Perennial Forage *Kochia* for Improved Winter Grazing

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Seeding rangeland pastures with forage kochia (*Kochia prostrata*) has improved winter grazing by increasing forage production and quality. The objectives of this study were to determine benefits from forage kochia and increase producer awareness of those benefits. Fifty mature, pregnant, Black Angus crossbred cows were body condition scored (BCS) and randomly divided into two groups of 25 head. One group was placed in a forage kochia/crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron desertorum*) pasture and the other (control) group in a crested wheatgrass pasture. Both groups were placed in the pastures on 11/2/07, removed on 01/03/08, combined in one group and condition scored. Forage availability measured by the double sampling method showed control and study pastures to contain 753 and 3374 kg/ha of crested wheatgrass and forage kochia respectively. Estimated carrying capacities were .84 AUM/ha for the control and 4.44 AUM/ha for the study pasture. Initial (control = 5.33, kochia = 5.09) and final (control = 5.64, kochia = 5.63) BCS were similar (P > 0.10) among treatment groups. Change in BCS (control = .31, kochia = .54) tended to be different (P > 0.12). An increase in BCS of 0.5 during winter grazing without supplementation would exceed the expectations of most beef cattle producers. While it is apparent that both pastures had adequate forage to maintain body condition, carrying capacity was more than five times greater for the forage *kochia* pasture than the crested wheatgrass pasture (P = 0.0002).