

The record of one prominent ranching family located just north of the village of Matfield Green mirrors the history of others who would forever try to protect and preserve the natural pastures. Wayne Rogler's paternal grandfather walked south from Iowa, stopping along the South Fork of the Cottonwood River, while the maternal grandfather Sauble rode a horse out from Maryland and settled on Cedar Creek to the southwest of what is today Matfield Green. For years, now, three generations of Roglers have made a living and built their lives around grass and cattle. In the 1970's Wayne Rogler wrote, "We who love grass and see it as our great blessing, are seemingly willing to face the adversities. There are those of us who will continue to hazard their all for this particular way of life." The lives of Charles, Henry, and Wayne Rogler have spanned the history of white man's livestock development on this beautiful pasture. Their ranch has supported up to 10,000 head of cattle at a time, while their neighbors, the Crocker Brothers' place (recently sold to Sam Methvin) has sustained as many as 18,000 to 20,000. These ranchers have dealt with the problems of predators, water or the lack of it, brush and

weed control, and low beef prices knowing always that it was all for naught unless the human spirit flourished. They recognized that the spirit flourished if nature's ways were respected as concerned the protection of the natural grasses.

The Chase County courthouse building at Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, stands out beautifully from the rolling hills surrounding it. This structure is a memorial to the dead and living who would preserve the wonderful legacy of the past. At the same time, this striking courthouse may offer an appeal to the unborn beseeching those future generations not to unduly molest that lovely area so adorned by nature. In closing it seems fitting to quote John J. Ingalls' words which are inscribed on his tombstone at Atchison, Kansas:

When the fitful fever is ended, and the foolish wrangle of the forum and the market is closed, grass heals over the scar that our descent into earth has made, and the carpet of the infant becomes the blanket of the dead.

We are reminded of his concept that "all flesh is grass," and we again ask if grass is forever?

Desert Ranching in Central Nevada

Evan A. Zimmerman

The Zimmerman Ranching Corporation is a family-owned and operated ranch located in Central Nevada. The members of the Corporation are my wife and I, and four sons: Ross, a veterinarian, Ted, Dennis, Arnie and their families.

The families live at five different locations on the ranch. The cattle are grazed in Smokey and Monitor Valleys, and on Monitor, Toquima, and Toiyabe Ranges. Ours is a cow-calf operation with the steer calves, at weaning age, moved to meadowlands for finishing. At times they are fed ranch-grown alfalfa and meadow hay until sold at 20-22 months of age.

Very little help is hired in the winter because ours is mainly a family run ranch. Usually, there are two hired men in winter, one at the RO headquarters ranch and one at the Disaster Peak ranch, where the steers are finished. In March eight additional men are hired for spring, summer, and fall work for moving and handling cattle, irrigating and haying, and for general ranch work.

My wife and I have been ranching in Nevada for 30 years, that's 22 at Disaster Peak, 6 at the RO Ranch and a couple of years at the Triple T and Monitor Ranches. Our main ranch brand is the I lazy F; we also use the Seven K and the Flat O.

Our cattle are run roughly on 1½ million acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 1 million acres of National Forest land, and a 1 million acres of Section 15 land administered by the BLM. In addition, our steers are run on 55,000 acres of BLM administered land at the Disaster Peak Ranch.

The Disaster Peak Ranch, near McDermitt, Nev., has a rest and rotation system on an allotment that is fenced into 9 pastures. Three pastures are totally rested every year. Furthermore, the pastures are used differently every year. For example, a particular pasture may be used in the spring one year before seeds ripen or after they ripen another year, or late in the fall yet another year. Sometimes the livestock are permitted to eat all the forage and another time they are allowed only 30, 40, 50, 60, or 70 percent usage. It all depends on what we think this certain pasture needs. If the cattle eat the forage right into the ground early in the spring one year, that pasture will then be rested for the rest of that year and all of the next year. The following year it might not be used until very late in the fall. There is no standard rule for when or how to use each pasture each year. The chief guideline is what each pasture looks like before cattle are turned in. Observation during the time they are in a certain pasture determines whether it should be used for a short or long period. These decisions are not made alone. They are made with the cooperation and approval of BLM personnel. It is of the utmost importance that we as public domain range users take care

The author ranches at Round Mountain, Nev.

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from a slide talk the author gave at a joint meeting of the Nevada and Arizona Sections in January 1980 at Lake Havasu City, Arizona. He did such a good job that he was invited to prepare an article for *Rangelands* based on his presentation.



