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University of Arizona College of Agriculture

EXTENSION SERVICE

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MANAGEMENT OF RANGE BULLS

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A uniform bunch of Hereford calves. Born and bred in Arizona

MANAGEMENT OF RANGE BULLS

The management of bulls under range conditions is a problem which range men in Arizona are beginning to take seriously. The following factors are those which have brought the proposition to their attention:

1. Percentage of calves dropped on the range.
2. Conformation of calves.
3. Strength and vitality.
4. Uniformity of age.
5. Decrease in the percentage of the death rate.

WINTER PASTURE FOR BULLS

One of the best ways to increase the percentage of calves dropped is to take the bulls off of the range in the fall and put them in a pasture by themselves. It is well to choose a pasture which has not had any stock on it during the growing season. Such pastures are apt to have sufficient

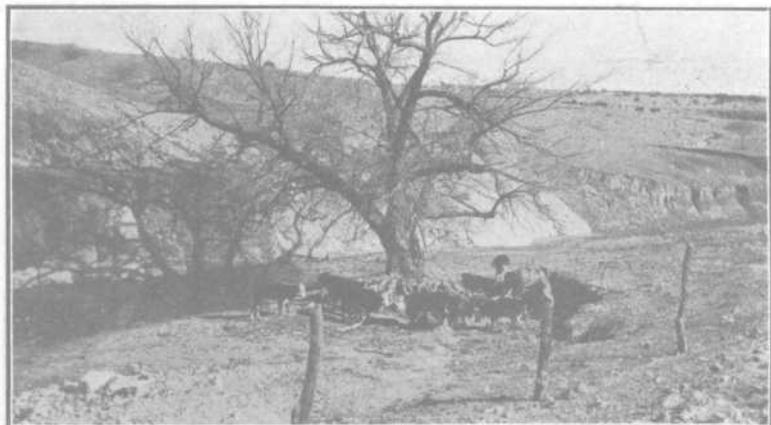


Fig. 1.—A uniform bunch of calves, showing the good results of removing the bull from the range so the calves will all come about the same time.

grass to carry these animals through the winter in good condition. If not, extra feed will have to be supplied, say, alfalfa hay, silage, milo, cottonseed cake, or cottonseed, feeding from one-half to two pounds of grain per day. All that will be necessary will be to keep the bulls in a good, healthy and vigorous condition, not to make them "big fat." Animals which are too fat do not make the best breeders under range conditions. It will be beneficial if the pasture does not contain natural shelter, to build them a shelter. Money thus invested should yield a good rate of interest to the cattlemen in the shape of feed saved and conserved energy of the bulls.

Another important advantage in favor of the winter pasture for bulls will be the possibility of securing a better grade of bulls for range purposes. Many cattlemen at the present time object to buying pure bred bulls which are not acclimated to Arizona conditions, accustomed to our grazing ranges, or which do not understand how to rustle for themselves. If a system of separation is practiced these bulls would only be on the range during breeding season, during which time the ranges are usually in their best condition for grazing purposes.

What should these bulls be expected to return for this kind of treatment? The reward will be as follows:

1. Larger percentage of calves dropped.
2. Greater vitality.
3. Uniformity of age.
4. Lower death rate.
5. Uniformity of size.
6. Uniformity in color and conformation.

UNIFORM CALVES

By using pure-bred bulls, such as Hereford, Shorthorn, etc., uniformity may be secured.

Nothing will add more to the sale of these animals than uniformity of size, color, and age when they are put on the market. A pure-bred Hereford bull



Fig. 2.—Uniform calf crop showing results obtained when the bulls are taken from the range.

mated to a Mexican longhorn or other scrub cow will produce offspring which will have a white face and a body ranging from light to dark red. If they are to be put on the market as feeders the man who feeds them is very desirous of obtaining individuals which are very uniform. He can secure better results from his feeding, because he can control the feeding operations to such an extent that he can have the animals ripe and ready to put on the market all at the same time.

