

The Uniqueness of Range Management

While it is encouraging to see there is an effort within the Society to develop expertise, and while it is true that we need to identify the expertise that is unique to range management, I cannot agree with Dr. Hedrick that the uniqueness of range management is limited to "the ability of using animals as a tool in modifying natural environments." Nor do I think this identity will help our professional development. Doctors are not professionals because they happen to specialize in obstetrics or pediatrics. Neither are dentists professionals because they use drills. To say we, as range managers, are professional because we specialize in ecosystems where the primary emphasis is on herbivores, or to say our uniqueness comes from the fact that we use animals as a tool in resource management, is too restrictive a view of range management. (I personally prefer the terminology "range science" over "range management" but the discussion of this controversial subject will have to wait until another time.)

I am troubled by the public and even our colleagues' limited knowledge of the range manager's scope of activities. I am even more troubled when, within our own discipline, we build a fence (as Dr. Hedrick does)

around one phase of range management and try to stay within it. In addition to being knowledgeable about the role of domestic livestock and wildlife in altering natural environments, we need to be knowledgeable about, and actively involved in, other aspects of the management of range lands such as (but not limited to) watershed (with its attendant problems of water production and pollution), recreation, conservation, natural beauty and "people problems."

Range management, like forestry, came into being as a protector of our natural resources. Range management was cast in the heroic role of the savior or preserver of our natural resources, not a manager of resources. Much of the vitality of range management stemmed from being identified with the conservation crusade. Most range positions are still identified as "range conservationist" positions. However, we now tend to be closely tied to animal production in the domestic livestock industry. The public doesn't regard livestock production in the same light as it did protection. The public we are dealing with is more urban oriented than the public we dealt with in the days of the great conservation crusade. The public today is worried about natural beauty, stream pollution, and the price of food. They have little direct concern for the costs of livestock production (Califor-

nia Cattlemen's Assoc. "Hot Irons" June 3, 1968), the plight of the livestock operator or the lack of professionalism in range management. To quote Charles Connaughton (J. Forestry 65(12):876. 1967), our problem is that we are not "in tune with the times." The blame for lack of professional status is not the fault of the public. The blame can be placed squarely on the shoulders of range management for not keeping current in our ideas.

Until we realize that range management includes a broad cross section of resource and "people" problems, we do not stand to advance in professional stature. To quote Steve Spurr (J. Forestry, 66(1):26. 1968) "what sets the professional apart in our field is his overall education and training which hopefully give him a broad base of knowledge upon which to build his practice, and an understanding of creative processes that permits him to tackle new problems that constantly beset him." It is not the ability to use the animal that sets range management apart. If this were the case, there would be no difference between a professional range manager and technicians and sub-professionals or husbandmen.

What sets the range manager apart is the particular set of "concepts" which, taken together, are the essential content of range management (Bentley,

J. Forestry 66(5):402. 1968). A concept is an idea, a generalized abstraction. For example, competition is an abstraction which, with minor variations, is useful in understanding and predicting the ecological dynamics of all biota, including man in his social interactions. Equilibrium, climax, succession, primary production, optimum yield, to name a few, are concepts which are encompassed by range management. There is considerable overlap with other disciplines in the use of these concepts, but this overlap is not a deterrent to range management being a profession. Physiologists and doctors both study the same organism (namely people), there is some overlap in concepts in their training and in the practice of their professions. What sets them apart is the particular set of concepts with which they are identified. It is this particular set of concepts (a demonstrated area of expertise) that should set range managers apart. Range management involves more than the one concept of using animals as a tool (Heady, J. Range Manage. 20(5): 283. 1967).

To answer Dr. Hedrick, I don't think we have "given ground in a field where our expertise is the strongest because we have stressed basic understanding." We unquestionably still have the best qualified group to con-

serve or preserve the range lands. But this is not the expertise needed. To answer Dr. Hedrick's question "how can we regain and maintain a stronger hand in the management area?" I would answer we never have had a strong hand in the management area. Range managers have traditionally been conservationists, not managers. We have often alluded to the fact that economics was important, but only recently have we begun to implement the serious economic study of range problems.

To say that "in no sense are we detracting from the value of physiology, ecology, nutrition, economics, etc." is misleading. Dr. Hedrick implies they are less important to the profession than "using the animal as a tool." To say "we're merely hanging our hat on a peg with a minimum of overlap and confusion" is also misleading. As I have stated previously, there is nothing wrong with the overlap of concepts. Viewing disciplines in this manner would get away from speaking about wildlife biologists (as Dr. Hedrick does) or other disciplines in a derogatory fashion and help remove the misunderstandings among range managers about wildlife habitat management. Some range managers are managers of wildlife habitat and rightfully so. Wildlifers have a set

of concepts which overlap with those of range management. But taken as a whole, it is a different set of concepts than that set unique to range management.

To summarize, range management is more than managing animals. It is a particular group of concepts encompassing many aspects of the biological and social sciences. It is this particular group of concepts that sets range management apart. However, because of the overlap of concepts with other disciplines, our only lasting salvation is to demonstrate better performance within the area encompassed by the particular set of concepts and not just within the concept of using animals as tools. By demonstrating better performance, we can better meet the challenges outlined in our Journal by Cook (20(4):277-278. 1967) and Woolfolk (21(3):185. 1968) among which are lack of public image, encroachment by other disciplines, and a failure to have range management accepted abroad.

To sell the uniqueness of range management, two tasks remain before us: (1) to identify the area of expertise (the concepts which are encompassed by range management); and (2) to demonstrate our expertise through performance.—*Jack F. Hooper*, Department of Range Science, Utah State University, Logan.