

# KGLC 2008 Range Schools

## Highlights

### 2008 Range Schools Grow!

KGLC hosted 54 attendees at the 2008 range schools, up by almost 20 percent from 2007 school attendance. The adult schools were held at White Memorial Camp near Council Grove on August 12-14, and the second school was held at Camp Aldrich near Claflin on August 19-21. The east school had 43 students and the west had 11 students who spent their time in the field, touring, and in the classroom. Days were filled from daylight to dark with plant identification, presentations, and hands-on instruction such as learning three separate techniques for measuring and monitoring the health of your grazing lands.

Area ranchers **Dr. John Bradley**, Lawrence, and **Bill Sproul**, Sedan, led specific discussions as did **Dale Kirkham**, Eureka, who facilitated a discussion as well as making a presentation on the history of fire and the development of the prairie ecosystem. **Jim Hoy**, Emporia, presented on the value and consideration of placing your ranch into a conservation easement.

The East school was also privileged to tour the Tall Grass National Prairie Preserve near Strong City to see what the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy are implementing - particularly patch burning - to improve the prairie resources on the land. **Kristen Hase**, NPS, and **Brian Obermeyer**, TNC, spoke during the day. The West school attendees enjoyed hearing from **Ted Alexander**, Sun City, who discussed grazing management principles and he led a discussion regarding management objectives and goals. **Virgil Huseman**, Ellsworth, talked about grazing management concepts in a historical perspective. Special guest speakers included **Justin** and **Dana Thomas**, Institute of Botanical Training, Salem, Missouri; and **Jeff Hansen**, KS Native Plant Society, Lawrence. Other presenters included **David Kraft**, USDA NRCS; **Dr. Walt Fick**, K-State Agronomy; **Doug Spencer**, NRCS; **Dr. KC Olson** and **Nancy Sproul**, K-State Animal Science, and **Jeff Davidson**, Greenwood County Extension.



Above: Students at the east school listen to **Dale Kirkham** cover the evolution of the prairie under fire; Middle: **Jeff Davidson**, works with students on plant identification; Lower: **Alan Larson** listens as **David Kraft** illustrates how to use the grazing stick to measure and monitor the health of your pastures.

*All photos by Tim Christian, KGLC*



Above left, then clockwise: **Justin Thomas**, Botanical Institute of Training, discusses plant ecology in the classroom; **Dr Walt Fick** shows how to complete the step-point method of measuring and monitoring; **Jim Lewis**, Yates Center rancher, completes his plant identification test on the last morning; **Nicole Small**, Neodesha, follows David Kraft's instruction on use the grazing stick; and **Brian Obermeyer**, discusses The Nature Conservancy management on the Tall Grass National Prairie Preserve, particularly patch burning.

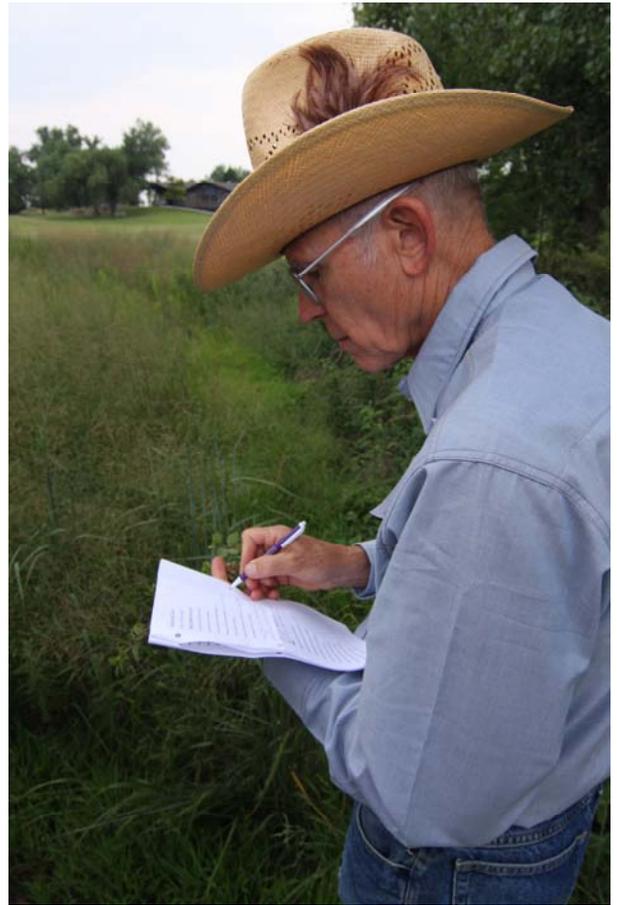




Left: Finalists in the 2008 east school plant identification test were (from left): **Travis Kraft**, student, Manhattan; **Greg Lyon**, Lyon County CD, Emporia; **Frank Hull**, KDWP, Toronto; **Calla Jarboe**, student, Holton; and **Lowell Anderson**, ranch hand, Williamsburg. The culmination of each school is the exam that covers 25-35 plants that students have been exposed to over the course of the 3 days. Winners receive plant identification guide books. Below (and clockwise): **David Kraft**, NRCS, and **Ken Sherraden**, KGLC, provide helpful tips on plant identity at the west school held in the sand hills at Camp Aldrich; **Kraft** continues his plant teaching in an evening session; **Dr. Walt Fick**, K-State, also briefs attendees on the fine points of identifying grasses common to the mid-grass region.



A solid understanding of the plants you are managing on your ranch will give you insights on the impacts of your management decisions - stocking rates, duration of grazing, and other factors that can maintain and improve plant productivity, or weaken them and reduce your long-term productivity creating a less profitable future.



While many of these photos depict plant id, a greater deal of time is spent helping students understand the principles of range management, understanding the livestock/wildlife interface on Kansas rangelands, specific management and structural practices that help solve resource problems, and how to measure and monitor to determine what you have left, what you have used, and the opportunities for improvement. Photos above from left, then clockwise: **Trisha Janssen**, rancher, Geneseo, determines the plant she is looking at for the test; **Wallace Webber**, rancher, Dorrance, surmises his plant's name at the west school; **Doug Spencer**, NRCS, leads a discussion on rangeland sites, soils, and other critical factors needed to mix a rangeland recipe for success; **Chris Ostmeyer**, consultant, Derby, and **Greg Bauer**, NRCS, Great Bend, work the plant test at the west school.