

Ohio Pastures for Profit Online

Gelley, C.¹, Lyon, E.¹, Bender, D.², Boyles, S.¹, Estadt, M.¹, Finney, C.³, Gahler, A.¹, Hartschuh, J.¹, Hendershot, B.², Holden, A.¹, Jagger, C.¹, Lima, D.¹, Little, C.¹, Morris, J.¹, Penrose, C.¹, Purdin, R.¹, Ruff, G.¹, Sulc, M.¹, Turner, C.¹, Wilson, G.², Campbell, B.¹, Joyce, M.⁴, Wiseman, T.¹

¹The Ohio State University, ²Ohio Forage and Grassland Council, ³USDA- Natural Resource Conservation Service, ⁴Ohio Department of Agriculture

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Abstract: The Pastures for Profit program is an established course created through a collaboration between Ohio State University Extension, Central State University, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council. In 2021, due to COVID-19, the Pastures for Profit curriculum was adapted to a virtual classroom setting and was offered again in 2022. The virtual experience consisted of three live webinars pairing with corresponding modules in Scarlet Canvas. Enrolled students were also mailed traditional course materials for personal use. Module content was newly developed and compiled to compliment the traditional materials and included videos, quizzes, additional presentations, and technical resources. The course materials were organized and taught by a team of over 50 collaborators. During the three live webinars, nearly 20 speakers presented on topics including the basics of grazing, plant and animal science, and grazing plans. A total of 168 people enrolled in Scarlet Canvas in the two-year time frame from over 15 states and included producers, educators, technical service providers, and government agency staff. Each live session was recorded and made available to the class for access at their convenience. Those who completed the course obtained a signed certificate of completion. This platform allowed for an expanded audience reach than in the past.

Introduction: Due to COVID-19 and in-person event restrictions in place during 2020 outreach methods for education drastically changed. The goal of the online Pastures for Profit course was to continue to deliver grazing education to Ohioans and build from the original Pastures for Profit curriculum through the addition of videos, quizzes, technical resources and online networking sessions. The curriculum was updated and adapted from a tradition in-person classroom model to a version designed for a hybrid classroom setting. Updates included converting the printed course manual into a digital document, converting content from the manual into modules within the virtual course, condensing the traditional eight hours of lecture materials into three live webinars offered through Zoom, and when pandemic restrictions lifted, offering in-person pasture walks that were synergistic with the class. The online course content designed in Scarlet Canvas was divided into modules corresponding to chapters offered in the manual with additional videos, resources and quizzes built in. The goal of the course was to continue to deliver grazing education to Ohioans. After a successful year of offering the course in 2021, the course opened again for enrollment in 2022.

Course Collaborator Recruitment: Members of The Ohio State University Integrated Forage Management Team met with the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council Board and determined that in order to continue providing necessary information on sustainable livestock and forage farming practices converting the Pastures for Profit course into a completely virtual course was imperative. The team then reached out to other faculty and staff within the Ohio State system, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture to recruit collaborators to work on revising the teaching materials and coordinating potential pasture walks during the summer. Once assembled, the group met regularly throughout 2020 on revisions and prepared the course for launch in January 2021. The teaching team grew with new collaborators to the course in 2022.

Student Recruitment: Once the Pastures for Profit virtual course was ready for launch, the Integrated Forage Management Team and the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council publicized announcements about the course through mailings, newspapers, radio, video, email, and social media to reach the state's grazing management audience. A course fee of \$50 was required for registration and completed online through the university. The course fee would cover all virtual content of the course and a digital copy of the course manual on a USB drive. Printed copies of the revised course manual were also available. In 2021, 132 students registered for the online course, with 99 participants choosing to purchase a hard copy of the course manual in addition to the online content. In 2022, 36 students registered for the course, all of which elected for digital copies of the course manual. The audience of the course in both years went beyond the boundaries of Ohio, with participants from over twelve other states.

Course Design: The learning system management system used by The Ohio State University is Scarlet Canvas. All virtual content for the course was accessible through this platform. Three live webinars, each lasting 90 minutes each, were offered with presentations by university faculty, staff, and members of the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council Board. Webinar topics focused on three main themes, getting started grazing, the science of grazing, and meeting grazing goals. To match the chapters of the course manual, the online course had paired learning modules for students to progress through, with a knowledge check at the end of each module. Once all modules were complete, the participant would be able to print a certificate of completion which could be a helpful aid when completing a pasture management plan and applying for farm improvement assistance programs.

Participation Summary: In 2021, the average time participants spent on Scarlet Canvas navigating the course averaged nearly 13 hours per participant. Webinar attendance was at or above 60% for each webinar. Participation statistics for 2022 participation is still being monitored. In addition to the webinars and the virtual course on Scarlet Canvas, participants were invited to social hours with the teaching team to discuss content not covered in the live webinars. In 2021, three successful pasture walks were organized by the Pastures for Profit planning committee with an average of 30 participants at each walk. Pasture walks were located in central Ohio to allow for the greatest likelihood that most of the participants could attend. In 2022, the course promoted and supported any pasture walk that an collaborative entity was

holding to the course participants, which expanded the potential for registered students to attend an in-person pasture walk event.

Future Course Development: When the second year of the class concludes on December 31, 2022, a full course evaluation will be analyzed. The course evaluation will address knowledge gained through the course and suggestions for improving the methodology of course delivery. The team expects to continue offering the course online on a yearly or alternating year basis to continue providing education to the grazing community. A hybrid model for teaching will also be developed to capitalize on the benefits of both the virtual portions of the course and in-person classroom and field experiences on a local scale. The progress and revisions of the course will continue to be coordinated by the collaborative team including the OSU Integrated Forage Management Team, Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council, USDA NRCS, and Ohio Department of Agriculture.