

'Greening the Desert'

Following are 5 main points taken from a webinar hosted by Understanding AG and featuring Alejandro Carrillo. Of course, I would hope readers would note the similarities and differences between their own grazing situations (climate, landform, animals, acreage etc.) and that of Alejandro Carrillo's so they can critically assess what's useful or not for themselves. Some of the main comparisons are listed below:

Precipitation: Uinta County varies with the elevation and landform, going from as high as 28-33" in the mountains to as low as 5-9" in the desert (northeast corner of Uinta County). Some of the largest precipitation areas in Uinta County receive an average of 5-9", 13-15", 16-18", and 23-27". Carrillo's ranch averages 8" per year.

Climate: This is obviously one of the biggest differences. Carrillo's ranch is in the Chihuahuan desert, with average yearly temperatures of 61-64 degrees F. Uinta County's yearly averages range from 35 - 43 degrees F. Again, those are the average temperatures for the whole year. The length and magnitude of the coldest temperatures in Uinta County Wyoming is a serious limiting factor.

Greening the Desert, Alejandro Carrillo_9-15-20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLUaVxCyxdU&t=5407s>
There is a question and answer session, so Alejandro's presentation is about 55 minutes long.

- Intensive grazing creates more grass- long rests after short and high impact from cattle. He shows many examples of the grass created on his ranch in comparison to neighboring properties.
- Culling cattle is a must, and he makes sure to do it all year round. Select bulls from the top 10% of your cows in quality and cull the bottom 20% based on the same conditions. Doing this year round will increase the quality of your herd.
- Don't pamper your cows- the only inputs they use is sea salt. The cows in his herd routinely eat large patches of prickly pear and pull down the stalks of yucca plants to eat the flowers. They must work for a living or they are culled.
- The hardest part of a brittle environment is the water- plan to supply more than you think you will need and keep a back up plan. They do a pattern where the pastures run perpendicular to a single water line.
- Improve/preserve the best areas of your ranch first, and then go to improve the failing areas after that. You don't want to lose your best areas because you were chasing the poor ones. Try to learn from nature instead of fighting it. The cow pie is a microclimate for grass- if you don't use de-wormers then the insects in your pasture will break down the cow pies and you won't have to harrow the pasture.



This article was published in the April 2022 Uinta County Connection, a quarterly publication of the Uinta County Conservation District: <https://www.uintacountycd.com/newsletters>