

A Hands-on Workshop to Increase Grazing Management Practices in Alabama

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Introduction

The Alabama Grazing Academy is a hands-on workshop focused on assisting livestock producers with intensive grassland management. From November 2018 to September 2019, three workshops were conducted at various locations throughout Alabama. These included the Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center (North Alabama), the Chilton Research and Education Center (Central Alabama), and a producer farm in Escambia County (South Alabama). A total of 65 producers attended the workshops, 77% of participants being male and 23% being female. Participants returned 62% of workshop evaluations (40 evaluations were returned). The workshops were 1.5 days (North Alabama) or 1 day (Central and South Alabama). The program was shortened after participants in the first field day (North Alabama) indicated they preferred a 1-day class. Topics of the workshops included: forage species and diversity, grazing management, soil structure and fertility, temporary fencing, and forage utilization and efficiency.

Objectives

Educate producers on:

- 1) Year-round grazing management
- 2) Calculation of stocking rates
- 3) Forage Physiology
- 4) Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Insurance
- 5) Soil Fertility and Health
- 6) Temporary Electric Fencing

Program Methods

A 1.5 or 1-day conference was conducted to assist producers with year-round grazing management through presentations, hands-on demonstrations, and field tours.

A post-program survey was conducted using a paper-based survey to evaluate program usefulness, change in action, and conditions as a result of concepts highlighted in this conference.

Program Results

Table 1. Impact of the Alabama Grazing Academy

Item	Program Impact
Number of Participants	65
Number of Cattle Impacted	Total: 2,245 Average: 56
Number of Acres Impacted	Total: 5,946 Average: 149

