

# High Country Conservation

Fall 2023

## Autumn is a wonderful time of year in Albany County.

The fall foliage starts to appear, elk bugles can be heard in the crisp morning air. Everyone is headed to the field to get in that last camping or fishing trip before the snow begins to appear in the valleys. This is also a good time of year to focus on any irrigation systems you may have for your landscaping.

Properly winterized irrigation systems will save you time and money in the long run. Focusing a few hours on your systems will prevent winter freeze damage that will cost unnecessary money and time next spring when you go to fire up the systems again. The first step in winterizing a Living Snow Fence drip irrigation system is to remove the head assembly. This will include any back-flow preventer, strainer, regulator and all the hard plastic fittings at the beginning of the system.

Next remove all the end caps in preparation to drain the system. There are two methods of draining the line. The most common method is utilizing compressed air to blow all the water from the line. Another method is to walk the line lifting it in all the low spot and at all the fittings. This will ensure that there is no water remaining in the line when you get to the end.

Most drip irrigation pipe on the market can withstand cold winter temperatures. The most common problems are where there was water in the area of the hard plastic fitting that freezes and cracks the fittings. After all the water has been drain from the lines it is recommended to recap or seal off both end of the line. This is to keep out any debris or insects throughout the winter.

By following these simple steps this fall, come next spring, all you should need to do is reassemble and reinstall the head assembly and remove the end caps to flush out the drip line. After flushing the lines, reinstall the end caps and your system should be up and functioning properly, allowing you more time to unpack all the camping and fishing gear in preparation for the upcoming summer!

Best of luck,

*Martin*



Warning: regulators will freeze and crack if left out in the elements!



### As a reminder...

LRCDC has grant funding available for community beautification and enhancement projects within Albany County! Grants up to \$5,000 are available for projects that benefit the public and promote the quality of Albany County's water and other natural resources.

More info at [www.lrcd.net](http://www.lrcd.net)





## And just like that, Summer is gone in a flash!

For many of our local landowners who are cattle ranchers, the end of summer marks the end of haying season and the start of shipping season. While it's nice to have haying out of the way, weaning and preparing calves for shipping is a task of its own that requires plenty of planning. Overall, ranchers have a few options for managing their calves after weaning including:

- Weaning calves from cows and shipping them to the sale barn on the same day,
- Wean calves and precondition their immune system before shipping,
- Keep calves to sell later as either long or short yearlings,
- Or retain ownership of calves as they enter a feedlot.

Regardless of where the calves go, producers must consider the tradeoffs between various weaning strategies before making their decisions.

While weaning and immediately shipping calves to the sale barn in the Fall is a quick and easy approach to getting it all done in a short amount of time, this method can have very big impacts on the calves' immune system even if the calves are up to date on all vaccines prior to shipping. In fact, approximately 42% of all calves are sick if they are not preconditioned prior to sale. So what does a preconditioning program entail anyway? And what does an ideal weaning period look like for the calf? I've recently attended a training which helped answer some of these questions.



### PRECONDITIONING

*What is it and why do it?*



A preconditioning program is a length of time (usually at least 45 days) that a producer works to build the health status of weaned calves before selling them. This is typically when calves become "bunk broke" or able to successfully eat a 100% dry feed diet – an important milestone for calves before moving on to their next stop.

In addition to improving the health and overall animal welfare, producers can experience an increased feed efficiency (increase weight gain rates) and can capitalize from a price premium at the sale barn in selling calves that have been preconditioned. Producers that retain calves to sell at a later date notice preconditioned calves are less likely to become sick which can minimize their labor and expenses in the future.

Overall, implementing a preconditioning program is not for every cow-calf producer. The producer will need to consider how the 45-day retention period would alter their current grazing schedule, if any changes need to be made to their facilities, and if they can dedicate additional time and labor to the weaned calves. Operations that can make these changes, often recognize economical gains at the time of sale down the road.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**A cow's immune response doesn't reach maturity until at least 3 weeks after being administered modified live vaccines. For "dead" vaccines, the mature immune response requires approximately 8 weeks.**

Vaccinating calves immediately after a stress event such as weaning drastically decreases the vaccination's effectiveness. Low-stress weaning strategies like fenceline weaning increases vaccination effectiveness. The more abrupt the weaning, the longer producers should wait before vaccinating to ensure vaccines are effective.

# Let's talk about pepperweed...

Perennial pepperweed has proven to be highly invasive and problematic in the Laramie valley and has begun to spread to other areas of the county. Once an infestation of this weed is started, it tends to spread rapidly.

Single plants become clumps of plants, which then become large monocultures in a matter of just a few years. When established, perennial pepperweed infestations will reduce forage quality, degrade wildlife habitat, lower diversity of flora and fauna species, and decrease overall agricultural production both on rangeland and irrigated cropland.

Pepperweed plants have multiple stems and can grow up to 5 feet tall. They have smooth, waxy, green leaves and clusters of white flowers at the tops of the plants. Flowering typically occurs from mid-summer to fall.

Reproduction and spread occurs via both seeds and roots. Pepperweed is a prolific seed producer, and although seeds are short lived, they are easily transported by animals, equipment, water, or in hay, and germinate readily with moisture.

Creeping root systems of Perennial pepperweed may expand at a rate of 10 feet per year, and root fragments can create new plants.

Options for treatment are limited and can often be expensive for producers to tackle.

***Don't be discouraged!***

**Funding may be available for producers and landowners to help mitigate these noxious weed infestations!**

**Contact our office and speak with our Resource Specialist, Holly Dyer. She can help get you on the right path to recovery!**

**307-721-0072, ext 3270**



**Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium* L.)** is an invasive perennial forb in the mustard family that is listed as a noxious weed in the State of Wyoming. It is also known as tall whitetop, giant whitetop and broad-leaved pepperweed



Photos provided by:





Check out our Facebook page for the latest district information and updates!

**PREFER AN ELECTRONIC VERSION?**  
EMAIL [INFO@LRCD.NET](mailto:INFO@LRCD.NET)  
TO BE ADDED TO OUR EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LIST!

## ~ Upcoming Events ~

- October 24<sup>th</sup> LRCO Monthly Board Meeting  
12-3pm @ LRCO Office Building
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> WACD Annual Convention  
Dubois, WY
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> LRCO Monthly Board Meeting  
12-3pm @ LRCO Office Building
- November 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> Thanksgiving Day & Friday, office closed
- December 20<sup>th</sup> LRCO Monthly Board Meeting  
12-3pm @ LRCO Office Building
- December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day, office closed
- January 1<sup>st</sup> New Year's Day, office closed

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### ***Laramie Rivers Conservation District***

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[www.lrkd.net](http://www.lrkd.net)

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### ***2023 LRCO Board of Supervisors***

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Larry Munn, Supervisor  
Zach Iddings, Supervisor

*LRCO's Mission: To provide leadership for the conservation of Albany County's soil and water and to promote the sustained use of Wyoming's water and all other natural resources. To preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect the tax base and to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Albany County through a responsible conservation ethic.*