

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST FOREST AND RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION
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Ronald A. Michieli
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Land & Nat'l. Resources
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Washington, D.C. 20004



Dear Ron,

I apologize for the long delay in replying to your letter of April 17 about livestock reductions on Tuledad-Home Camp. Been busy with seed germination studies and preparing for field trips to Montana and Idaho. But part of the reason for the delay was that I was hard put to figure out how to reply. In your charming way you asked me to "comment" on a problem that has been discussed for over a half century without resolution.

No question that Tuledad-Home Camp, as most ranges in the West, has been heavily deteriorated by livestock grazing. Because of the evident damage on ranges livestock grazing has earned a black name.

Most people in the field of range management, educators and practioners alike, believe the main cause of range deterioration is overstocking and that the range can be maintained under continuous grazing by stocking with a moderate number of animals. They assert that the first step in rehabilitating ranges and getting with good management is to reduce stocking to a moderate or "proper" level. Most ranges in the West, public and private, are managed under this concept. But the idea is fallacious.

Livestock have been reduced on public and other ranges through the years to moderate and even low levels yet deterioration has continued. The reason for this is explained on page 15 under the heading The Problem in Training, Text-4, 2200. I sent you a copy of this publication. Use on Tuledad-Home Camp, for

example, has been reduced from an estimated 750,000 AUMs around 1880, to 155,000 around 1934, and to 46,000 in 1977, still the best grazing sites are heavily overgrazed and continue to deteriorate. There is no end to reductions under continuous grazing.

Proponents of rest-rotation grazing management contend the main cause of range deterioration is continuous grazing not overstocking, and that the range can be maintained under any practical stocking rate if it is rested from use periodically so plants can grow and reproduce normally. Rest-rotation grazing management has proved effective in practice.

Systematic grazing management proposed for allotments on Tuledad-Home Camp is a hybrid incorporating features of both rest-rotation and continuous^{ous} grazing management. The grazing systems used with systematic grazing management are rest-rotation systems. However they are not being applied as they would be under rest-rotation management but are compromised with ideas from continuous grazing management.

Initial stocking rate on Tuledad-Home Camp is being determined as with continued grazing management. It is based on estimates and arbitrary assumptions. Grazing capacity and probable effects of a given stocking or use on resources and livestock are estimated. Arbitrary limits are set on vegetation use in pastures. An immediate heavy cut in stocking that could cause great hardship to operators in being based on such a shaky foundation.

With rest-rotation grazing management stocking rate is determined realistically from actual use on the particular range over a short period of years at the outset of management. Grazing is started with the number of animals that have been grazed on the range in the last two or three years or with any fewer number the livestock operator judges there is capacity for in the pastures scheduled for grazing. Impact of the grazing on resources and livestock are monitored. A reasonably firm basis for initial stocking rate can usually be obtained in 3 or 4 years.

Any sizeable reduction in stocking indicated at the end of the phase-in period to management is made in small amounts over a period of years to give the stockman time to adjust his operation. Adjustments in stocking after the phase-in period are made on the basis of observed impacts on resources, environment, and livestock as earlier. With rest-rotation management of

grazing the range is maintained throughout. (Stocking, page 19, TT-4, 2200.)

About cultural treatments such as seeding and spraying. I recommend managing the range for a few years and then observing if there is still need for treatments. Results with management alone may suffice (Cultural Practices, page 23, TT-4, 2200.)

Again, I apologize for being so late in responding.

Sincerely,

AUGUST L. HORMAY