

Millers chosen to receive soil conservation award

By VERONICA MONIER

Stan and Carol Miller were picked to receive the 2005 Kansas Bankers Association Soil Conservation Award.

The Millers run around a 900 to 1,000 cattle/calf operation, which is just east of their home.

Stan said they started feeding on a smaller scale around 1990, but didn't start getting serious about cattle feeding until about 1996.

He said they expanded a little in '96 and then added more in 1998-'99. They added pens in 1999. In 2002-'03, the Millers began building a pit east of the pens.

It was finished in 2004 and was built with an EQUIP contract.

Stan said for the feedlot, their main conservation practice is the water pit, which controls run off with the help of a sediment pit.

They also haul manure from the pens and spread it on their fields, and have been doing so since before they've been on the EQUIP contract.

"It's a real benefit," he said. "It adds organic matter and a lot of nutrients to the crops."

Stan said they soil test all of the time and have gotten their phosphates up.

"We've really seen the benefit on the crops," he said, "even though we haven't had the rain to see the full effect."

The Millers farm around 5,000 acres and all but about 1,600 acres is family owned. Stan said his grandpa built the farm house and he is the third generation to farm the land and live there.

He said their crop rotation is a major conservation practice. They have been practicing no-till on all of their crops since 1990, he said,

starting with a wheat, corn, chemical fallow rotation. They started no-tilling just their fall crops in 1985.

Around 1995, they started an intensified crop rotation where they don't fallow the land. Now they rotate wheat, corn, soybeans and then back to wheat, with some variants.

The intensified rotation makes for better water infiltration, he said.

"It took about four or five years," he said, "but the ground is mellower without the fallow rotation."

It also allows for less terrace maintenance and helps to prevent water runoff, although they did rebuild terraces in the 1990s.

"With the lower rainfall for the past several years, it's amazing how well we can raise crops," he said. "Last year we had 60 bushel crops with almost no rain. Our corn averaged 80 bushels this year."

"Conservation is something we've been committed to for a long time," he said. "We can really see the benefits, both with our crops and in the fuel savings."

The Millers employ three full-time hired hands, who work at the feedlot and do harvesting and repair work.

Stan said he does all of the spraying and some of the planting. He started doing his own spraying in 1985.

The Millers live on W-15, two and a half miles south of U.S. 36.

Come help honor the Millers at the Norton County Conservation District's annual meeting at 6:30 p.m. this Saturday, Jan. 21, at the Norton American Legion.



Stan and Carol Miller (above) are the recipients of the 2005 Kansas Bankers Association Soil Conservation Award for their conservation practices, including an intensive no-till program and some terracing. Two of the Miller's hired hands (left) build a concrete water tank for their feed yard. The Millers will be honored with the other winners Saturday night at the Norton County Conservation District's annual meeting at the American Legion.

— Telegram photos by Veronica Monier

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