

Observations of a Rancher on Range Reseeding in Oregon¹

R. A. LONG, Rancher, Fort Rock, Oregon

This paper will be just what the title implies—the observations of a rancher on range reseeded. As the mind observes what the eye sees, in like manner we will follow no sequence of thought, nor will we try to arrive at any conclusions.

I am a central Oregon rancher. The area in which I live is a high plateau country, elevation from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, soils mostly light volcanic, rainfall from 8 to 12 inches annually, with a short growing season, and a 4 to 5 month hay feeding period.

The ground cover is mostly bunchgrass and sage and rabbitbrush, and bitterbush with juniper and pine timber. Please keep these conditions definitely in mind, because they will influence the observations to follow.

Conditions Alter Cases: For instance, what would apply where I live probably wouldn't work at all on Arizona ranges. Conditions can so vary right in the same locality and on the same ranch as to make it necessary to apply different methods of range management.

Reseeding

Now, for some observations on range reseeded. In speaking of reseeded we have two distinct processes to keep in mind. One is a natural reseeded of range grasses and browse plants through range management. The other is the planting of grasses both native and imported by mechanical means. Of the two methods, the reseeded by natural means, where it can be applied, is by far the best.

I have planted several hundred acres of crested wheatgrass, and it has done a lot of good to increase the carrying capacity and simplify the management of my ranch. I have seeded a good many thousand acres by natural means through range management practices. The latter did not cost nearly so much per acre. The soil did not need to be disturbed, which leaves a more permanent type of cover. I do not wish in any manner to underrate the importance of artificial reseeded. In many instances it is the only manner by which we can bring some of our good producing grasslands back into use.

Reseeded methods change according to sites and soils. Many times when we do not understand why plants respond the way they do, *we are standing on the answer.*

In the eradication of competitive plants, we could well give controlled burning a lot of serious thought, and when I say controlled, I mean just that. Fire is a terrible master but if properly handled is a wonderful servant.

An observation on seedbed preparation and planting methods: I think the most important thing of all, in light soils, is to have a good firm seedbed. Let's include an adapted legume along with our dry range land grasses.

Plan to stay off the ranges when the ground is soft. *Grass grows by inches but it is oft times destroyed by feet.*

In all of our range land practices, we should try to work with and not against nature.

In planning range management practices, such as reseeded, water development, fencing,

etc., let's do them in such a manner that they will not only protect the grazing resource but make it more practical and economical for the user to handle his livestock. For if we handle our ranges well and put a lot of fat on our cattle, that is fine, but if we lose part of our gain through improper management we might just as well not have grown the grass in the first place. A grass management program should be flexible so it can change with the demands upon the land.

Utilization of Grass

I believe a great part of the thought and effort of the range land managers has been directed toward the *growing* of grass, and their slogan has been "Let's grow two blades of grass where only one grew before." We all know that grass is of not much benefit unless it contributes something to the welfare of humanity. Therefore, if we utilize these two blades of grass in such a manner that they do the job of four blades of grass, then we accomplished something as important as growing grass.

No range land manager's observations would be complete unless it included multiple use. Every grassland area should be used to its maximum capabilities within the limits of good conservation practices. These uses should not be confined to any *one* of the many demands upon them. Every legitimate use should be recognized and given a place according to the production capabilities of the land and the needs of the area.

Everyone knows, and I hope understands, the demands upon our grasslands, so I will not attempt to enumerate them here. There is one use that I believe is oft times not mentioned, and is perhaps overlooked, that I think is very important. It is a use that we can have without taking anything away from the other uses. It is this: The beauty

¹Paper presented at the 11th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Range Management, Phoenix, Arizona, January 28-February 1, 1958.

of the hills, the clearness of our mountain streams, the privilege of enjoying the wild game and seeing the animals in their native habitat, and the value of what all these things contribute to our American way of life.

I wish to make an observation on the value of research.. It is

amazing how many people know so little about so much. Of all the phases of the range management program research is one of the most important. We need more coordination between the technical and the practical.

One final observation: We, as grassland managers, have a re-

sponsibility to humanity. Let us not permit people to lose sight of the importance of our basic resource, which is grass. If I may paraphrase using the famous Biblical quotation, "It will profit us nothing if we win the war against Communism and lose our own top soil."