How the Livestock Industry Can Best Be Served by Livestock Publications

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How can the livestock industry best be served by the livestock publications? Magazines and newspapers alike.

At the outset, it might be best to establish specific criteria and to erect an "ideal" publication image similar to the "ideals" used in judging range land conditions or purebred livestock. The reason being that, like range and livestock, the more nearly a livestock publication resembles the "ideal" the more useful it becomes to the livestock industry.

Beginning with Nelson R. Crow, the publisher, all of us at Western Livestock Journal agree that an "ideal" livestock industry publication must have a full measure of the following ingredients: (1) believability (2) a sense of responsibility (3) courage (4) integrity (5) a goal and (6) a purpose.

You would be just as hard-pressed however, to find a perfect livestock publication as you would be to find a perfect bull or a perfect ranching operation. Being realists, livestock journalists know that in the face of one deadline after another, perfection is unattainable. In place of perfection, therefore, a livestock publication that seeks to approach the "ideal" finds it more practical to constantly strive for excellence.

Of the character traits important to an "ideal" publication, I would list believability near the top. A publication has achieved maximum believability when the people engaged in the industry it serves refer to it as their "bible".

To attain an image like this, the personnel of a general livestock publication must be alert. They must be alert to detect new trends. And they must be alert to report news events which affect the future and well-being of the industry. For example, Nelson R. Crow was one of the first to predict the advent of huge-scale commercial cattle feeding and to contribute to it.

Inquisitiveness is another facet that helps build believability. Curiosity is one of journalism's most important digging tools. Curiosity inspires the kind of inquisitiveness necessary to unearth important information which will determine whether the things or people or events being reported should be given editorial space and if they are, that editorial will answer as many of the readers' questions as the man who's doing the writing can possibly think of.

Accuracy is also important to believability. I don't mean the kind of accuracy which frequently eludes proofreaders and results in news items like my own recent bungle called to my attention by an official of the North Dakota Farm Bureau who is a good friend of Brooks J. Keogh. In reporting Brooks' presidential address at the American National Cattlemen's Association convention in Portland, Oregon, I moved Brooks' home town of Keene, North Dakota, to South Dakota. I promptly got a note from a sharp reader who wrote to say, "We would just as soon keep the town and the people (in North Dakota) if it is all right with you."

Even though they are not serious, "goofs" like these, a journalist's and proofreader's anathema, do not help a publication's believability image. The accuracy I have in mind has to do with getting and reporting the facts, especially when the facts are on the incredible side. For example, gains of 4.5 to 5.0 pounds per head per day by steers fed a Brand X product in the ration. Common sense plus editorial integrity command you to be alert, to inquire about weighing conditions, how long the cattle have been on feed. Once you have unearthed the conditions under which the gains were made, you must have the courage to present them to your readers, particularly if it deglamorizes "Brand X".

Any livestock publication that values its image of believability will devote its editorial space to people who do things, people...
who say things, and people with ideas which benefit the livestock industry it serves. Writing which ignores these important journalistic precepts of human interest is aseptic writing and aseptic writing puts a tired rancher to sleep faster than an overdose of sleeping pills.

Readability, the manner and style in which a publication presents its editorial content has much to do with this matter of believability. There are a number of books devoted to the art of readable writing and the art of plain talk. Editorial material, whether it’s in a newspaper or magazine, must be attractively packaged so that it stops the reader, commands him to read it, and, once he starts to read it, it must be written in a style which retains his interest from beginning to end. The same principles hold true in the case of advertising and the advertising industry spends millions employing creative artists and copy writers to create ads that sell.

We have always strived for excellence in the quality of our editorial content in Western Livestock Journal and we also strive to present it in a style that is easy to read and easy to understand. Manuscripts that are accepted for publication are edited and often re-written. Sometimes the editing or re-write job doesn't quite meet with the approval of the author. But to preserve our image and retain our readers and our readability, we believe it must be done. Especially if the author has something to say and no talent for plain talk. I recall one case of a university professor who requested the privilege of checking and approving the edited version of his manuscript. When he returned it, he wrote that although the edited version contained all the essential information and the facts, it sounded like one of his teenage kids had written it. Even though I was stung by the criticism, in retrospect I now consider this one of the greatest editorial compliments I have ever received.

In this audience are many individuals who have authored material published in Western Livestock Journal, material which has certainly added excellence in the quality of our editorial content. We appreciate and welcome all such contributions and hope that you will continue to look upon our publication as a partner in furthering the aims for which this Society was founded and established.

A sense of responsibility is doubly important to a trade journal because so many of the personnel who solicit advertising also gather and prepare much of the material which fills its editorial columns. Livestock publication editors, in my opinion, ply a difficult trade because they can, if they choose, prostitute their own and the publication’s integrity by inserting “commercial plugs” in the editorial columns for advertisers who either request it or who imply they might increase their advertising budget if it’s done or decrease it if it is not. The majority of commercial advertisers however, use professional evaluation techniques to measure the worth of a publication. These firms prefer to use the advertising space they buy to tell their product message and to sell their products.

