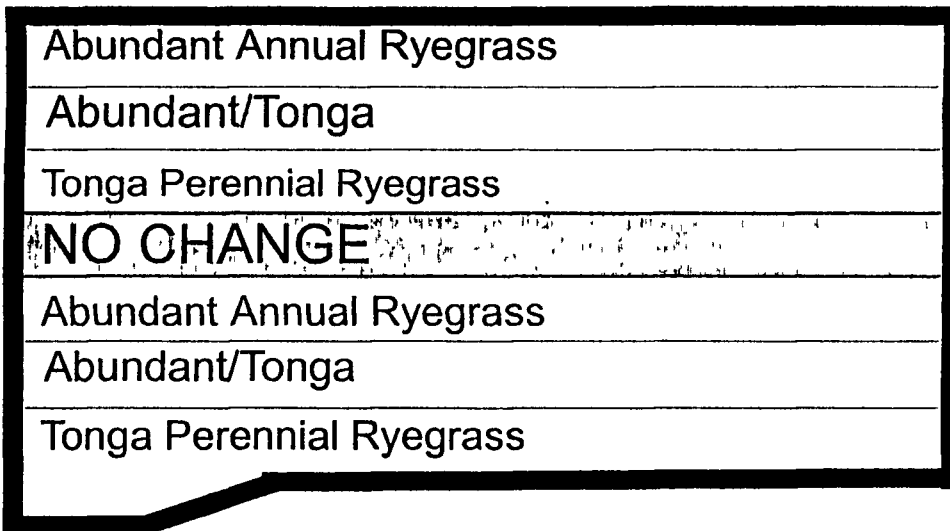


(Continued from Page 18)

DIAGRAM 2 - RUPERT RANCH



Here's another example. If the mix is down in yield mid-summer, and the fescue plots are noticeably exceeding the other plots, Martin will know that if he is to increase summer yields he may need to plant more fescue. We haven't even addressed the possible evaluations of nitrogen uptake from manure water or a host of other conclusions these trials will give Martin. But you get the picture. A simple mix, plus a few plots of the individual components is an easy source to invaluable information for the VanBeeks.

By the way, I was out at Martin's the second week of March. I have never seen his dairy look so pretty as it does now. And to think it will look so nice for years.

The Rupert Ranch

My small hobby farm is host to a small but growing herd of dairy goats. Past fall, I wanted to experiment with overseeding to learn more about the benefits of annual tetraploids vs. perennial tetraploids. I divided one acre into six strips and overseeded as shown in Diagram 2.

Cost? Three bags of seed and a couple hours on a Saturday.

Benefits? First, I added seed — seed that will turn into grass, grass which will improve my pasture density and available feed. (By the way, this is of utmost non-research importance, because my two daughters have almost got me convinced to buy a horse . . . and you know what *they do* to pastures!)

Second, I will learn some important answers to questions such as:

- How much faster will annual grow compared to perennial?

- How much longer will perennial last than annual?

- Will the combination of the two be better than either individually?

- Will the animals prefer one over the other?

- Did overseeding pay for itself, or should I have done nothing at all?

Look at that last question again. It is a very important question. Always, always keep some of your old pasture around to compare with the new. By evaluating the old to the new you will

be able to determine a great deal more than if you completely revamp the old.

Third, I committed myself mentally to checking out my pasture more often. Over and over again, I hear profitable grazers reminding one another to get out and walk their fields. The direct benefits of this are enormous and usually obvious.

Well, in addition to the great direct value of seeing how your pastures are performing, I have discovered that such attention will result in what I refer to as "hidden benefits." For instance, the day I started writing this article, I went out and examined my plots. While staring at my grass, one of my momma goats stole my attention. Soon, I found myself on all fours watching her vigorously graze on spring grass. Know what I discovered? I discovered that she can really chomp up a storm! Of course, while I was down on all four, her 10-day-old kid kept trying to jump on my back!

But then, another distraction and the greatest discovery of the day: I found a new place to hang a tree swing for my girls. Yes, these are but a few of the hidden benefits yet to be discovered by many a farmer who has checked out of the pasture rather than checking out the pasture!

(Turn to Page 21)

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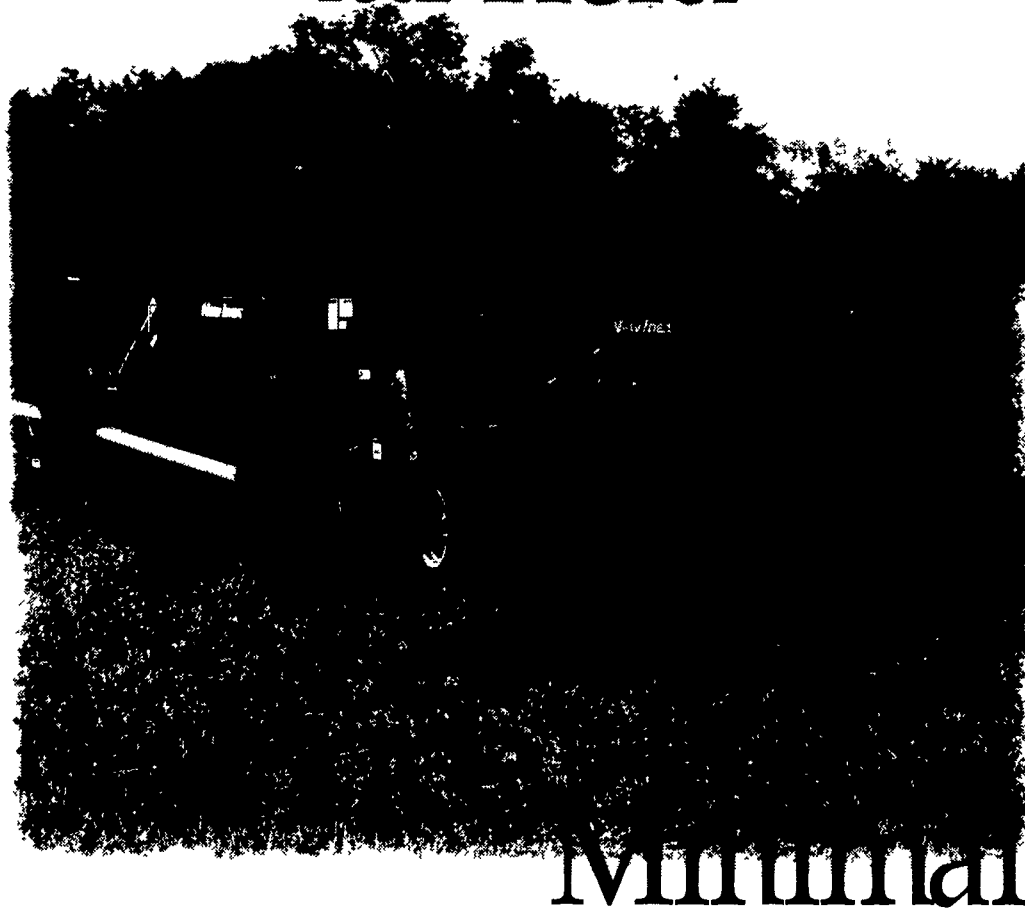
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