

# Range Education

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**E**DUCATION in range management includes many diverse ideas and objectives. As a topic of discussion, it creates many lines of thought. The teachers probably think in terms of curricula or subject matter emphasis. The public land administrators, requiring high standards of employee training are always looking for new educational procedures to ease their administrative problems. The researchers may be critical because their data are not utilized more effectively. Some ranchers, as Louis Bromfield recently wrote, are thinking, "If this information available is so good, why haven't we been told?"

What are the objectives of range education? They are to further the application of the art and science of range management—or, to accelerate better range land use—or, to obtain maximum application of good range land management. Application or use is the key.

That application or use usually is through the basic medium of grazing animals, domestic or wild, on lands of both public and private ownership. The animals are managed by people who should be and generally are, thoroughly interested in their livestock. Education in range management must reach, interest, inform and then stimulate to constructive action that group of people.

Range education serves people of many different economic interests. The first historically to effectively attract public attention to range management was the land administrator groups, the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Indian Service,

the National Park Service, the Soil Conservation Service and others. For many years some of these agencies have required grass and survey technicians for administrative purposes. Their "job giving" approach to educational institutions greatly influenced the type of training offered by the colleges. That training job has been well done.

The public land administrators were not always satisfied with the training their men had received. Specialized range men were needed rather than pure science technicians. Range production data were required for both range administrators and for teaching. Hence, specialized technicians were developed. These constitute our second group, the range researchers and range management professors. Here again a commendable job in education has been accomplished.

The third group includes the men who actually manage the animals which graze the range resource—the range livestock operators and the big game managers. Have they received the type and quality of education they deserve? Have they had the same opportunities to know their basic resource problems as has the wheat rancher, the irrigation farmer, or even the stockman on disease control and animal breeding? Or has too much time been spent telling them what they should or should not do, to the neglect of the "why" of their range production? Most will admit that a poor job has been done, whatever the reason may be. Adequately informing this group can materially simplify the work of the public land administrator, and save much public land administrative cost. It will make

money for both the rancher and the local community.

Why has this educational gap been unfilled? It may be due to other more important matters requiring the attention of adult educators; to lack of adequately ear-marked funds for range education; or to too much enthusiasm and too little salesmanship in presenting the information. Unquestionably, the emotionalism involved in land administration—rancher relationships has done much to form mental blocks against the entire subject of range management. A better coordination in the past of the efforts of the various agencies engaged in range education could have produced more economical and effective results from the money spent.

The fourth group is composed of young men who will be managing the livestock in the years ahead. They have fresh open minds. They are the farmers-to-be, the men who will be handling lands and livestock and formulating plans and policies in the future. Most of these men will go through high school. A portion, often too small, will have the opportunity of higher educational training. A large part, however, is now out of reach of any present organized range educational effort. These men can be reached through the Smith-Hughes Vocational Agriculture program, the 4-H clubs and the Veterans-on-Farm training classes. The need here is to simplify the principals of range management and then present them. Here is an opportunity to make good range management an automatic reflex reaction. With such a program the adult educator and the public land administrator of 1960 will find ready acceptance of new ideas or new administrative rulings by open and understanding minds. If the rulings and results are not sound they will be rejected as they

should be. This phase of range education presents a fertile field as yet little touched.

The last group served includes those who have an indirect relationship to range management. Have the people interested in water production from range-land watersheds been properly acquainted with the true uncolored picture of how range land actually responds to proper grazing? These people have been subjected to propoganda, both by the sincere, but misinformed person, and by the man with an axe to grind. The range man's attention must be focused on this group, not only to give good information but also to correct the results of the half-truths and misinformation so often encountered in today's high tension, high powered promotional programs which involve our western watersheds. Clear-cut, well-handled information will tend to build confidence in the range profession and to develop and maintain amicable relationships within communities and among the civic organizations of those communities.

The business men in our range area are economically involved with good range use. They can be interested in what the resource is, and can be shown the inter-relationships between ranchers and the welfare of the whole community. Conflicts between recreational and livestock interests exemplify this need. The informing of this last group is a field of adult education to which all range agencies whether technical, administrative, educational, or rancher must give more attention.

