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BLUESTEM PASTURE RELEASE 2025

KANSAS STATE Agricultural Economics

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The 2025 results on bluestem pasture leases utilize the responses from the 2025 Kansas Bluestem Pasture Survey conducted from February through April of 2025 across the 14 Bluestem counties.¹ The format of the Kansas Bluestem survey was revised in 2019, in response to requests to change the question format to provide more detailed information on native tallgrass prairie use and leasing practices. The new survey instrument incorporated suggestions from a focus group of report users that included landowners, livestock owners, livestock care providers, and Flint Hills extension agents. Because of the format change, discussions on leasing rates from the 2025 survey are not directly comparable to years prior to 2019. Please refer to previous Bluestem releases for historical leasing rates.

The 14 Bluestem counties surveyed include: Geary, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee, Chase, Lyon, Morris, Marion, Butler, Chautauqua, Cowley, Elk, Coffey, Greenwood, and Woodson. Lease types discussed include short summer season leases, $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season leases, full summer season leases, winter grazing leases, and full year leases. The grazing period of short summer season leases lasts about 90 days; a $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season contract has a grazing period of about 120 days; and the grazing season is typically around 180 days for a full summer season lease. About 42% of the survey respondents are landowners; 27% of the respondents are livestock owners; 13% of the respondents are livestock care providers, and 18% of the respondents are land managers.

In 2025, the condition of bluestem pasture in the Flint Hills region of Kansas was rated as 1.2 percent very poor, 8.7 percent poor, 34.7 percent adequate, 38.9 percent good, and 12.4 percent excellent. In 2023, the condition of Bluestem pasture in the area was rated as 5.4 percent very poor, 23.7 percent poor, 32.8 percent adequate, 30.4 percent good, and 7.6 percent excellent. The 2025 results indicate that the Bluestem counties received adequate rainfall. The 2025 responses indicate that pasture conditions in 2025 are better than they were in 2023. About 90.1 percent of pasture was rated adequate or better in 2025 compared to 70.9 percent in 2023, reflecting better growing conditions for pasture and, possibly, changing grazing practices.

Responses to the sources of **water** being used for livestock on bluestem pasture were distributed in the following manner: ponds, 44.9 percent; streams or spring-fed or spring development, 20.3 percent; solar powered, 10.6 percent; wells, 9.6 percent; electric-powered wells, 5.1 percent; rural water, 4.0 percent; windmill, 3.5 percent; and hauling, 1.5 percent. The distribution of water sources in 2025 was similar to the distribution in 2023. Ponds remained the top water source, up 1.0 percent from 2023. Streams or spring-fed, the second most prominent source, decreased by 5.1 percent from 2023. Solar powered supply sources increased from 5.6 percent in 2023 to 10.6 percent in 2025. Rural water as a supply source decreased from 8.1 percent in 2023 to 4.0 percent in 2025. Kansas stock water supplies are no longer reported by USDA, as of 2018.

¹ For questions and comments, please contact Heather Johnson (Heather.C.Johnson@ks.gov) and/or Leah Tsoodle (Ltsoodle@ksu.edu).

About 82.1 percent of the respondents reported **burning** their tallgrass pastures in 2025, up 7.6 percent from 2023. Most of the burning took place between April 1st and April 15th. About 97.2 percent of **available pasture was reported to be under contract** in the 2024-2025 season. Lease durations were distributed as follows: 19.0 percent of the respondents had short summer leases; 22.8 percent had full year leases; and 42.4 percent had full summer season leases; 12.0 percent had $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season leases; and 3.8 percent had winter grazing leases, (Table 1). Of the **acres** that respondents had contracted, 35.9 percent were under full summer season contracts; 44.4 percent were under short summer season contract for early intensive grazing; 5.9 percent were under $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season contracts; 13.3 percent were leased for the full year; and only 0.6 percent were leased for winter grazing. The average number of acres leased ranged from 218 for winter grazing leases to 3163 acres for short summer season leases. The number of acres for full summer season leases averaged 1146 in 2025.

According to the 2025 survey responses, the **start date** of the grazing season for most of the full summer season contracts was May 1, and the mode ending date was October 31. The mode starting date for short summer season was also May 1, and the mode ending date was August 1. Most of $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season contracts start May 1 and end around September 1. Winter grazing leases often start around November 1 and last for about six months.

