Winter Annuals for Stocker Cattle Grazing in the High Plains
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BACKGROUND
Stocker cattle grazing is a primary part of the cattle industry in the High Plains. The forage base for these programs includes rangeland, introduced perennial pastures, winter annual forages and summer annual forages. Typically, wheat has been the primary small grain forage planted for winter grazing in the region. In these systems, wheat is either grazed until March and then cattle are removed and grain is harvested in June or the wheat is grazed out without grain harvest. In these systems, fall forage production and winter forage budgeting is important in order to provide adequate forage to support cattle during the winter months when forage growth slows or ceases. Stocking rate, wheat varieties, type of small grain (barley, triticale, wheat), spring pull-off dates are a few of several management decisions that affect grain and cattle production in these systems. Trials at the Texas AgriLife Research Bush Farm have and continue to address various aspects of these systems.

OBJECTIVE
• Evaluate the impact of stocking rates on performance of stocker cattle grazing wheat during the winter.
• Evaluate stocker cattle production (weight gain and carrying capacity) for wheat and triticale forage programs.
• Compare systems that incorporate graze-out for wheat and triticale to a wheat system incorporating grazing and grain harvest.
• Evaluate the impact of grazing termination date on grain production of newer varieties of wheat.

RESULTS
Stocking rate studies on dryland wheat demonstrated that daily gain declined 0.25-0.30 lb/hd/day for each 50 lb increase in stocking pressure (Fig. 1). These response curves can be interfaced with partial budgets to evaluate optimum stocking scenarios under different variable production costs (Fig. 2).

Current studies are focusing on alternative forage such as triticale and barley in comparison to wheat. Other studies are evaluating the impact of grazing termination dates on stocker and grain production.