

Annual Meeting Utah Cattlemen's Association  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
December 3, 1971

COMMON SENSE

A. L. Hormay  
Bureau of Land Management  
Berkeley, California

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

I believe the beef cattle and sheep industries are far and away the most important industries in Utah. They influence practically every other activity in the State.

More than 85 percent of the land area in Utah is grazed by livestock. Besides livestock, these 46 million acres produce many other values, such as water, wildlife, recreation, and timber, that are vital to the welfare of the people of the State.

These renewable resources all stem from vegetation, directly or indirectly. Their yield and quality are determined by the kinds of plants growing on the land. The most important force under control of man determining the plant composition is livestock grazing and therefore, production of renewable resources. Proper management of livestock grazing is essential to the livestock industry and to the entire economy of the State.

Utah rangelands, as those of other western states, have been rather heavily deteriorated in the past 100 years by several forces, but mainly by livestock grazing. Desirable plants have been reduced or killed out

entirely and inferior ones have increased on many areas. The plant cover has been thinned. Top soil has been eroded away and the production capacity of the land reduced. Grazing capacity for livestock has declined 50 percent or more. The rangeland environment has been seriously degraded primarily because of mismanagement of livestock grazing.

Much criticism has been directed at stockmen for the poor condition of many ranges. Some of this has come from special interests and the public because of conditions on public lands. This criticism is not justified, however. Stockmen are not responsible for management of public lands.

Private ranges have been deteriorated as well. Why? It is hardly reasonable to think stockmen would knowingly destroy the very resource on which they depend for a living. I believe stockmen just have not been adequately informed on sound, practical grazing management practices.

Scientific facts underlying good grazing management have been known for over a half century. Yet they have not been used appreciably until recently. The reason is that many in range management circles embraced the idea that range deterioration is caused mainly by overstocking, and that light or moderate stocking is necessary to effect range improvement. This premise is untenable. Ranges cannot be improved over-all by regulating stocking rate because of the selective grazing habits of livestock.

Livestock graze vegetation selectively by species. Invariably, they graze the more palatable ones closely. If a plant is grazed closely for a period of years, it dies because it cannot make food for itself. So under continuous grazing the more desirable forage plants are killed progressively, leading to deterioration of the range. The range can be grazed fully and improved and maintained, however, if it is rested from use periodically -- in other words, if it is used under a rest-rotation grazing system.

There are several different rotation grazing systems. All involve rest. Rest-rotation grazing is distinctive, however, in that it is a designed system. It is designed for the particular range and to meet plant, soil, and animal requirements and management objectives. All other rotation systems are of fixed design and fit only certain situations.

I do not have time today to describe rest-rotation grazing management in detail. But here are some of its main features: First, as just mentioned, it is a designed system. On public lands the system should be designed by the land managing agency and the stockman together, aided by other interests that may be concerned, such as other land managing agencies, State Fish and Game Department, Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Conservation Program Service, and State Agricultural Extension Service. The system is as effective and practical as the designers make it.

It is a pasture system involving two or more pastures. Some are rested and others grazed in a given year. Rest is incorporated in a rest-rotation system to provide the plant opportunity to make food, for seed to ripen, and reproduction to establish.

The range can be used any time of year and stocked at any rate desired under the system.

The system can be put into effect with the number of livestock currently grazing the range.

Proper livestock grazing -- which means rest-rotation grazing -- is essential to the maintenance of a vigorous livestock industry. Livestock grazing is essential for best management of rangelands. Livestock trample seed into the soil, aiding in regeneration of the plant cover. They remove old growth from plants and promote fresh, more usable growth. They stimulate greater than normal growth in many species. Livestock grazing is being used specifically to produce more food for big-game animals. Livestock grazing can be used to reduce plant competition around young trees, aiding forest regeneration, and to reduce fire hazard.

Proper livestock grazing is in fact man's most important wildland tool. So as I said earlier, the beef cattle and sheep industries are far and away the most important industries in the State. It is just common sense to see it this way.