

# Round Table for the Promotion of Range Management in South America

**B.J. Ragsdale**

"The first time ever for South America" was the phrase to describe a week-long Round Table held in Santiago, Chile, on December 2-6, 1985. The Round Table was co-sponsored by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Departamento de Zootecnia, Facultad de Agronomía, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Dr. Don Huss, FAO Regional Animal Production Officer and Drs. Juan Gasto and Osvaldo Paladines of the Universidad Católica organized and conducted the Round Table. Countries represented included Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. The Society for Range Management was represented by Dr. B.J. Ragsdale, Past President.

**A major goal of the Round Table** was to form a working group to promote and develop the management of rangelands and stimulate the development of the range resources of South America. The long-range objectives would be to increase animal production, prevent additional desertification and conserve natural resources—soil, water, wildlife, and plants.

Presentations given by representatives from each of the participating countries provided a framework for working groups to develop a plan to meet the Round Table's objectives. Topics included the conceptual basis for the management and utilization of rangelands, the rangeland situation of each of the participating countries, and the present state of range knowledge and research in South America. Other topics concerned tame pasture research in Chile, development of range management in the United States, and range Extension activities in Texas.

Four study groups were formed to delve into education, formalization of the work group, research and promotion, and studies of the present situation.

Common rangeland resource problems of the South American countries recognized by the Round Table are:

1. There is a lack of uniformity in the criteria and language used in the descriptions, characterization, and cartography of the rangelands.
2. The social and economic situation of the range ecosystems has had little study. Generally only vegetation has been considered, not ecosystems in which man is the main manipulator.
3. Although scientific knowledge is available, it is seldom applied.
4. The governments of these countries generally do not consider the promotion of range management.
5. The activities tending to promote range management are

scarce at a country level and international programs are not coordinated.

6. There is a shortage of personnel specialized in range management.
7. The national governments and international organizations pay very little attention to the study and diffusion of knowledge related to range management.
8. The people are not conscious of the importance of the rational use of their rangelands.
9. At a regional level there is a lack of a precise language to define the concepts in range management.
10. There is a lack of methodologies to collect and evaluate information, and when it is done, there is a lack of continuity in the process.
11. The concept of multiple use of the range ecosystem is unknown in most cases.

**The Round Table suggested the formation** of an "International Working Group for the Promotion of Latin America's Rangelands" that would have as its objective the maintenance of permanent communication and coordination among the national and international organizations involved in range management and the promotion of the following activities:

1. Initiate an analysis including the state of the art, the advances in research, the socio-economic situation, and the most relevant problems, each according to its priority.
2. Create and organize a bibliography with specific publications on rangelands.
3. Promote the formation, at a country level, of interinstitutional and interdisciplinary groups that can cope with the problems and develop specific methodologies.
4. Support research programs to solve the problems.
5. Promote and support initiatives towards the formation of a trained manpower pool to assure the continuation of a permanent education program.
6. Promote the formation and organization of a structure for extension and transfer of technology that will be related to research.
7. Promote any activity that has as a goal the improvement of the present situation in the area.

The Round Table also suggested that:

1. The FAO Regional Office create an Executive Secretariat in charge of the Regional Animal Production Office to be incorporated as part of its priority work programs having the following objectives:
  - a. Coordinate the activities of the International Work Group.
  - b. Search for the financial resources required for the operation of the Secretariat and for the development of the projects that arise as part of the activities proposed by the group.

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Note: Bob Ragsdale is one of the Past Presidents of the Society. He represented the Society for Range Management at this meeting in Santiago, Chile.

2. The "International Working Group" would be formed, *Ad-Interim*, by the persons participating in the Round Table. The members would remain as such until ratified by their governments.
3. The FAO Regional Office publish a proceedings of the papers presented at the Round Table.
4. The FAO Regional Office support the conducting of national and/or international courses to train leaders in range management.
5. Argentina's Instituto Nacional de Tecnologia Agropecuaria (INTA) publish the Range Management Training Manual prepared for a course on the subject that was conducted in Argentina in 1982.
6. The University of Chile, through its Centro de Estudios de Zonas Aridas of the Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias y Forestales organize, publish and distribute a newsletter on the activities related to the rangelands of Latin America and the Working Group.

