshop knowledge (1 = Very Low; 5 = Very High) of topics presented. Participants indicated a knowledge gain (average pre = 2.78 and post = 3.91) in Concepts of Pastureland Ecology, Adaptive Management, Managing Nutrient Distribution, Pasture Renovation, Temporary Electric Fence, Troubleshooting Electric Fence and Pasture Plant Identification. Workshop impact was determined by asking attendees their post workshop intentions regarding management practices (1 = No, 2 = Maybe, 3 = Yes, 4 = Already Doing). Attendees plan to spending more time walking pasture to determine plant condition, learn more about soil, plant, animal and human interactions, increase use of

temporary electric fence and adopt an adaptive management style (average score = 3.91). Continued workshop participation indicates the demand for hands-on education in these areas and that the on-farm format is an effective teaching environment.

Keywords: on-farm workshop, pasture ecology, adaptive grazing