Our 102 acre farm is all permanent cool season grass pasture, except for 6 acres of woods and 2 acres around the house/barns. Paddocks vary in size from 2 to 20 acres. Fenceline waterers are used to place water in each pasture. Soils are tested routinely; organic matter soil levels have increased after 12 years of rotational grazing. Commercial fertilizer is used sparingly. We plan to use more composted manure for fertilizer in the future. Dung beetle populations are encouraged. We obtain hay from leased ground and buy the balance from neighbors. Larue and Hart counties are areas of hay surplus so hay is relatively inexpensive. As a result we maintain a relatively high stocking rate (50 beef cows, 50 + ewes and their offspring) on 96 acres of pasture. We have a tight calving season of about 45 days, wean our calves at about 7 months of age, background calves on the farm and then ship to a Kansas feedlot on retained ownership. This frees up pasture for cows and sheep.

Goats were initially purchased to clear brush. After two summers a few goats turned the 6 acre thicket into a park-like setting, allowing for more grass growth. The sheep (easy-care Bamoka hair sheep) graze the same pastures as the cow herd. Easy-care sheep consume some browse. Sheep and goats often share the same pasture with the cow/calf herd. Sheep and goats co-grazed for a few years but no longer do. Currently the meat goat flock is managed on a leased 10 acre facility with 8 paddocks. Weaned kids are returned to the home farm where they graze paddocks and weed lots close to buildings or are confined. Both sheep and goats have access to night-pens for predator prevention.

Parasite resistant sheep and goats are being intensively selected. Worm parasites are monitored using the FAMACHA anemia guide during the June – September worm season and worm egg counts periodically. Genetic selection and co-grazing with the beef herd resulted in no losses due to worm parasites among the Bamoka sheep during the dry year of 2005 and minimal loss in 2004, a wet year. This effective worm control program was achieved without use of routine flock deworming and very few individual dewormings.

After browse is consumed, goats graze fescue/orchardgrass. We have had good success growing perennial ryegrass. We observe fewer weeds as a result of sheep and goat pressure; this has allowed more grass to grow. With sheep, care must be taken to keep them rotating to avoid overgrazing. Sheep numbers were cut in 2005 nearly in half due to drought and our decision to provide the cows the best grazing. In 2005, we installed a heavy use hay feeding pad using geotextile fabric. This will reduce the amount of pasture damaged when feeding rolled hay to the cow herd. Both sheep and goats graze stockpiled fescue when available. Red and Ladino clovers are added using a no-till drill. We will continue multi-species grazing of hair-sheep and beef cattle as we see this as sustainable, manageable and beneficial.