



By Gary Frasier

# Frasier's Philosophy

Rangeland weeds and pests, the theme of this issue, are an ongoing concern to many people. Everyone who has tried to garden, farm, or managed a piece of land has encountered them. I have several old photos taken in the early 1900s of the Frasier homestead in southwestern Nebraska showing the farm buildings, animals, and family. The remarkable thing is that the photos also show a good crop of cockle burrs and sunflowers. Years after the photos were taken, I remember that as a youngster growing up not too far from the old homestead, my father every evening during the summer would spend an hour or so pulling cockle burr plants. Cockle burrs and sunflowers still grow on the land today. Though maybe not as numerous in present times as in the past, they are still there despite all the effort to eradicate them. The best that can be done is to keep them down to a mere nuisance level.

We have all heard about the locusts that invaded the crops of the early settlers. They were a pest. A few years ago I was trying to grow a small garden. Just as everything was going good, we had an invasion of grasshoppers. They devastated the plants. My neighbor said, "This isn't bad. Several years ago the grasshoppers were so numerous that they ate the screens off the windows and the paint off the wood siding of the house." Just because grasshoppers are not a problem this year does not mean that they are gone for good.

Rangeland pests can come in all sizes. There are several large bull elk wandering around my neighborhood. To a hunter, they are a desirable species. They are a pest to my place. To a rancher, prairie dogs can be a pest. To the black-footed ferret, the prairie dog is a desirable item on the rangeland. It all depends on your perspective.

There are many pests of the rangelands. Some are present today. Some occurred in the past. Some pests of the past may return. We will never completely eliminate pests. We must learn to live with them. As one of the papers in this issue points out, a weed is a plant out of place. A pest in one place may be a desirable feature in another setting. There may even be some places where grasshoppers and locusts are desirable. ♦