



# Adapt to thrive in cattle and forage.

*Sustainability for the Harris family is helped by diversification and how they capitalize on a long growing season.*

The new buzzword amused Jonny Harris when he first heard it at a conference a few years ago. The word was “sustainability.”

New word, old idea, he thought. He and his son, Paul, are the fifth and sixth generations of the family to make their living from a Screven, Ga., farm started by an ancestor in 1860.

A family has to take care of the land and the business to sustain an operation 150 years.

“You have to be adaptable,” Harris says. “If we raised cattle like we did even 20 years ago, we’d be broke.”

In 2009, his family’s Greenview Farms earned the regional Environmental Stewardship Award from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association that recognizes both the environmental and business side of sustainability.

Their 3,500 acres are divided among pasture, timber and cultivated land for corn, peanuts and cotton. They’ve grown their seedstock Polled Hereford and F1 Braford business while reducing permanent pasture from 700 acres in 2009 to 550 today.

They maintain about 400 brood cows, but with developing weaned bulls and heifers for sale, total cattle numbers on the farm are about 900.

Forage management is intense, and Harris capitalizes on the farm’s diversity and long growing season.

## Year-round grazing

Cover crops of winter annuals



on cropland provide both grazing and two to three

crops of balage – wet hay ensiled in airtight plastic wrap. The annuals are rye, ryegrass, oats, triticale, clover and blends of those.

Harris limit-grazes the winter annuals, moving cattle in and out every day. To keep adequate fiber in cattle diets, he supplements with dry hay.

The premium-quality balage goes to first-calf heifers and the sale bulls and heifers Harris is developing. It also supplements the mature cow herd grazing stockpiled dormant pasture.

On his permanent pastures, all bermudagrass, Harris overseeds about 450

acres with winter annuals, usually ryegrass and oats. That, too, is grazed with excess put into balage.

The rotationally grazed permanent pastures also produce bermudagrass hay for sale.

“Hay is a byproduct of my cattle business,” Harris says. “All our pastures are cut at least once and grazed – we don’t have hay meadows.”

## Altered inputs

Every year, Harris fertilizes his bermudagrass according to soil test and sprays for weeds, principally dogfennel and pigweed. Four years ago, he switched his spray timing.

Prior to that, he sprayed in May and June to get the most use of the clover he interseeded. By then, though, some weeds were mature and

making seed. He also was concerned about potential for drift on nearby sensitive crops.

In 2010, Harris started spraying in February and March, first with Grazon® P+D herbicide and last year with GrazonNext® HL herbicide at the labeled rate of 1.5 pints per acre.

“We kept looking for a weed problem, but we’ve gotten season-long control,” he says. “And we’ve got more grass and better-quality grazing.”

But the early spraying has taken clover – sensitive to most herbicides – out of Harris’ grazing. It’s a tradeoff Harris is willing to accept.

“We were reseeding clover every year

anyway,” he says. “Now we still have ryegrass we interseed [for winter grazing]. We can spray and be OK.”

## Economical feed, satisfied cows

Driving through a pasture early on a fall morning, Harris notes the cows lying down. “That’s a bunch of satisfied cows,” he says. “Their nutritional needs are met.

“We grow everything we feed,” he continues. “Hay and commercial feed are expensive. You’ve got to keep that down if you want to be efficient.” ■



Jonny Harris

Label precautions apply to forage treated with Chaparral and GrazonNext HL and to manure from animals that have consumed treated forage within the last three days. Consult the label for full details.

\*\*\*Trademark of The Dow Chemical Company (“Dow”) or an affiliated company of Dow  
Grazon P+D is a federally Restricted Use Pesticide. Chaparral and GrazonNext HL are not registered for sale or use in all states. Contact your state pesticide regulatory agency to determine if a product is registered for sale or use in your state.  
Always read and follow label directions.