**A midweek break in the Round Table agenda was a field trip to the livestock farms of Ricardo Aristia de Castro and**

Juan Eduardo Castillo to observe livestock production and Mediterranean rangeland. Both range and tame pastures were utilized for range in the programs. Mr. Aristia de Castro had purebred Herefords, but was beginning to use Charolais bulls in a cross breeding program. Mr. Castillo had a fine wool sheep operation (13,000 high quality breeding ewes) but also grazed cattle (Clavel and Freisian).

Diversification of enterprises was noted on both ranches. With the Pacific Ocean serving as a boundary on Mr. Castillo's Station Lucia Farm, sea water was being evaporated to produce salt. Alfalfa, wheat and chick peas were also being produced on the farm. Mr. Aristia de Castro had swine, corn, and a charcoal operation which utilized a species of *Acacia* that was being cleared from certain range sites.

The field trip afforded the opportunity to observe the agronomical and horticultural production in the Santiago area. A wide range of vegetable and fruit crops was being produced; a major portion of some of the crops is exported to the United States. ●

## Good Range-Good Forages: Are They Equal?

R.D. Pettit

Every range manager, agronomist, rancher, or technician has a favorite forage which they "swear" will alleviate many agricultural-forage problems. Because of many different opinions, I wonder if there is a "perfect" forage. Do we really have any common standards to judge the quality of plants or plant communities? A favorite story about forages was one by my barber in Corvallis, Oregon. He always mentioned that black-tailed deer liked his garden! For two years he swore that deer only ate tomato plants! In Texas I hear the same story but with a more drought tolerant plant! A lot of folks do not agree on the components of a good forage.

Frequently we note that some grasses, forbs, shrubs, or trees are relished by grazing animals. When asked why, no one can give a definite answer. We cannot ask the animal why it ate a weed one day and our favorite forage the next. Once I noted a heifer feeding exclusively on pine tree seedlings. Two weeks later, ninebark was the preferred forage. Also, cattle relish weedy primrose and ragweed! Quite frankly, we cannot give a good answer as to why animals graze *what* and *when* they do. We can only conclude they like *variety* in their diet.

There is increasing interest in "weed ranching." Some feel that weeds, whether grasses or broadleaves, are the way to make money in the ranching business. Others believe in the "good" plant theory. Many are tempted to judge the manage-

ment skills of their neighbors based upon the way his pastures or range look. Sometimes "Joe" makes more net profit than his neighbor who stocks moderately and/or rotates his grazing allotments and has good range. Who is the best or perhaps wisest manager?

Many rate alfalfa as near perfect. Can you think of any better species? We all know at least one or more weakness. For example, bloat, weevil damage, dodder, and other problems come to mind. Is this a manager's problem rather than a forage weakness? Occasionally, we get a big head in lambs from grazing kleingrass or emphysema in cattle from grazing Bermuda grass. Johnson grass also has received "bad press" because of prussic acid poisoning, particularly on regrowth after frost or drought. Many forages, in every state, occasionally receive bad publicity from ranchers. It is interesting that one rancher's nightmare might be another's "gold mine".

In a plenary session of the Soil Science and Agronomy meeting in 1976, an animal scientist was "jabbing" agronomists for not breeding forages with lower fiber and higher digestibility. One gentleman from the audience got up and with all the modulation he could muster, shouted, "Why do not animal scientists seek a breed of cattle with smaller bones"? You can imagine the audience's response! A good point, nevertheless, animal scientists and agronomists have not often worked collectively to provide efficient production of a salable product.

We have come a long way in a few years to develop inter-

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