

Poetry

Editor's Note: The Tonto and Prescott are two U.S. National Forests in Arizona. John N. Spencer was a Forest Service employee, doing range management work on both forests in the 1920s and later. SRM Charter Member William Hurst states, "The poem pretty well describes some of the range conditions found on these National Forests in the 1920s."

Range Appraisal

I had seen how, on the Tonto, cactus grew an inch in a year,
And it took a dozen cactus to produce a yearling steer.
With a cactus to an acre, and ten acres to a chain,
three cows to every yearling, and an inch a year of rain.

This, by ratio and proportion, say as nothing is to one,
Gave a pound per inch of cactus, and ten yearlings to a ton.
Thus, on a cactus acre basis, for a given term of years,
We could check the carrying capacity by the annual
sale of steers.

With this basis for appraisal, the value then was told
By the price per head for yearlings, and the average
number sold;
Which, figures by equation—say 100 equals C,
Minus A and B for handicaps—would give the grazing fee.

But since I've seen the Prescott, my dope is wrong
I've found,
As I failed to class as forage the roots down in the ground.
For on the Prescott ranges, the hungry bovine brutes
Have eaten cactus to the gravel, and are pawing for the roots.

And the cattle are much smaller, so my dope on weights
won't check;
As they always ship their yearlings in cars and double deck.
And they say that west of Prescott, near the Diamond-
and-a-half,
A cowboy saw a rabbit and thought it was a calf.

The inspector said, by checking weights on shipments, he
had found
That their average run of yearlings weighed about a
hundred pounds.
So I'm right back where I started, but I haven't quite lost hope,
Though I have to start all over on this appraisal dope.

—John H. Spencer, 1921

Letters to the Editor

Gary,

Very nice job on the February 2005 issue of *Rangelands*. I have been working my way through it the last week or so and have enjoyed the articles and the new look. That white space and use of color makes it easier on my aging eyes!

I particularly enjoyed Butch Taylor's description of what a range fire must have been like before the Edwards Plateau of Texas was settled. I had no idea Butch was such a passionate and poetic writer.

Thanks for your good work and congratulations on a very good magazine for us civilians.

Ellen Humphries
Texas Cattle Raisers Association

Dear Gary,

Charter Member Weldon O. Shepherd's wife contacted me by telephone recently and said Weldon was worried about one statement in the "Insights" statement by him published in the February 2005 issue of *Rangelands*.

The statement of concern is in the third paragraph, 2nd sentence: "This involved establishing experimental plots and studying density, species composition, forage types, poisonous plants, and range conditions in Ponderosa pine-cane type areas." This should read "of pond pine-cane type areas."

Sincerely,
Bill Hurst

Editor's Note: We are sorry for the error.