Ted Zimmerman looking out over a vegetative sea of shadscale browse and Indian ricegrass on the Zimmerman Ranch.

of our grazing allotments. When a range user's allotment is in a well-managed grazing system, animals—both domestic and wildlife—will benefit.

On our BLM range in Central Nevada, we have been voluntarily resting a part of the range for the past 4 years. It has shown a tremendous improvement. The range is rested without fencing. This is successively done by riding during the winter months to keep the cattle off the rested area and by water control. We have been trying to demonstrate that areas can be rested without having to put out tremendous costs of installing and maintaining fences. Moreover, in the winter fences can become death traps for cattle during big snow storms. These desert cattle are in their natural habitat just as wildlife species are, so, when they are not fenced and a big storm hits, they are able to move and thus take care of themselves.

Although we do have some grass, our range is basically a browse range. Our cattle are browse cattle—not grass cattle. They eat different types of brush, weeds, and some grasses, willow and aspen leaves and even wild flowers—all of which are indigenous to the range. The different browse species include white and bur sage, shadscale, horsebrush, blackbrush, bitterbrush, rabbitbrush, and Brigham sage. Indian ricegrass, western wheatgrass, and galleta are the main grasses available. Tumbleweed and halogeton are the basic weeds found here. Our cattle never take more than a bite or two out of any one shrub as they graze along. They eat only certain shrubs at certain times. Sometimes they might be eating only flowers and weeds.

Poisonous plants give us very little trouble. The only ones we have are halogeton and locoweed. The first is no problem unless we move a bunch of cattle onto it. They will be hungry and gorge, and it's fatal under those conditions. Otherwise, the cattle nibble lightly on the plant as they do all plants and there is no problem. Locoweed is another matter, but then it's only a problem during droughts, when it is the only green plant available. We watch for it during droughts and move cattle around to avoid it.

We have almost no disease problems such as scours or pneumonia in calves, shipping fever in yearling steers, or foot rot. The cattle are vaccinated for black leg. Our cattle are very healthy and this is attributed to their diet and partly to the fact they do not congregate in large bunches in small areas. Desert cattle, such as we have, travel in small bunches or family groups with 6, 8, or 10, and no more than 18 or 20 head in a group.

We like a small amount of Brahman blood in the cattle because it is a strain of *Bos indicus*—cattle especially bred for our type of range. These cattle will easily go 8 miles to water. They eat and do well on all kinds of browse on the range. The cows have small-headed and small-hipped calves, making birth easy on young cows. They are tough cattle that can adapt and therefore survive out on the open range the year around. To achieve this goal, a cow that can survive, Herefords are maintained as the base strain. Brahman blood is introduced through the use of Brangus, Santa Gertrudis, Charbray, and some straight Brahman bulls. Charbray bulls do the best job, followed by Brangus and then Santa Gertrudis. A few Hereford bulls are kept to maintain the base strain. Some of the best looking bull calves are saved from the herd for future use. It is very important to have a bull with each of the family groups of cattle that travel together so the cows get bred. The most expensive animal owned is a dry cow. Bulls stay with the cows the year around. We usually average about 75 percent calf crop.

Not only are these cattle survivors, they also do well when they go across the scales at market time. Steers are weaned at 8-9 months of age and trucked to the Disaster Peak Ranch, where they are kept until long yearlings, 20 to 22 months of age, before being sold. Weaning and selling weights vary from year to year. (The last three have been good ones.) Calves recently have been making 500 to 550 pounds of gain, whereas earlier, they made as low as 375 pounds gain. Last year (1979) was the best ever. The pay weight was 892 pounds. Selling weights the past four years have been 812, 828, 856, and 892 pounds. Weights have improved a little each year, so we feel that we are on the right track in establishing a good strain of cattle and in managing our ranges. Everything that we have depends on the old cow. We have no other income and have not inherited any big sums of money. At market time we have to have the numbers and weight or we will not make it.

Steers do not receive any supplements of any kind during the time we have them. They are born and raised on the ranges and come to the meadows at Disaster Peak for their last two months before being sold. Before the steers come onto the meadows, they are on BLM land at the Disaster Peak Ranch. The cow herd receives no supplements either. Therefore, our cattle are converting browse into organic red meat protein, a delicious health food that is both very nutritious and highly beneficial to the health of human beings.



These are typical cross-bred cattle on the Zimmerman Ranch. The cow in front is eating horsebrush.

