

VEGETATION MONITORING IN THE LAS COLORADITAS AREA

Native rangelands are important for food, water, and wildlife. Vegetation, and specifically the availability of grasses, often drives livestock and wildlife performance – particularly in the South Texas Sand Sheet. While grass availability and abundance is directly related to rainfall and associated drought conditions, cattle stocking rates also play an important, though not fully understood, role. The East Foundation believes that ranching and wildlife go together and that cattle grazing is an important part of land stewardship, particularly in this drought-prone region. **We aim to demonstrate relationships between cattle management and vegetation responses through our research and demonstration efforts in the Las Coloraditas Grazing Research and Demonstration Area.**

As part of the Las Coloraditas Area we have initiated a project designed to monitor and compare vegetation relationships at 2 different cattle densities, under both continuous and rotational situations. Baseline data (from before the experiment officially begins, when cattle outfitted with electronic individual animal identification are reintroduced onto the site) are critical for making comparisons throughout the 10-year life span of the project.

Annually, we sample 240 vegetation transects in the Las Coloraditas Area and collect data on:

- Woody canopy cover and diversity
- Herbaceous cover and diversity
- Suitable nesting habitat density and concealment from predators for northern bobwhite

Additionally, 8,000 visual estimates are made on forage availability and use in the summer and fall of each year.

Baseline vegetation sampling and analyses from 2014 indicate that there was an average of 2.9 times more forage available in the fall of 2014 than the summer of 2014 across the 8 pastures of the Las Coloraditas Area.

The East Foundation is committed to conducting research that makes a difference. Data collected over the next 10 years in the Las Coloraditas Area will shed light on cattle management and vegetation relationships at an operational-scale (4,600-acre treatment pastures) and help private landowners make informed decisions on how best to manage their lands.



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