The number of years a tallgrass lease has been in place varies (Table 2). About 45 percent of the tallgrass native pasture leases have been in place for 10 or less years. About 6 percent of the leases have been in place for only 1 year. About 37 percent of the leases have been in place for 20 or more years. About 46.5 percent of bluestem pasture leases were written contracts in 2025, and 53.5 percent of the leases were oral leases in 2025.

The term “with care” has a wide range of meanings across leases in the 14 Bluestem counties. Therefore, the new survey format attempted to more clearly define that term. The 2025 survey format, started in 2019, allowed respondents to select from 13 specific categories and one “other” category of care services that may be included in the lease rate. About 24.3 percent of the reported rental rates for a 600-pound steer/heifer base animal included at least 1 care service listed in the table. Twelve percent of the reported rental rates for a 1250-pound cow/calf pair included care services. Care services included in contracts with care varied by lease types and by respondents. Table 3 shows the care services and related response percentages.

Fence maintenance was provided by most of the respondents when care was provided. **Fence** maintenance was included in 100 percent of 600-pound steer/heifer **full summer** season leases with care. Services provided by the landlord or caretaker in **600-pound** steer/heifer full summer season leasing arrangements were: grass management including weed & tree control and distributing salt & mineral, 87 percent each; burning and riding/checking cattle, 80 percent each; doctoring and gathering cattle, 73 percent each; providing herbicide and herbicide application, 40 percent and 60 percent, respectively; providing medicine, liability insurance coverage, and providing salt & mineral, 40 percent, 47 percent, and 33 percent, respectively; guaranteed count, 27 percent; and other miscellaneous services, 13 percent. About 91 percent of all **1250-pound** cow-calf **full summer** leases with care included fence maintenance and grass management. Riding/checking cattle was included in 86 percent of 1250-pound full summer leases. Distributing salt & mineral, riding/checking cattle, and gathering cattle were included in 82 percent of 1250-pound pair full summer leases, followed by burning, doctoring, liability insurance coverage, and herbicide application (Table 3).

All **600-pound** steer/heifer **short summer** lease responses, with care arrangements, included grass management, doctoring, distributing salt and mineral, gathering cattle, and riding/checking cattle services. Ninety percent of those lease respondents indicated services that included fence maintenance and burning. Seventy percent provided liability insurance coverage. Sixty percent provided herbicide application care

services, and 40 percent provided herbicide. Guaranteed count was included in 30 percent of 600-pound 3/4 summer leases. Twenty percent provided medicine and 10 percent provided salt & mineral (Table 3). There were too few responses for care services included in **1250**-pound cow/calf short summer leases to be reported (Table 3).

Fence maintenance and doctoring were the services provided most often by the landlord or caretaker in 3/4 **summer** season leasing arrangements; 100 percent for **600**-pound steer/heifer leases. About 88 percent of 600-pound steer/heifer 3/4 summer leases with care included distributing salt and mineral, grass management, and riding/checking cattle. Other services included in **600**-pound steer/heifer leases were: burning, and gathering cattle, 75 percent each; herbicide application, 50 percent; providing medicine, providing salt & mineral, and liability insurance coverage, 38 percent each; providing herbicide, and guaranteed count, 25 percent each.

Fence maintenance, burning, doctoring, grass management, riding/checking cattle, and distributing salt and mineral were provided in 100 percent of the **full year** contracts with care for both 600-pound steer/heifer and 1250-pound cow/calf pair. Other services included in **600**-pound steer/heifer leases were: providing medicine, herbicide application, and gathering cattle, 67 percent each; providing herbicide, liability insurance coverage, and providing salt & mineral, 33 percent each. Regarding **1250**-pound cow/calf full year leases with care, 100 percent included gathering cattle. Providing medicine, providing herbicide, herbicide application, liability insurance coverage, and providing salt & mineral were included in 67 percent of all leases (Table 3).

The average lease rates for the various care services are shown in Tables 4a and 4b. To be included in the average, the lease rates had to be associated with the exact same care services. In these tables, B represents burning, and D represents doctoring. M indicates that the care giver administers medicine. F and L indicate that the care provider maintains the fence and an insurance liability policy, respectively. G, Hp, Ha represent grass management, providing herbicide, and applying herbicide, respectively. Sd and Sp indicate that the care provider distributes salt and provides salt, respectively. Finally, C indicates a guaranteed count, R represents riding the cattle, and Gc indicates gathering the cattle.

