# Grazing associations pop up in county

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The grazing association is one of the newer aspects to Davis County agriculture.

And the man who coordinates the establishment of these associations in Davis County sees a great benefit to the community from their operation.

Davis County has become a leader in Iowa in the formation of grazing associations. A total of seven have been established in the state, five of them in Davis County. Two of the five operated last year.

A grazing association, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, is a "member-owned, member-operated and member-managed nonprofit association of family farmers and ranchers organized to acquire and develop grazing land to provide seasonal grazing for livestock belonging to its members."

The five Davis County grazing associations and their members are:

**Lakeview**—David W. Wiegand, Richard J. Teubel and Russell F. Wuthrich.

**Carter Creek**—Roe Tharp, Clyde Knapp, Don U. Waller, Carroll Lanman and Lennie Hines.

**Triangle**—Donald H. Chickering, Donald Altheide, and Russell D. Hopkins.

**Wyacondah**—Sam J. Bradford, Bill P. Marlow, Delbert Tarbell and James M. Marlow.

**Bluegrass**—Jimmy D. Dixon, Jack L. Fleming, Richard D. Stufflebeam and Ronald L. Shively.

The five associations have bought a combined total of 2,919 acres of Davis County land at a cost of $352,430. Another $100,650 is being spent on the development of this land into high grade productive pasture.

Doyle Schmitter, Farmers Home Administration officer in Davis County, said the pasture associations help farm families strengthen themselves by giving them more land holdings.

He also said the grazing associations will aid the community as mostly unproductive land is being purchased and money is being spent to make it productive.

The USDA lists several benefits of the grazing associations. These include increasing incomes, strengthening rural communities, making better use of land and water resources, shifting use of land from production of commodities in surplus supply and improving livestock quality.

Grazing associations are born with a Farmers Home Administration loan. These loans cover approximately 75 per cent of the land purchase price and the cost of developing the land. Repayment of the loans is not to exceed 40 years and the interest rate is 5 per cent.

To qualify a person must be an established stockman or a farmer of family size. Family farmers are generally considered ones that do not have to have not more than one hired man.

The association is formed by its members setting up a nonprofit corporation. Shares of stock are sold to meet the down payment on the land and other expenses.

The corporation owns only land and the incidentals necessary for the operation of the grazing association. It cannot own cattle.

The cattle are owned by the individual members of the association. They pay rent to the association in an amount large enough so the corporation can meet its principal and interest payments and other expenses.

Generally speaking, each member can graze one cow for each share of stock he owns. The numbers of shares of stocks are somewhat less than the total number of acres. It is figured that 600 acres of land will handle 400 head of cattle when it is developed.

No crops can be produced on the land owned by the grazing association and any crop land coming under the ownership of the corporation must be taken out of production.

Development of the land into high producing pastures is laid out by the members with the aid of the Soil Conservation Service.

Verle Arnold, work unit conservationist with the Davis County SCS, meets with the members and advises them on the types of improvements that should be made. Improvements normally are boundary fencing, clearing construction of ponds, installation of water tanks and pipes, reseeding, fertilization and waterway work.

After actual development is started, the SCS provides engineering work to the association. The contractor is hired by the association and all materials such as seed and fertilizer are purchased by the association.

Depending upon the development level of the land, it normally costs $25 to $26 per acre for proper development. Once devedoped, the carrying capacity of the land can be doubled or tripled.