**Saying ‘Baa-Bye’ to Buckthorn**

**Spotlight: Nancy Luzer—Ogilvie, Minn.** Mille Lacs Uplands

Nancy Lunzer is no fan of invasive European buckthorn. “Buckthorn’s nasty stuff. It makes a thicket, you can’t get through it, it’s thorny, and it’s horrible!” Unfortunately, Nancy and her husband, Scott, are all too familiar with woods taken over by buckthorn. “There was an area in the northwest corner where only buckthorn grew under the canopy of aspens. And it had pretty much shaded out everything else except for a few ferns … so that the ground was nearly bare except for a little bit of leaf litter.” Because a bare forest floor can lead to soil erosion, Nancy and Scott were concerned about the impact on their ponds and local stream. They were also concerned about how using herbicide may affect the water, so they chose a different strategy to manage their buckthorn problem**—**livestock grazing.

Using a grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, Nancy bought hogs to graze the most invaded places where few native plants remained, rotating the pens through the woods until all understory vegetation had been removed. Nancy notes that using hogs is a last resort, as they disrupt the soil by removing all stems, roots, and seeds that they can find. Sheep however, are slightly more selective and impact the soil a bit less. Nancy grazes sheep in areas where buckthorn plants are smaller and some native species remain, but takes care not to let them overgraze. “If you cut buckthorn, it just grows back thicker and bushier. But if you keep grazing it, you kill the buckthorn … I cut it to sheep-height, and then they graze it off and kill anything that regrows. I’ve been doing that for 2 years and it’s pretty effective. And some of the native species that the sheep don’t eat are coming back.”

Nancy feels that their work helps protect the rest of her property, which is mostly buckthorn-free. She wants to teach other landowners how to remove small buckthorn infestations. “It’s worth it.” ◆