For a **base animal** of 600 pounds, 4.9 acres were allowed in a full summer season lease (Table 5). The average number of acres allowed for a typical 600-pound animal was 2.7 acres in a short summer season contract. In a 3/4 summer season lease, 4.0 acres were allowed. An average of 7.4 acres was allowed in a full year lease. In a winter grazing lease, 7.5 acres were allowed for a 600-pound animal.

For a full summer season contract, the average tallgrass native pasture **lease rate** for a 600-pound **steer/heifer** was reported to be \$133.75 per head where care is provided and \$117.50 per head where care is not provided (Table 6a). The average lease rate for this 600-pound steer/heifer in a short summer lease was \$107.60 per head where care is provided and \$96.22 per head when care is not provided. The lease rate for a 3/4 summer lease averaged \$125.71 per head with care. The average lease rates in a full summer season contract were slightly lower than the rates in 2023. All other lease rates were slightly higher than the rates in 2023.

The average price **per acre** for a 600-pound **steer/heifer** in a full summer season contract was \$33.75 where care is provided and \$30.28 where care is not provided (Table 6b). In a short summer lease, the average rate was \$44.00 per acre where care is provided and \$37.45 per acre where care is not provided. For a 3/4 summer season contract, price per acre with care wasn't reported, and the price per acre without care averaged \$32.67. The rate for a full year lease averaged \$29.43/acre where care is not provided. All these per acre rates were higher than the corresponding rates in 2023.

For a **base pair**, defined as a spring calving cow of 1250 pounds with her calf, 8.1 **acres were allowed** in a full summer season lease (Table 5). Acres allowed for a typical 1250-pound cow/calf pair was 5.0 acres in a short summer season contract. In a 3/4 summer season lease, 7.6 acres were allowed. An average of 10.9

acres was allowed in a full year lease. In a winter grazing lease, 8.7 acres were allowed for a 1250-pound pair.

For a full summer season contract, the average **price** for a 1250-pound **cow/calf** pair was \$276.25 per pair where care is provided and \$210.84 per pair where care is not provided (Table 7a). If care is not provided, the average lease price for 1250-pound cow/calf pair in a full year contract was reported to be \$290.00 per pair. In a $\frac{3}{4}$ summer season contract, the average lease rate averaged \$274.00 per pair, if care is not provided.

For a 1250-pound **cow/calf** pair, the average lease price **per acre** in a full summer contract averaged \$30.40 per acre where care is provided and \$30.13 where care is not provided (Table 7b). For a full year lease, the average lease price was \$32.50 per acre where care is provided and \$30.22 per acre where care is not provided. The average lease rate for a 1250-pound cow/calf pair in a short summer contract without care was \$42.77 per acre. The average leasing rate in a winter grazing only contract where care is not provided was \$26.75 per acre.

In the bluestem region, steel posts and combined steel & wood posts were the most common for **fences**. About 29 percent of fences used steel & wood posts, and 68 percent used all steel posts. Treated wood and hedge posts were rarely used. About 82 percent of fences used five barbed wires, and 9 percent used 4 barbed wires. If material is included, the average rate charged for building a 5-wire fence with steel and wood posts was \$15,376 per mile (\$48.05 per rod) (Table 8a & 8b). The rate charged for building a five-wire all steel post fence, including materials, averaged \$14,651 per mile (\$45.78 per rod). Additional charges for gates and corners averaged \$237.89 and \$332.50, respectively (Tables 9 & 10). The additional charge for building in rough or rocky terrain was \$142.14 per hour (Table 10).

Table 1. Reported Bluestem Leases by Lease Types

Lease Type	Acres under Various Types of Contract			
	Percent of Respondents (%)	Percent of Total Reported Acres (%)	Average Size (Acres)	Range (Acres)
Short Summer Season	18.99	44.37	3163	54 - 14000
3/4 Summer Season	12.03	5.85	658	80 - 2500
Full Summer Season	42.41	35.88	1146	31 - 8000
Full Year	22.78	13.29	790	35 - 5000
Winter Grazing	3.80	0.61	218	120 - 400

Table 2. Characteristics of Reported Bluestem Leases

	Number of Years Lease has been in Place								Lease Type	
	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-19	20 or More	Oral	Written
Percentage	6.2%	6.8%	8.1%	1.9%	6.2%	16.1%	18.0%	36.6%	53.5%	46.5%

