WHAT IS RANGE MANAGEMENT?

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Since our professional society has been in existence for nearly two decades it seems appropriate to critically examine and reflect upon what we mean by the term, range management. This question is prompted by the innate desire of most of us to maintain a propriety and dignity befitting our profession. In order to do this and keep in step with modern trends, many of us have identified ourselves with “range science” during the past ten years. Whenever this name change more nearly reflects our present activities it has been worthwhile. However, in this attempt to gain identity and respect the question is: Have we unconsciously short-changed our profession in applied science or technology?

I’m afraid that I’ve been as guilty as anyone in the attempt to impress my campus colleagues with the importance of science in range management. In this attempt to gain identity and respect the question is: Have we unconsciously short-changed our profession in applied science or technology?

To avoid the criticism of raising questions and not providing any answers I’m suggesting consideration of the following definition of range management which I’ve used and found suitable in teaching an introductory course: “Range management is the manipulation of the soil, plant, and animal complex used by grazing animals.” This management is based on the best scientific information available on these complexes which occur largely on uncultivated land, where native plants are predominant, and where other natural resource values—watershed, forestry, wildlife, recreation, etc.—may be important. With minor changes such as the substitution of arable for uncultivated, improved for native, and the deletion or addition of other land uses, this definition also fits pasture management as well. More important, perhaps, is the stress on technology which is the final test of the value of our scientific findings in obtaining better use of the range resource.