

# Our Responsibility to Youth and Range Management

Connee R. Quinn



It often has been stated that range is the primary resource of a ranching operation and, as is true with all resources, the resource must be used wisely in order that its potential be maximized. We are but stewards of the land, and in this role our most important legacy is to pass the urgency of this task on to our young people. The challenge for proper range management is greater today than it has ever been before in the history of mankind.

The objectives of the Society for Range Management are "to foster a comprehensive understanding of range ecosystems and the intelligent use of all range resources." A synonym that can be used, then, for this intelligent use of the land is *range management*. According to Hershel M. Bell, a long-time range conservationist, the first requirement of the range manager is to have the ability to read the landscape, or the "rangelandscape" if you will. He must be able to see the land clearly in terms of range resource. In addition the range manager must be able to make a judgement as to present production in relation to potential, and if changes are to be made the manager must be able to implement practices for improvement.

The Nebraska Handbook of Range Management states: "It is vitally important for ranchers to know how range plants grow in order to plan grazing programs that will improve productivity." A good range manager must have a working knowledge of plant physiology. He must know that the growth and development of grasses and forbs are dependent on the following four essentials:

- strong root system,
- normally developed and maintained top growth,
- adequate amount of space, and
- adequate supply of nutrients.

These are the minimum requirements for maximum growth and production of any plant. I think we can safely say, with certain modification that these are the requirements of any living thing.

We have identified then that a range manager must have the ability to read the range, understand what he has read, and make decisions based on this understanding. To condense these points we might say that range management is the development of skills together with the development of the ability to make intelligent choices.

This article is based on a talk the author presented at the SRM Annual meeting at Casper, Wyoming, February 1979.

Connee was born and raised on a ranch in northwestern Nebraska and southern South Dakota. Her background is in teaching, ranching, and working with 4-H and FFA Clubs. Currently, she is sales representative for Elanco Products, the agricultural division of Eli Lilly and Company in five parts of five states—North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming. Her educational background is in animal sciences and nutrition.

Most of us are actively involved in some phase of range management. A few possess all of the abilities necessary to manage the land and many are still striving to master these competencies. However, we are acutely aware of the basic requirements needed to use the land intelligently. Indeed we have as an objective of the Society the promotion of a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This awareness gives us the basis of a solid educational program.

In order to build on this foundation, we must also understand that as living beings the needs of youth are very similar to the needs of a grass plant. In fact these needs—a strong root system with maintained growth and an adequate amount of both space and nutrients—must be the paramount consideration as we put together an educational program.

The strong *root system*, of course, must be considered first because it is necessary to all subsequent growth. It is our duty as the adult population not only to be interested but to be involved in our educational programs. This involvement can start early in a child's life; and as soon as he or she is able to understand, a foundation can be laid that will result in a lifelong respect for and active interest in the range.

4-H projects, FFA programs, and courses of study in vocational agriculture which emphasize plant identification, site definition, and improvement techniques maintain and nature young people's interest—they support the *top growth*. The educational efforts of the Old West Regional Programs—Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, North and South Dakota—have added many resources at the local level, and I have personally witnessed the enthusiasm these programs can generate.

As an organization (SRM) we must continue to sponsor and support such existing programs and initiate new programs as the need arises. As individuals we can offer our services and as community members and tax payers we can encourage local school districts to include fundamentals of range management as an important part of the curriculum. Especially should this hold in those districts largely supported by rangeland taxation.

Range experts must insist that these curricula will insure a solid basis of understanding and include teaching both time-tested techniques and innovative practices. These types of programs will give young people a strong root system supplying them with the knowledge necessary to make wise decisions and the skills necessary to implement them. But the maintenance of this root system and the support of the top growth is dependent on additional programs which continue to interest—continue to educate and continue to challenge the individual.

In formulating such programs, however, we must be aware of

youth's impatience and disdain of effort that is not immediately and obviously profitable. We must continue to pull but refrain from pushing in the enthusiasm of our task. We must give these young people an adequate amount of *space* and always maintain their interest and respect by the continuance of sound practices ourselves. Let our effort and experience serve as a stimulus for future work.

