

The Lost Rivers Grazing Academy – a multigenerational benefit to cattlemen

AT A GLANCE

The Lost Rivers Grazing Academy has provided training on management-intensive grazing to over 650 producers from Idaho and the surrounding states over the past 25 years.

The Situation

One major challenge facing livestock production in Idaho and the surrounding states is the rapid conversion of agricultural land to development, and the rising cost of available grazing land. Feeding costs are already one of the greatest expenses for livestock production, so teaching livestock managers how to increase their grazing efficiency, properly manage their pastures and ultimately reduce their reliance on hay is vital to the sustainability of the industry.

Our Response

The Lost Rivers Grazing Academy is a 4-day hands-on workshop currently held in Homedale & Marsing, ID. The academy is a collaborative effort between University of Idaho Extension and American Grazing Lands Services. Attendees are taught the fundamentals of Management-intensive Grazing (MiG)– including animal health and behavior, plant physiology and pasture management, as well as how to set achievable goals and create and maintain an enterprise budget. Classroom instruction is followed-up by a boots-on-the-ground field activities where teams of students apply what they've learned and manage a small herd of cattle during the week. Pasture assessment, both pre- and



Extension Educator Joseph Sagers demonstrate proper forage sampling technique. Photo by Scott Jensen.

post-grazing, and fence building and maintenance push academy attendees to utilize the fundamentals learned in the classroom.

Educational objectives of the program are:

- Introduce livestock operators to an alternative paradigm for livestock production using MiG,
- Provide operators with an opportunity to practice MiG in a supervised and synergistic environment,
- Improve the quality of life for operators by improving profitability, reducing costs, reducing labor input and by changing the quality of work to make it less stressful.

Program Outcomes

The Lost Rivers Grazing Academy has persisted for the past 25 years, with 15-20 students attending the academy each year. Attendees have come from all over the United States, Canada, Mexico and even South America. The location has changed several times over the years – starting in the Lost River Valley, Salmon and now Marsing. The current farm hosts of the hands-on portion of the academy are former academy graduates who've implemented the practices taught.

Success has been evident by the number of operations who have sent multiple generations of farm managers to the Academy. In 2025, a family-operated ranch near King Hill sent a third family member to attend the academy and a ranch near Salmon that once hosted the academy sent their ranch manager to attend.

The 2025 pre- and post- assessments from the academy show an increase in knowledge across all categories taught except for low-stress livestock handling, which attendees came in with a high level of knowledge on. Categories of greatest improvement included: phases of plant growth, managing pasture soil quality and developing and analyzing a grazing management plan.

A 2005 survey of attendees from the first 10 years of the academy, published in the Journal of Extension, found an increase in animal numbers and pasture grazing days achieved by implementing practices learned in the academy. Further results included:

- Decreased weed pressure,
- Stable or declining fertilizer costs,
- Decreased animal health costs,
- Decreased winter feeding costs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The Future

The Lost Rivers Grazing Academy will continue to teach Management-intensive Grazing principles and practices to future generations of livestock managers. The founding instructors have been training the next generation of educators to carry the torch. In 2026, we anticipate repeating the survey of past attendees to measure the benefit created by the academy over the past 25 years.



2026 LRG class participants. Photo by Scott Jensen.