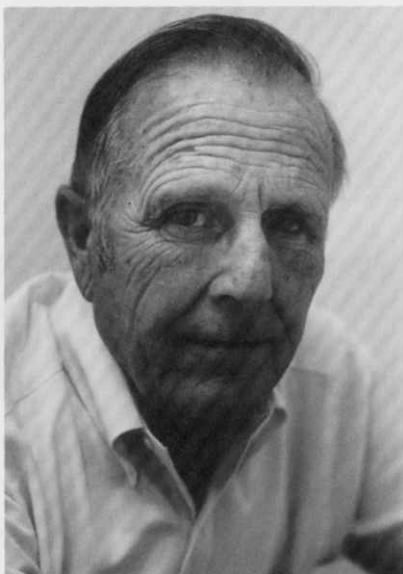


# Raising Beef on Public Land

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Horace Mayes headed production of the annual book *Arizona Agricultural Statistics* from 1970 to 1981 as state statistician for the Arizona Crop and Livestock Reporting Service. This year, he worked on special assignment for the UA College of Agriculture to develop a data base about Arizona ranches. Gathering information throughout the state, he has gotten to know many Arizona farmers and ranchers.

Arizona ranches vary widely in numbers of acres and cattle, but one trait almost all of them share is the use of public land.

A new tabulation of grazing permits for federal and state land in Arizona shows 1,755 ranches using public land, excluding Indian reservations. The number of solely private-land ranches with more than 50 cattle is small, though a few of them are among the largest operations in the state.

Corralling together records from the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the State Land Department reveals patterns of land ownership and ranch size.

For example, only about one-third of the ranches using Forest Service land also use other public land, while about two-thirds of the ranches using BLM land also include land owned by the Forest Service or the state.

Arizona ranches include examples of every combination of private, state, BLM and Forest Service land. Separate records for public-land grazing permits total 1,580 for state land, 929 for BLM and 632 for Forest Service. Merging separate records for the same ranch name or owner name gives the figure of 1,755 ranches using public land.

Of the 73 million acres in Arizona, only about 11 million acres are owned by individuals or corporations. The rest are public land. Much of the public land, especially BLM land and state land, is interspersed with private land in checkerboard patterns.

Indian reservations have 20 million acres in Arizona. On the reservations, private land is not intermixed with public. Virtually all livestock producers using reservation land are tribal members who do not use other public or private grazing land.

The numbers in the rest of this discussion and in the graphs exclude Indian reservations. Federal land other than BLM and Forest Service lands are also left out. These other federal lands, such as national parks and military areas, amount to 8 million acres. They support little grazing of livestock.

Of the 9.7 million acres of state-owned land, 8.8 million are leased for grazing. State Land Department records do not tell the amount of private land managed by ranchers with state grazing leases.

BLM and Forest Service records do show the acreage of private land managed as part of each allotment. It totals 2.8 million acres of private land managed with 12.6 million of BLM land and 7.2 million in national forests.

The amount of land in each grazing permit varies from less than 80 acres to, in 12 cases, more than 200,000 acres. Most small permits, without records of other public or private land are state leases. The larger permits are mostly BLM allotments in arid Mohave, Yuma and western Maricopa counties.

Ranchers using public land pay for their leases or allotments. Arizonans' grazing payments for fiscal 1981 brought \$5.5 million to federal, state and county governments.

Ranches that combine BLM and state land add up to 12 million acres of public land, far more than ranches with any other pattern of public ownership (see Figure One). The next largest category, ranches whose public land includes only Forest Service land, totals 5 million acres. Almost 2 million acres of public land are on ranches that have all three types: state, BLM and Forest Service.

Much of the BLM land in the state supports fewer than five cattle per square mile. Forest Service land is generally more productive.

Figure Two shows that 40 percent of Arizona ranchers with public-land grazing rights use 90 percent of the rangeland in public leases and allotments. That is, the 693 ranches with 10,000 or more acres hold grazing rights for 28 million acres.

Similarly, 42 percent of the ranches that include public land account for 91 percent of the livestock carrying capacity – the number of mature cattle the land can support on a continuing basis. Those are the 736 ranches with carrying capacities for 100 or more cattle each. These comparisons exclude private land on ranches with only state and private land.

The new tabulation of users and combinations of public grazing land should aid analysis and planning for the future management of these lands.

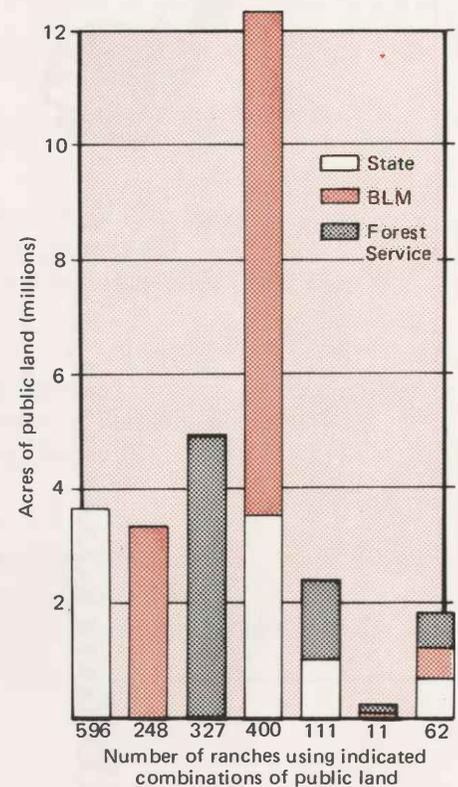


Figure One. Ranches in Arizona use many combinations of public lands. The amounts of public land used for ranching, and the combinations used by individual ranches, are shown here.

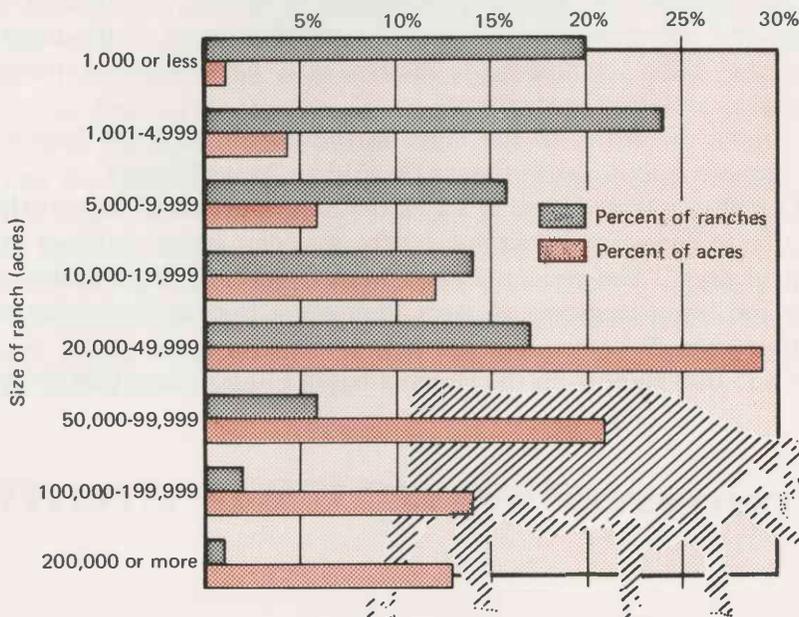


Figure Two. Portions of ranch numbers and of total acreage are given by categories of ranch size. For example, the 6 percent of ranches that are each between 50,000 and 99,999 acres add up to 21 percent of the ranch area in the state. Sources: State Land Department, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management.