When the bulls are separated from the cows during the winter and spring months, cattlemen control the time of year when the calves will be dropped, and instead of calves being dropped in every month of the year, as at present, they can have them coming at the most favorable seasons according to the location of the ranch in the State. It will be of advantage to have them dropped before the screw fly is making its rounds, thus saving time, labor, and money. Furthermore, the death rate will be decreased both among cows and calves. A cow which is in thin condition but which might manage to pull through until the spring has started, usually loses her life trying to give birth to a calf in January or in some of the other months which are cold and unfavorable for calving.

What can be expected of the bull if left out all winter to rustle for himself during the cold winter months? This is what may be expected and what usually happens:

1. A small calf crop.
2. Calves of all ages and sizes.
3. Lack of vitality and conformation in calves.
4. Heavy death rate among calves and cows.
5. Bulls which are thin in flesh and run down in vitality.

A bull which is thin in flesh and run down in vitality is no more in shape to enter the breeding season that a draft horse is to catch a three-year-old

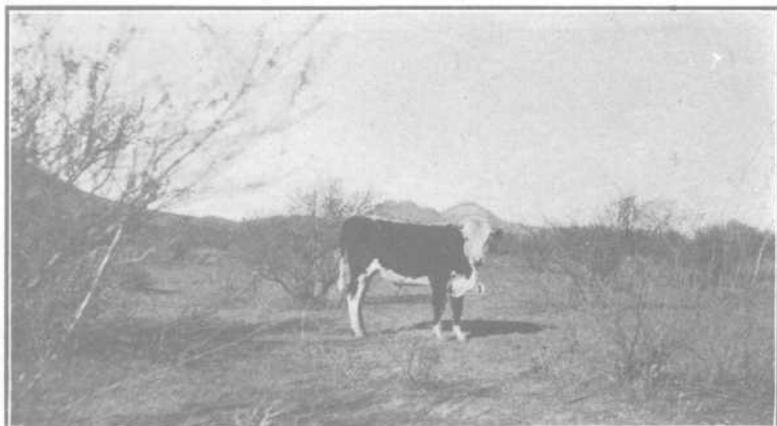


Fig. 3.—A bull in poor condition to enter breeding season.

steer. The bulls which are left on the range all winter come into the breeding season lacking vitality and constitution and do not serve more than 35 to 50 per cent of the cows they should—and as a result out of every 100 cows running on the range you only get from 35 to 50 calves. The bulls instead of mingling among the cows spend their time gathering every sprig of grass possible to sustain their own bodies. If these bulls are taken off the range in the fall and given some extra care, when the breeding season comes on they will be in such good breeding condition that they will serve more cows and increase the per cent of offspring from 50 to 75 or 85 per cent, perhaps more.

Some cattlemen say, "Well, that is all right for the small rancher under fence, but it will not work at all on the open range. Many stockmen have their cattle on the range, and if one of us should care to use the separation system, we would not get the full benefit." The majority of the small stockmen under fence are separating the bulls from the cows during the winter and are using only one bull to 25 and 40 cows and are getting a percentage of calves from 85 to 94.

It is true that it would be more difficult for the open range stockmen to handle the bulls in this manner, but the thing to do would be for the cattlemen to get together and fence a few hundred acres, dividing the expense of the fence and using it only for the winter pasture of the bulls. If it should be necessary to supplement the pasture with any feed, the expense of this feed should also be divided according to the number of bulls which each man might have. The first year the increase of calves which they would receive would be enough to pay for the fence, and from that point on all the increase in calves would be clear profit after the feed and the cost of rounding up and distributing the bulls had been determined.

At the price which yearling steers are bringing one cannot afford to be without those 20 to 30 additional calves for every hundred cows which are running on the range. The cattlemen cannot afford to keep the 50 non-producing cows out of every hundred, which only consume the grass that really belongs to the cows that are producing calves.