And finally we must, and this is absolutely essential, maintain and continually expand a supply of *nutrients* necessary for the development of a strong, healthy mind. Such "nutrients" may be discovered by searching through methods of both pure and applied science to discover new and better techniques with which to manage the land. There must be stimulating courses of study available for those students who return to the ranch as well as for those individuals who pursue non-ranch careers in range management. As with the management of grassland, if these

conditions are allowed to exert their influence, optimum growth and production will result.

In this very brief comment on a complex subject, I have tried to outline our responsibilities as members of the Society for Range Management to youth and education. I feel that we can best meet the challenges of the times and achieve the objectives of this Society if we combine the energy and enthusiasm of youth with the experience and expertise of age in an excellent youth program. This will assure us that our work not only will be continued but undoubtedly be improved in the years to come.

We must make a firm commitment now to these responsibilities and continue in our endeavors if we are to provide future generations with individuals that have developed the capabilities needed to make intelligent choices in the management of the land. What greater legacy can we leave than a new generation well-prepared for the tasks ahead? ●



## Better Oral Communications For Range Managers Series—No. 4

# Talk to People, Not Audiences

Clayton B. Marlow

Public speakers will address many audiences, shaping their presentations to each. That is to say, they and you—the professional range manager—will talk to an audience, but must communicate with the people in it. To do that, you must speak to people as individuals, not as a group. If you are to create a favorable impression in their minds, your talk must be adjusted to what you perceive to be their interests and concerns.

As Frank Busby pointed out in the first paper of this series, you must talk to the average members of the audience while trying to pick up the below-average ones at some points in the speech and challenging those above average at others. Knowledge of your audience's background, training and experience is paramount in developing such a talk. To illustrate the point, consider giving a talk on burning as a sagebrush control method to (1) a Section meeting of the Society for Range Management, (2) a local chapter of the Audubon Society, and (3) the appropriations committee of a state legislature.

To the SRM members you might say: "Most western rangelands are covered with dense stands of sagebrush. Such cover is considered unproductive for livestock and game, and of little use as watersheds. A recent controlled burn we conducted has shown that burning coupled with reseeding can be both effective and economical in removing sagebrush while tripling livestock carrying capacity."

As guest speaker at the Audubon Society meeting, you could begin with: "Sagebrush has increased on certain western rangelands. Increased shrub density has little value for game forage or as a watershed. Mechanical control such as plowing or chopping can expose soils to increased erosion, while chemical control may leave toxic residues in soils, plants, and animals. Controlled burning, a relatively low-cost technique, employs a natural component of the ecosystem with a very short-term

impact on plants and animals. Removal of dense sagebrush stands, followed by reseeding, can increase production of animal forage."

At a legislative appropriations hearing you could state: "High density stands of undesirable shrubs on the state's livestock and wildlife ranges are counter-productive to animal management programs. While mechanical and chemical treatments have been effective in shrub control, inflation and governmental regulation have made both expensive and difficult to use. Controlled burning and reseeding have been found to be less costly in both environmental and economic parameters than either mechanical or chemical control methods."

There, you've done it. You've presented the same message to three different audiences, but tailored it each time to *their* interests and concerns. As a result, each talk had a different orientation, yet each was presented in such a manner as to convey equivalent messages. All three groups should now understand that controlled burning removes undesirable shrubs at low cost, without hazardous impacts on the local ecosystem, while improving animal carrying capacity. You have tried to talk to *people* at the leave of their interest, which may or may not be your level. While none of us can be all things to all people, we can improve our ability to make ourselves understood in this way.

It takes time and effort, but public speakers must cultivate the habit of speaking to people, not audiences. There are a variety of means by which this can be done, but the steps remain the same: (1) learn as much as possible about the group, (2) know what their objectives are, and (3) know what they consider to be critical issues. Then cast your talk against that background. This may require you to compose or alter the organization of the speech, its length, its method of delivery, its level of detail, and even its vocabulary so as to retain *their* interest while presenting *your* message. Be prepared to be flexible in both what you say and how you say it—the hallmarks of effective oral communication.