The college level training is good and is improving. The students in animal production still are not getting sufficient basic range information in some schools. Likewise, the lack of emphasis on animal production in some of our technical range courses is lamentable. These defi-

ciencies are minor. By and large, the major problem is in the field of adult education or better stated, in extension.

Extension, as used herein, applies entirely to activity or process rather than to an organization. This activity is one of carrying suitable research results plus good rancher experience to those persons who can make good use of such information.

There are today many people doing range extension work. The Agricultural Extension Service is charged with full time work and effort in adult education. The Soil Conservation Service does adult educational work in soil conservation districts. The Production and Marketing Administration has stimulated attention on range problems through the medium of financial assistance. Public land administrators have been forced to do extension work in range management as an "assist" in accomplishing their goals. Experimental stations, State and Federal, are doing whatever they can. The educators at the high school level have no general program but are open minded and receptive to suggestions. Of the groups working on the problem, two are specifically charged with doing adult education over the entire area with no restrictions involved. All others are interested.

In the past, attention has been focused on problems and problem areas where the effective adult educational work has been in the correcting of evils. Land users have readily accepted such cures as poisonous plant control, gully control and water diversion, range reseeding, water development, rodent control, predator control and brush burning. Little time and effort have been expended upon that vast area of range which does not really require artificial rejuvenation—where merely working with mother na-

ture will attain better and more stable production of animal products. Isn't there a golden opportunity in talking the advantages and possibilities of "fat" grass as well as those from "fat" cows? Has sufficient use of McCarty's work, Weaver's work and that of many others been made? Cannot such information be put into stockman terms without either talking down or mis-stating the scientific principals involved?

The opportunity for accelerating and improving the efforts toward better informing our range land users was never greater. Usable scientific information is available in volume. Good experience of many ranch operators is becoming more plentiful. This is the raw material for any good extension program.

Range land users today are financially better off than ever before. This tends to make them more receptive to new ideas. Our range management science is considered new by them because they have either had little opportunity to see it in a favorable light, or have refused to look at it. These men are recognized as being rugged individualists, which means that they are intelligent men slow to change ways of operation until sold on the reasons for change. As a group they have had little opportunity to learn the individual components or parts of that thing we call collectively "grass"—the annual and perennial grasses, the forbs, and the exceedingly valuable and little recognized browse plants found throughout our "strong" winter ranges. Average ranchers have been given little opportunity to know the individuality of these plants—the fact that they respond, in production, to being permitted to get fat just as sensitively and economically as does the cow that grazes there; or, that they starve to death just as do poorly handled livestock; and that once

starved out, they cannot be replaced economically—and often not at all. As our president, Dan Fulton, has often stated and written, “we are humid agriculturally minded,” which is evidenced by the attitude of replacing by reseeding. Some call that Agronomy minded. Due to the nature of our range lands, few ranchers would ever trade a section of true native range in good condition compositionally and in vigor for that same area reseeded to any species available today. Finally, in speaking of opportunity, the entire country is watershed conscious. Resource conservation and river basin management is before the people continually. Congress and the employees in the various governmental agencies are and will continue to pay more attention to our range lands.

Summarizing, there is ample good information available. The livestock industry can make economic use of the information. There are many who are anxious to have the educational job done. What can be done? A few suggestions are offered:

1. Recognize the job as a *salesman's job*. The extension activity sells the applicable work of others. The tools of salesmanship are visual aids, public speaking, sound journalistic knowledge and enthusiastic optimism.
2. Have a salesman's *organization coordinate* the efforts of all who are

doing extension range work. The job is large—many must work at it, but coordination is mandatory if economical results are to be expected.

3. Obtain salesmen who recognize the job and who can talk the language of the land users.
4. *Approach the job from the local level* and stay clear of any stigma of public land administration. Coordination, however, should be from the top.
5. See that the selling organization is *adequately financed* with “earmarked” funds. The *job required cannot be done as a sideline* of some other activity.
6. *Federally subsidize* such a program in line with the percentage of federally owned land in the area involved. Most adult educational funds are now distributed on the basis of population. This must be on the basis of problem area.
7. Base the program upon *fundamental and simple facts* governing native forage plant growth.
8. Finally, *expend effort and money upon methods* of presenting material.

When we place the amount of emphasis on the palatability and degree of utilization of our extension material that we expect others to place upon the palatability and degree of utilization of range we can expect good results.