



Is Prescribed Fire a Solution to Control Invasive Grasses in Chihuahua Grasslands?

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Invasive species such as natal grass (*Melinis repens*) is gaining ground in native grasslands in Chihuahua. The constant progress of this grass is a current concern of ranchers in the central part of the state. Every growing season greater patches of natal grass are evident. Native species with high forage value such as black grama (*bouteloua eriopoda*), sideoats grama (*bouteloua curtispindula*), and blue grama (*bouteloua gracilis*), wolfstail (*Lycurus phleoides*) among others are decreasing. However, information to control the advance of natal grass is not developed yet. The objective of this study is to use prescribe fire as a tool to limit natal grass progress. The study is conducted in La Laja Ranch in Satevo, County in Chihuahua, Mexico. Three plots were selected assuming highly covered by natal grass. Each plot has an average area of 1,200 square meter and it was divided by half. One half was burned during spring and the other kept as a control. Before burning, biomass production and species composition were recorded. A permanent 15 meter, 15 cm point line was used. Results for each plot showed that natal grass represents 68, 54, and 82% of the species composition in each plot respectively. Measurements in early summer were conducted to estimated survival rate and biomass production of natal grass after burning. Another sampling is schedule to the end of the growing season in order to contrast these data against the control.

2009. 62nd Society for Range Management Annual Meeting. Paper No. 1020-12.