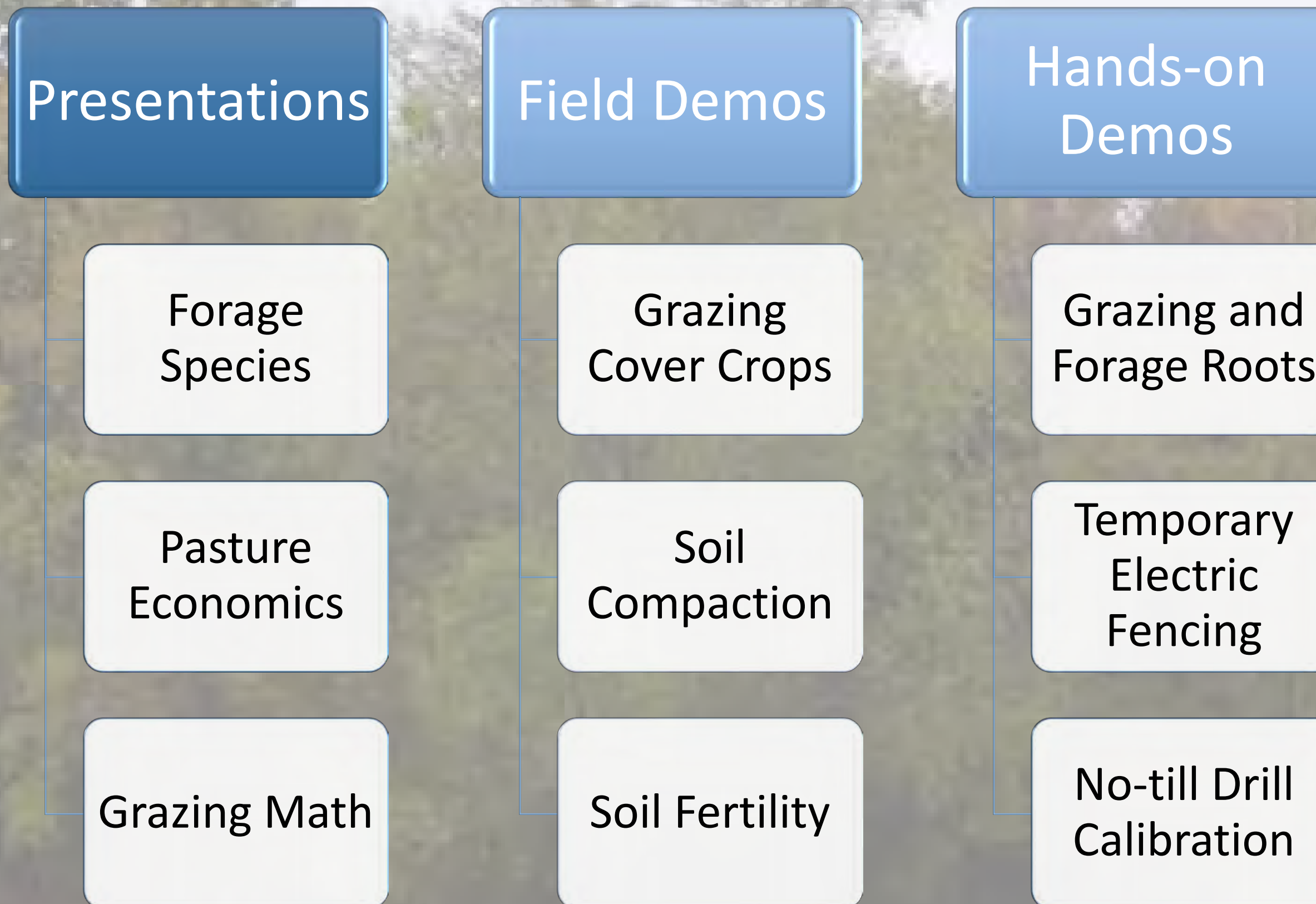
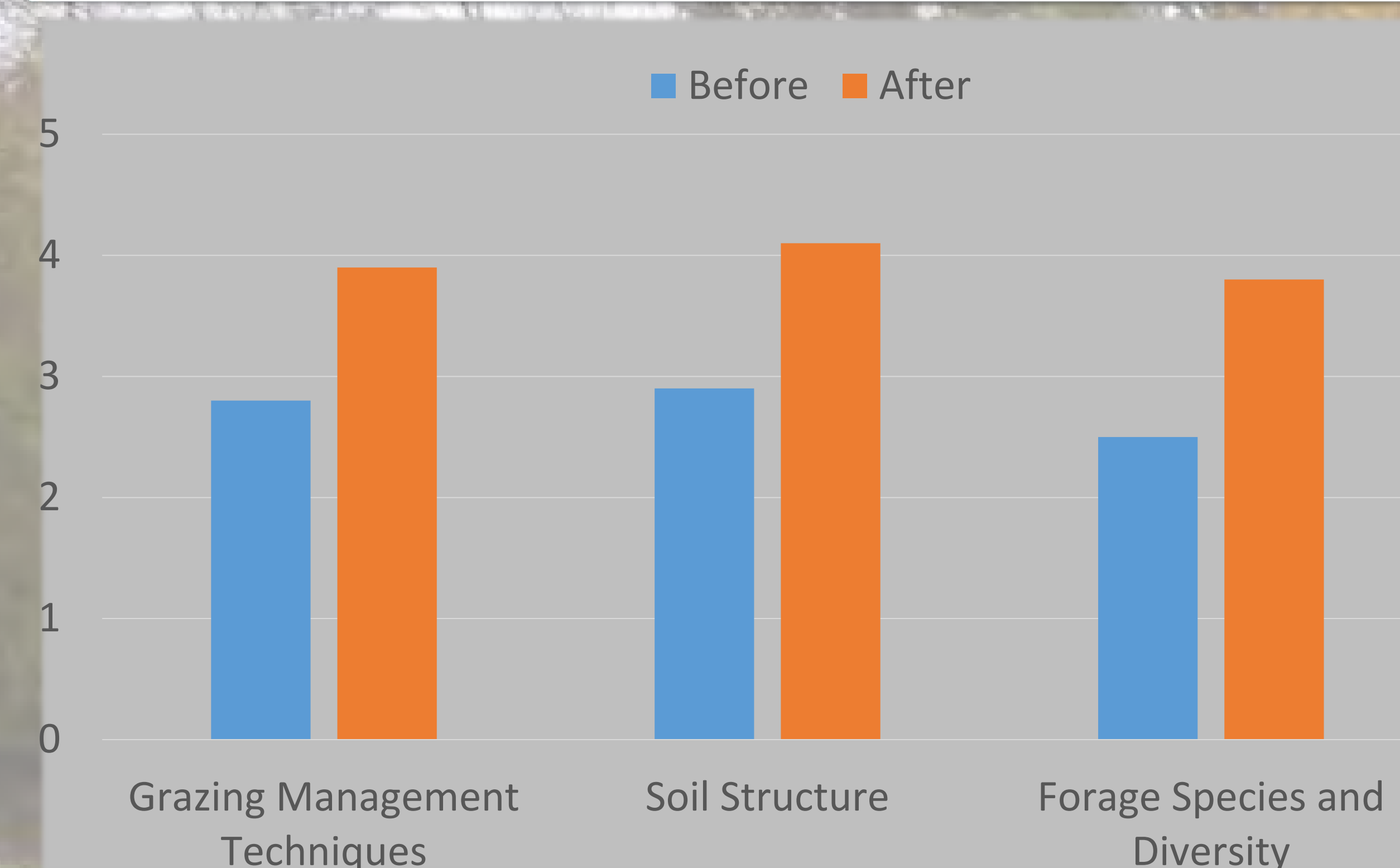


Figure 2. Change in knowledge ($P < 0.0001$) for participants of the Alabama Grazing Academy ($n = 25$).



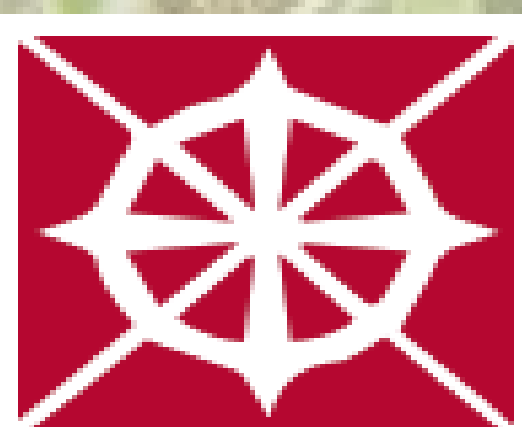
Key Results and Conclusions

- 62% of evaluations were returned ($n = 40$)
- The average herd size of the participants was larger than the state average herd size (25 head/farm).
- The total economic impact indicated by the participants was \$22,624,530
- This is an average \$73,805 in savings per farm from attending them meeting.
- Results indicate that for producers already participating in some type of grazing management program, programs should still be provided regarding forage species and variety options, grazing management, and soil management.



Figure 1. Diversified educational programming by combing field tours and in-classroom learning increase knowledge transfer.

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