Table 3. Care Services Percentage of Total Respondents by Lease Types

	Percentage of Care (%)					
	600-Pound Steer/Heifer				1250-Pound Cow/Calf	
	Full Summer Season	Short Summer Season	3/4 Summer Season	Full Year	Full Summer Season	Full Year
Burning (B)	80.00	90.00	75.00	100.00	72.73	100.00
Doctoring (D)	73.33	100.00	100.00	100.00	72.73	100.00
Providing Medicine (M)	40.00	20.00	37.50	66.67	36.36	66.67
Fence Maintenance (F)	100.00	90.00	100.00	100.00	90.91	100.00
Grass Management (G)	86.67	100.00	87.50	100.00	90.91	100.00
Providing Herbicide (Hp)	40.00	40.00	25.00	33.33	45.45	66.67
Herbicide Application (Ha)	60.00	60.00	50.00	66.67	72.73	66.67
Liability Insurance (L)	46.67	70.00	37.50	33.33	72.73	66.67
Distrib. Salt & Mineral (Sd)	86.67	100.00	87.50	100.00	81.82	100.00
Provide Salt & Mineral (Sp)	33.33	10.00	37.50	33.33	36.36	66.67
Guaranteed Count (C)	26.67	30.00	25.00	0.00	36.36	0.00
Riding/Checking Cattle (R)	80.00	100.00	87.50	100.00	81.82	100.00
Gather Cattle (Gc)	73.33	100.00	75.00	66.67	81.82	100.00
Other	6.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 4a. Care Services Average Lease Rates by Lease Types: 600-Pound Steer/Heifer

Care Services	Average Lease Rates				
	Full Summer Season		Short Summer Season		3/4 Summer Season
	\$/Head	\$/Acre	\$/Head	\$/Acre	\$/Head
BDMFGHpHaLSdSpCRGc	150	-	-	50	-
BDMFGHpHaSdSpRGc	-	-	-	-	90
BDMFGLSdSpCRGc	-	25	-	-	-
BDFGHpHaLSdRGc	-	-	-	35	-
BDFGHpHaSdCRGc	-	-	-	47	-
BDMFLSdSpCRGc	-	25	-	-	-
DMFGLSdSpCRGc	-	-	-	-	150
DMFLSdSpCRGc	-	-	-	-	150
BDFGHaLSdRGc	100	-	84	-	150
BDFGHpHaSdRGc	-	-	-	-	100
BDMFGHaSdRGc	100	-	-	-	-
BDFGLSdRGc	-	-	120	-	-
BDFGSdRGc	185	-	130	-	160
BDFSdRGc	-	35	-	-	-
BDFGSdR	-	-	-	-	80
BDGSdRGc	-	-	120	-	-
FGHpSdR	-	50	-	-	-

- No Response.

Table 4b. Care Services Average Lease Rates by Lease Types: 1250-Pound Cow/Calf

Care Services	Average Lease Rates			
	Full Summer Season		Full Year	
	\$/Head	\$/Acre	\$/Head	\$/Acre
BDMFGHpHaLSdSpCRGc	300	-	-	-
BDMFGHpHaLSdSpRGc	-	-	210	35
BDMFGHpHaSdSpRGc	-	-	-	30
BDMFGLSdSpCRGc	-	25	-	-
DMFGLSdSpCRGc	-	-	-	-
BDFGHpHaSdRGc	215	-	-	-
BGHpHaLSdRGc	210	35	-	-
BDFGLSdRGc	380	-	-	-
DMFHaSdSpRGc	-	25	-	-
BFGHpHaL	-	42	-	-
FGHa	-	25	-	-

- No Response.

Table 5. Average Acres Allowed for Animals (Acre)

Lease Type	Average Acres Allowed (Acres)			
	600-Pound Steer/Heifer		1250-Pound Cow/Calf	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Short Summer Season	2.73	1.25 - 8.00	5.00	4.00 - 6.00
3/4 Summer Season	3.96	2.00 - 10.00	7.61	5.00 - 10.00
Full Summer Season	4.90	2.50 - 13.00	8.07	3.00 - 20.00
Full Year	7.40	3.00 - 10.00	10.92	7.00- 22.00
Winter Grazing	7.50	2.00 - 20.00	8.70	2.10 - 20.00

Table 6a. Average Bluestem Pasture Lease Rates per Head (\$/Head): 600-Pound Steer/Heifer

Lease Type	Average Lease Price per Head (\$/Head)			
	Without Care		With Care	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Short Summer Season	96.22	50 - 150	107.60	50 - 130
3/4 Summer Season	1/	1/	125.71	80 - 160
Full Summer Season	117.50	100 - 150	133.75	100 - 185
Full Year	-	-	-	-
Winter Grazing	-	-	1/	1/

- No Response.

