

## She Teaches Cows To Eat Noxious Weeds

Why spend money on herbicide when you can teach your cattle to eat the weeds? Kathy Voth, owner of Livestock for Landscapes, has a cow-coaching program that will have your cows eating Canadian thistle and other noxious weeds in 10 days or your money back.

"When your cows learn to eat the weeds in pastures, you could gain as much as 43 percent more forage," says Voth. "When cows eat the weeds, you eliminate the expense of weed control and have more feed at no additional cost. Cows gain weight more rapidly on the high protein weeds so you'll raise more cows more cheaply, and you'll make more money doing it."

Voth has researched and worked with livestock as a land management tool for more than a decade. Using what she learned, she invented a process for teaching cows to eat weeds and other non-traditional forages.

Voth has written a book on the subject and produced multiple DVD's as well. She conducts workshops and presentations, as well as personalized coaching for producers interested in training their cows to eat weeds. Her blog, [www.thetaoofcow.com](http://www.thetaoofcow.com), is full of experiences she has had working with producers and their cows. It also covers many questions she gets, such as concerns about toxic weeds.

Chris Christiaens, Montana Farmers Union, set up a demonstration program in 2011 using Voth's technique. He taught groups of cattle on three different ranches to eat thistle and other weeds.

"We tried it with one group of 70 head on pasture and two smaller groups of 10 and 15

each in pens," says Christiaens. "It worked best with the penned groups. When we turned them out with the rest of their herds, the other cows saw them eating thistle, and some of them started eating it too."

The key to the program was to condition the cattle to eat different feeds, both in taste and texture, for several days. This can be flaked, pelleted or cubed feeds. On the fifth day, Christiaens introduced Canada thistle with hay and later by itself.

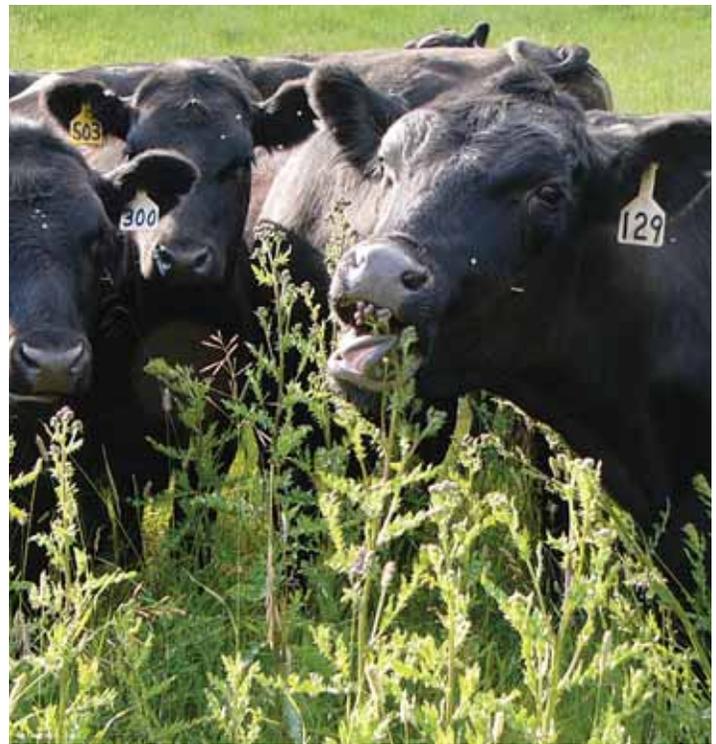
"After the fifth day of feeding, we turned them out into the pasture," he recalls. "They walked through, eating the tips of the thistle at first, then the leaves. Later they came back and ate the stem down to three to four inches in height. It doesn't kill the thistle, but it guarantees no seed will be produced."

Voth does personal on-site training at \$800 a day. She also offers a remote coaching program for \$570. It includes her book and a DVD as well as personal services, including a training recipe for what and how much to feed each day and when to feed it. She contacts a local feed store to find out what's available and tailors the program accordingly.

Voth estimates feed costs for 50 head at around \$200. Instructions include when and how much of the target weed to gather, how to mix weeds with the training feed, what to expect with the trained cows and how to move them back to pasture.