On many ranches it is standard practice to wean the heifers along with the steers. We, however, do not do this. We leave the heifer calves with their mothers because they must learn from their mothers how to survive on the desert. They must learn where to go—when it storms, when there is a shortage of water, and when there is a shortage of forage. They need to know how to utilize country that is long on feed but short on water, and to eat snow so they will not have to go for water for long periods of time. The young heifer has to learn all these things from its mother, so that the next year when she comes out of the fields as a bred heifer she will know how to take care of herself and raise her calf at the same time. Her mother will wean her at the proper time. If we did wean her by keeping her in the fields to put on weight and then sent her back on the desert the following winter as a bred heifer, we would be signing her death warrant. She would not know how to take care of herself or her calf. What our cattle have in the way that they take care of themselves in their natural habitat is a very special and priceless commodity. The only way it can be taken from them is by man imposing rules and regulations that are impractical such as fences, not allowing cattle where water is farther than 4 miles, nor where it takes more than 32 acres to graze a cow. These regulations could work in a different kind of a country or with a different strain of cattle. But these regulations on this kind of range will take away this priceless commodity these cattle have developed to adjust to whatever way their natural environment may go.

Coyotes are a problem at times. They are the worst during the winter and early spring months when young cows are

calving. When coyotes start travelling in packs of 6, 8, or 10, they become a very serious problem. Just last winter we had a large bunch of young heifers calving in the fields at the RO Ranch where I live. It was a very cold winter and the coyotes were hungry and started to bunch up. As soon as the heifers started calving the coyotes began killing the tiny calves. They generally killed the calves as they were being born or soon afterwards. So, I know for sure that coyotes don't just go tripping through the field chasing butterflies—they also rip and slash baby calves. It is very hard to get an actual figure on just how many calves they do kill, because they eat everything of a baby calf—I mean everything, head, skull, bones, feet, everything! Oftentimes, after having eaten a newly born calf, they will begin to eat the heifer if she cannot stand up right away. They will begin on her back parts that are bloody from calving and proceed to eat her alive!

We don't have wild horse problems, but this is a very big problem on many Nevada ranches. The wild horses will have to be managed soon because they are doing irreparable damage to our renewable natural resources on many ranges—damage that may take up to 20 years or longer to fix.

At the Zimmerman Ranch we enjoy living the way we do and working the way we do. It's our way of life. I think that these western ranges can be improved, some more than others. Everybody who wants to use these ranges could and should work together not only for their own interests but for all interests. There is no reason that all interests cannot be working at the same time for the same goal or goals. For sure, a court battle does nothing for the ground.

Dogs From Hungary to Guard U.S. Sheep From Coyotes

Coyotes won't kill sheep protected by a Hungarian-bred dog called the Komondor. That is the hope of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is currently testing the dogs for just such a purpose.

The Western sheep industry is declining, and a major reason is the large number of sheep lost each year to coyotes. Since 1972, poisoning has been Federally banned and guns, steel traps, and other lethal control methods have proved incapable of stopping the slaughter.

Non-lethal control methods, such as repellants and sterilizing agents, need more development before being put to widespread use. Surprisingly little attention, however, has been given to the use of the guard dog, which traditionally has never been popular in this country.

Guard dogs have been bred for centuries to protect livestock from predators in Europe and Asia. The Hungarian Komondor was developed more than a 1,000 years ago for use against wolves.

A large and powerful dog—adult males stand a minimum of 25½ inches at the shoulders and weigh from 80 to 120 pounds, females are slightly smaller—the Komondor features a long, dense shaggy outercoat that cords into ropelike tassels, plus a soft, wooly undercoat. Together the two coats

serve as armor that is all but impregnable to an enemy's teeth.

Wolves in Hungary challenged the Komondorok (plural form) for supremacy and as a consequence, came close to extinction there. It is expected that the shy coyotes will quickly learn to avoid confrontations with Komondorok.

To protect sheep from coyotes, a dog must be socially attached to the sheep, treating the flock as personal property, and it must be aggressive towards coyotes and other predators. Komondorok display such traits; they are courageous and faithful to their masters and over the years have been bred for self-reliance and intelligence, in addition to aggressiveness towards predators.

One pair of dogs will be needed to guard a band of sheep (1,000 ewes and their lambs). Since a Komondor puppy currently costs \$250 to \$700, this would be a relatively inexpensive means of controlling coyote attacks on range sheep if it proves effective.

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