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South Dakota, Nebraska grazing groups plan bus tour July 21-22 ***Visits highlight organic production and extended grazing practices***

LINCOLN, Neb. — The South Dakota Grassland Coalition and the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition have joined forces to host a bus tour of progressive grazing operations around the Yankton, S.D., area on July 21-22, 2009.

The two organizations will meet at the Best Western hotel in Yankton at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 21, then head to the Pat Steffen ranch near Wynot, Neb. Steffen is an organic producer who raises Scottish Highlander cattle and conducts custom grazing. The afternoon will feature the organic grazing operations of Dave Fischer and Martin Kleinschmidt, both of Fordyce, Neb. Fischer has recently initiated an irrigated rotational grazing system, and has worked closely with Kleinschmidt, who produces low-line Angus cattle.

Tuesday evening dinner at the hotel will include entertainment from South Dakotan Micah James sharing his world renowned collection of Tonka trucks, followed by the Rancher Panel Discussion. Panelists will give a short presentation then take questions in a round table discussion, and include: Dan Rasmussen of Belvedere, S.D., who helps manage his family's certified organic ranch and sells organic grassfed beef; Angela Jackson of Vermillion, S.D., a consultant who has worked with Hy-Vee to market organic beef; Tom Neuburger of Canistota, S.D., who produces, processes and markets organic meat; and Jim Carr of Atkinson, Neb., who has a successful history of using rotational grazing to eliminate noxious weeds and improve grass production.

Wednesday the tour will travel to Plainview, Neb., to visit the ranch of Wayne Rasmussen, a cattle producer whose practices include converting row crops to grass under pivot, grazing corn, grass-finishing beef, and extending the traditional grazing season. The tour will conclude at 1:30 p.m. at Yankton.

The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition will charter a bus to Yankton starting in Kearney, Neb., leaving at 5 a.m. on July 21, with a stop in O'Neill, Neb. The South Dakota Grasslands Coalition will charter a bus from Miller, S.D., with stops in Mitchell, Kimball and Parkston, S.D. Registration is due July 10, and participants can register by downloading the form at www.nebraskagrazinglands.org or contacting Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Coordinator Marcy Hunter at 402.613.9144 or marcy@nebraskagrazinglands.org.

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The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition is an independent organization of ranchers, interest groups, and agencies whose mission is to collaborate on projects that improve the management and health of Nebraska grazing lands and ensure long-term stability of rangeland resources. The NGLC is funded through grants from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, the Nebraska Rural Development Commission and the Sandhills Task Force.

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition is a non-profit organization of individuals, private organizations, and local, state and federal entities. Our vision is a partnership of people working to voluntarily improve grasslands for the long term needs of the resource and its populations. Given the appropriate tools and training, grassland managers will be better prepared to make cost-effective and environmentally sound management decisions.