

# Opportunity for Fall 2014

## Directed Reading/MREM Final Project

### **Holistic Grazing Management**

I am looking for one or two students to work with me over the fall on some analysis of the literature around holistic grazing management. This will inform a rebuttal to Briske et al's (2014) attack on my 2012 paper in Agricultural Systems.

If interested, come talk to Kate Sherren, [kate.sherren@dal.ca](mailto:kate.sherren@dal.ca) or 902 494-1359

What is holistic management?

HM is a decision framework for graziers/ranchers premised on careful observation of environmental conditions and the use of pluralistic, adaptive management strategies to cope with changes in those conditions. The system is based on the value of adapting farming practices in response to landscape patterns, climate cycles and human well-being. The fuzziness of the definition of HM is problematic. Some specific practices are often part of an HM management regime, such as high-intensity, short-duration (intensive) rotational grazing and native and/or perennial pastures, but these are not synonymous with the HM system. Other terms are often used interchangeably or with partial overlap: holistic resource management, holistic grazing, cell grazing. It is well-suited to dry or 'brittle' rangeland farming systems for which livestock can provide valuable nutrient cycling.

What's the problem?

The science around holistic grazing management (HM) is messy. There is a well-acknowledged chasm between experimental evidence supporting the benefits of holistic management and the positive experiences of practitioners at the farm scale (for instance, the ongoing battle between David Briske and Richard Teague). Some of the tension in this tug-of-war may derive from the salesmanship of Allan Savory, who has popularized the approach, but many graziers report positive experiences with it. While the agricultural science literature seems now to acknowledge the limitations of experimental science alone in understanding an adaptive practice such as holistic management, there is still strong resistance to using the perspectives of graziers as evidence of its utility.

Potential research topics

1. To what degree are experimental science researchers making reference to qualitative evidence and vice versa; are these discrete 'silos' or is there co-citation? What is the nature of those citations? (bibliometrics = mapping co-authorship and citation)
2. What is the discourse around holistic grazing management within and outside of scholarly realms? Is the new 'resilience' paradigm likely to bring together the experimental scientists, practitioners, policy-makers and qualitative researchers? (discourse analysis/literature review/etc)

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