"I send off the plan and set up a time to review the plan, answer questions and make any needed changes," says Voth.

Though Voth is available to clients to answer questions by phone every day, she seldom gets more than a few calls. "The



Kathy Voth teaches cows how to eat Canadian thistle and other noxious weeds. "You get more feed at no additional cost," she says.

calls are more about folks needing a little reassurance they are on the right track," she says.

Her book and DVD are also available by themselves on her website. A video on Voth's program can be seen at [www.farmshow.com](http://www.farmshow.com).

While Christiaens had best results with smaller groups, Voth has trained groups as

large as 110 cow/calf pairs. She has worked with training in dry lots and on pasture, as well as with cattle of all ages and with bison.

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## Fighting Fires With Goats

Kathy Voth, Livestock for Landscapes, knows how to use goats to fight fires. Her CD handbook "Goats For Firesafe Homes in Wildland Areas" contains practically everything you need to know about goats, fire and prescribed grazing.

"It's the result of 6 years of research on the use of goats for reducing fire danger," says Voth. "We wanted to give Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managers information to set up grazing for fire control."

Voth was with the BLM in 1994 when a bad fire killed 14 firefighters in Utah where she worked. While helping families and the local community build a memorial trail, she began thinking about ways to reduce the risk to firefighters in wilderness areas. She and a fire reduction expert set up a firebreak grazing trial using goats on a nearby National Guard base. Ironically, a grass fire started during the grazing trial.

"It burned right up to the pens and stopped," recalls Voth. "It worked so well that the base commander still keeps goats for fire

control."

Voth says one of the keys to using goats in fire prevention is to let them do the work. In one research trial, local firefighters cut trees and brush to speed the process. In a second plot, the goats did all the work.

"When a fire came through, it stopped where the goats had mob grazed but kept burning where the firemen had worked," says Voth. "The goats had trampled the dead vegetation into the ground."

The instruction handbook/CD, which she sells for \$25 plus S&H, covers setting up firebreaks, how to manage goats for vegetation reduction, contract examples and suggestions, cost estimating tools, where to offer the service and business development assistance for prescribed grazing services. For those who want grazing done but don't want to deal with goats, visit her website. It carries a list of individuals and companies by state who offer grazing services.

As good as goats are for reducing fire danger, she has found them difficult to control



In one research trial, mob grazing goats created an effective firebreak. When a fire came through, it came up to the area where the goats had grazed and stopped.

even with electric fence. While she still endorses using them, Voth, who also trains cows to eat weeds, thinks she has found a better fire fighter.

"I discovered that cows trained to eat weeds, will start eating brush as well," says Voth. "They do as good a job as goats and stay

inside a one or two wire fence long after goats would have escaped a much better fence."

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## Kohler Propane Engines Run Cleaner

Kohler engines are going propane with new models to be introduced late in 2012. The new engines run cleaner than equivalent gasoline engines. The 19 to 29-hp engines are so new, the company doesn't even have pictures of them yet. However, interest is high, given their environmental and practical fit.

"They are a highly efficient, environmentally friendly option akin to the gasoline version in our Command Pro EFI engine line," says Heidi Farmer, Kohler Engines.

Unlike gasoline and in particular ethanol, propane can be stored indefinitely. It burns more efficiently than gasoline and produces less carbon monoxide and other gases. Engines also run cooler on propane,

producing less stress and longer life.

Equipped with closed-loop electronic fuel injection (EFI), the Command Pro engines are virtually unchanged in the propane versions. Engine operation and load monitoring sensors and the microprocessor controls constantly adjust the fuel/air mixture without regard to the type of fuel being used.

Components designed to handle propane fuel have been added to the original gas engines. Additions include a pressure regulator and upgraded delivery lines, as well as injectors that can handle the pressurized gas.

The propane engines are designed to meet the needs of commercial zero-turn lawn

mowers. Municipalities with concern about ozone levels are increasingly limiting the use of gasoline-powered engines.

Kohler spokesmen indicate the propane engines will enjoy the same no-choke, easy start as the original gas versions. Credit is

given to the closed-loop EFI for its immediate feedback and the propane's constant pressure.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kohler Dealer Locator Assistance (ph 800 544-2444; [www.kohlerengines.com](http://www.kohlerengines.com)).

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