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RALPH AND VIOLET SHAW are proud of the landmark sign with their initials intertwined with that of their sons Joel and Richard. The landmark was made by Ralph and hangs near the entrance to the their farmstead. — Herald staff photo by Jeanette Krizek

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# Couple has improved grassland for 40 years

By JEANETTE KRIZEK

Improving grassland management practices over the last 40 years has earned Ralph and Violet Shaw the 1999 Grassland Management Award from the Decatur County Conservation District.

The couple and their two sons Richard and Joel run a cow/calf operation and have farmland west of Oberlin.

The Great Plains Program which was government paid for in the late '50s got Mr. Shaw started with grass seeding rough areas and cross fencing pastures.

Rough acreage and washed out patches or ditches along fields are not productive to farming so reseeding the area to grass is more productive.

Mr. Shaw said after the grass seed became established in the rough areas he moved the pasture fence to include it, increasing grazing acreage.

Dividing large pastures into smaller sections

with cross fences are becoming popular with cattlemen.

He said cross fencing helps a cattleman schedule grazing. The rotation from section to section ensures that the cattle have better feed and more of it throughout the season.

About 350 acres near Mr. Shaw's home has been cross sectioned to make rotation possible. A windmill, pond and stock tanks provide a constant supply of water for the cattle.

The family raises alfalfa and forage sorghum to feed their cattle. Corn and milo stocks in a nearby field are a supplemental food source in the fall and winter months.

Mr. Shaw also works as a Farm Bureau Insurance Agent and Violet works at The Dresser. Both like to be involved in the community and with their family.

"To love what you do an feel that it matter." said Mr. Shaw "How could anything be more fun."



**THE CROSSFENCING** (above) increases grass yields throughout the year. While cattle (left) are in one of the sectioned cells in the grassland management program near the Shaw residence.  
— Herald staff photos by Jeanette Krizek

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