An ideal livestock publication must also have a goal, an editorial policy if you please; one which should be pursued with the zeal of a crusader — the betterment of the industry it serves. More specifically stated, a publication must have the zeal, the courage, and the determination to embrace and promote sound ideas and programs that will improve the lot of its readers engaged in the production and marketing of livestock for profit.

Often, a general publication such as ours will be accused by militant and enthusiastic segments of the livestock industry as being pro-this or anti-that; or anti-them and pro-their-rivals. What they’re saying, in reality, is that in their opinion, we exercise bad editorial judgment. But when the essence of their objections to our editorial judgment is distilled away from their emotional outbursts and examined in an atmosphere of calmness, what they really want is the same thing a politician wants for his constituency—a fair advantage. Our only answer to such accusations is the simple truth. We cannot afford to be biased.

In the 13 years I have been with Western Livestock Journal, I have never overcome my amazement at the power of the printed word. This realization alone is enough to generate a sense of responsibility in any self-respecting livestock journalist. In addition, I am constantly astounded by the number of readers who offer us editorial advice. Truthfully, there are as many would-be editors as there are would-be managers of baseball teams. Regardless of where it comes from or how it's given, however, we listen. And quite often we heed our reader editors' advice.

Coupled with its goal of bettering the industry it serves, a livestock publication must also have a purpose. A goal gives it a sense of direction; a purpose provides it with a reason for existence.

The purpose of an “ideal” livestock publication should be to educate, to inform, and to enlighten in a manner and style that develops and keeps habitual “cover-to-cover” readers. When it does, it provides a maximum exposure for the sales messages carried by its advertisers. If a publication accomplishes this, it fulfills its responsibility to its readers, to its advertisers, and to the industry it serves.

The most primary of all purposes for a livestock publication
such as ours, a consideration that is paramount with all publications that rely on believability and readability to gain paid subscribers and paid subscribers to gain paid advertising — is the necessity to operate at a profit. For no matter how high the purpose or how noble the goal, you can't pursue it if you don't show a profit.

As editor of Western Livestock Journal it has been my privilege to visit and talk with livestock producers in several parts of the world. I have been impressed first by their eagerness to know more about our livestock production methods and also by their admiration and envy of our industrial and agricultural efficiency. I am convinced, after these experiences, that the principal reason America's industrial and agricultural efficiency is the envy of the world is because both have flowered and flourished in an atmosphere of freedom; an atmosphere that permits and encourages free enterprise and the free flow of information and ideas.

Students of government will tell you that our democratic system is by no means the most efficient form of government. But, when you stop and think, isn't it prophetic that the countries which supposedly have the most efficient form of government — the totalitarian form in which freedom suffocates and dies — are the countries which envy our industrial and agricultural efficiency the most.

Let me again emphasize that here in America an "ideal" livestock publication can best serve the livestock industry by an unswerving determination to help the industry improve its efficiency and that a publication's usefulness to the industry it serves approaches the maximum when it possesses a full measure of (1) believability (2) a sense of responsibility (3) courage (4) integrity (5) a goal and (6) a purpose.

And to remind you again, "Nobody's perfect," and that it is more realistic to strive for excellence instead of perfection.

Effects Of Seeding And Grazing
On Infiltration Capacity And Soil Stability
Of A Subalpine Range In Central Utah

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Highlight
Seven years after disking and seeding to grass, main effects were: decreased organic matter and capillary porosity in the surface soil, greater soil bulk density, and decreased plant and litter cover. Seeding did not significantly affect infiltration or soil stability. Grazing during the previous four years decreased plant and litter cover and noncapillary soil porosity, but increased capillary porosity in the surface soil and decreased infiltration and soil stability.

Some mountain rangeland in Utah has been artificially seeded to control overland flow and erosion, or to improve the forage resource, or both. Many other areas will be similarly treated in the future. Because these lands are highly susceptible to erosion where vegetation has been depleted or destroyed, it is important to learn the effects of site preparation including disking or plowing and seeding — on infiltration capacity and soil stability. For the same reason, the effects of various methods and intensities of grazing should also be evaluated.

This paper reports results of a study of the effects of seeding and of grazing on a cattle grazing unit in the subalpine zone of the Wasatch Plateau in central Utah. The main objectives of this study were to determine: (1) the persisting effects of seeding on infiltration capacity and soil stability, (2) the effects, on infiltration capacity and soil stability, of cattle grazing on the seeded range and on comparable unseeded range, and (3) the role of soil and cover characteristics in these effects.

Description of Study Area
The study area is in the head of Lowry and Logger Forks of Manti Canyon where 435 acres of the most level and accessible portions of a 1,000-acre fenced cattle grazing unit were disked and seeded to adapted grasses in the fall of 1952.

The elevation of the area varies from 9,500 to 10,000 feet. Average annual precipitation is about 32 inches of which 24 inches or more is in the form of snow. Precipitation during the 3-month growing season is highly variable but averages