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

Table 6b. Average Bluestem Pasture Lease Rates per Acre (\$/Acre): 600-Pound Steer/Heifer

Lease Type	Average Lease Price per Acre (\$/Acre)			
	Without Care		With Care	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Short Summer Season	37.45	20 - 64	44.00	35 - 50
3/4 Summer Season	32.67	25 - 45	-	-
Full Summer Season	30.28	18 - 42	33.75	25 - 50
Full Year	29.43	17 - 42	1/	1/
Winter Grazing	1/	1/	-	-

- No response.

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

Table 7a. Average Bluestem Pasture Lease Rates per Head (\$/Head): 1250-Pound Cow/Calf

Lease Type	Average Lease Price per Head (\$/Head)			
	Without Care		With Care	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Short Summer Season	-	-	-	-
3/4 Summer Season	274.00	200 - 390	1/	1/
Full Summer Season	210.84	100 - 400	276.25	210 - 380
Full Year	290.00	250 - 320	1/	1/
Winter Grazing	1/	1/	-	-

- No Response.

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

Table 7b. Average Bluestem Pasture Lease Rates per Acre (\$/Acre): 1250-Pound Cow/Calf

Lease Type	Average Lease Price per Acre (\$/Acre)			
	Without Care		With Care	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Short Summer Season	42.77	21.87 - 64	1/	1/
3/4 Summer Season	1/	1/	-	-
Full Summer Season	30.13	18 - 42	30.40	25 - 42
Full Year	30.22	17 - 50	32.50	30 - 35
Winter Grazing	26.75	7 - 40	-	-

-No Response.

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

Table 8a. Bluestem Pasture Custom Fence Building Rates in Miles, by Post Types

Post Type	5 Wire Including Materials (\$/Mile)		5 Wire Excluding Materials (\$/Mile)	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Steel Post Only	14,650.80	5,446 – 19,800	7,351.73	1,500 – 16,500
Steel & Wood Posts	15,376.00	10,000 – 20,000	1/	1/
Combined Rate	14,832.10	5,446-20,000	9,138.80	1,500 – 16,500

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

Table 8b. Bluestem Pasture Custom Fence Building Rates in Rods, by Post Types

Post Type	5 Wire Including Materials (\$/Rod)		5 Wire Excluding Materials (\$/Rod)	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Steel Post Only	45.78	17.02 - 61.88	22.97	4.69 - 51.56
Steel & Wood Posts	48.05	31.25 - 62.50	1/	1/
Combined Rate	46.35	17.02 - 62.50	28.56	4.69 - 51.56

1/ Insufficient reports to publish.

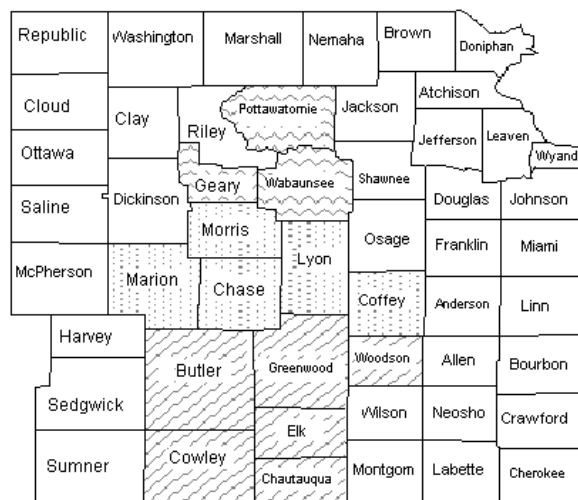
Table 9. Bluestem Pasture Custom Fence Building Charges for Gates

Gate Type	Additional Charge for Gates (\$/Gate)		Number of Gates	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Steel Gates	277.12	25 - 500	2.50	1-4
Wire Gates	130.00	20 - 250	2.50	1-4
Combined Rate	237.89	20-500	2.50	1-4

Table 10. Additional Charges for Bluestem Pasture Custom Fence Building

Additional Charges	Average	Range
Additional Charge for Corners (\$)	332.50	100 - 525
Average Hourly Rate for Rough or Rocky Terrain (\$/Hour)	142.14	70 - 200

Kansas Bluestem Pasture - 14 County Area



Northern Zone



Central Zone



Southern Zone

