

Livestock and Big Game Relationships¹

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THE problem of Livestock versus Wildlife has plagued us since the turn of the century. No issue, except that of water, has raised so many conflicting opinions and problems.

Instead of decreasing in intensity, this battle has become broader and more bitter as the years go by. It would seem that as we learn more about the proper management of both livestock and wildlife on our ranges, some progress would be made toward solving the battle of conflicting use.

In spite of research, the conflicting claims of one side against the other are still being debated on all levels, from the corner bar to the Washington conference table.

It is our good fortune, I believe, that there is a third element entering this fight. This third party is composed of those persons who believe that livestock and wildlife can live side-by-side on the same range, or in the same ecological area, and thrive.

It should be obvious to all of us that we live in changing times. Much as many of us regret it, the ways of the Old West are passing. There was a time when cattle was king and the cattle interests were all-powerful. We are all aware that the cattle industry is still of vital importance to us in the West, *but it is not the only great source of our wealth today!* Cattle has competition in the form of growing industry and growing population. And it is the growing population that is of specific importance to

those of us whose job it is to manage game.

Let me quote a bit from a recent issue of Fortune Magazine:

"Full of vigor and promise, the leisure and recreational market today is one of the largest and most complex in the entire U. S. economy. It measures about \$30.6 billion annually, which is half again as much as the American consumer spends on clothing or shelter, and twice what he lays out for new cars or home goods. Its components are a hodgepodge of smaller markets, some wholly inter-dependent, others closely related but antagonistic.

The leisure market becomes more intelligible if it is viewed in two parts: First, the heart of that market is \$18 billion of unmistakable leisure-recreational expenditures on spectator amusements, spectator and participant athletics, HUNTING AND FISHING, gardening, boating, etc. A secondary group, totaling a little over \$12.6 billion, is made up of consumer expenditures. . . ."

In the past 10 years the income of the Arizona Game and Fish Department has increased by 400 percent. Bear in mind that this increase is a reflection of license numbers, not increases in the cost of licenses.

The budget for the Department for the fiscal year 1954-55 is over one million dollars. That alone is proof positive that hunting and fishing amounts to something in this state.

It has been figured that the cost of a hunter's license is about 3 percent, on the average, of his general expenditure for hunting. Obviously, in a state such as Arizona, with more species of game to hunt than in any other state, the total expenditures of our sportsmen on equipment, gasoline, food and

other items concerned with their sport must be considerable.

This general and rapid expansion of hunting and fishing license buyers both in Arizona and nationally, is matched by the immense army of vacationists. These persons claim right to, and use, our national forests. . . the same lands which are so vital to us as ranges for our cattle and wildlife.

Certainly, in the past few decades, the overall picture has changed. As Jimmy Durante says, "Everyone wants to get into the act."

The professional cattleman and the professional conservationist are often so biased in their thinking that they are unaware that these changes have taken place. But we must face the facts, and the fact is that at the present time all of the other conflicting interests on our rangelands must force us to work out some mutual solution to the problem of livestock-versus-wildlife.

The professional conservationist usually begins his side of the story by denouncing the cattlemen for the devastating over-use of our ranges. He is bitter in this attack, often forgetting the privation and hardships endured by those hardy, early-day cattlemen who carved a cattle empire in the West. But the conservationist is right when he says that there has been serious over-grazing.

I'm reminded of a cartoon by J. R. Williams. Curly and old Stiffy are riding by a fenced-off plot on the range. Inside the fence the grass is high and luxuriant. Curley is telling Stiffy: "They put that there to show us how high the grass would grow if we didn't run cattle on this ranch!"

Of course, there has been over-grazing and everyone knows it. Putting the finger of blame now on the cattlemen will not bring back the range that was depleted years ago. The main point to make clear

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is that the cattle interests have a legitimate right to use our ranges.

But I certainly do not feel that cattle have *exclusive* right to these ranges. Wildlife have the prior right by virtue of being there first. But that, in this modern day and age is not sufficient. Wildlife have a right to be considered as legitimate users of our rangelands because the millions of hunters and fishermen in our nation demand they have that right.

Here in Arizona, we are particularly touchy on this subject. So much of the land in our state is under federal control and so little privately owned, that as controversial a subject as wildlife versus livestock on our ranges is bound to draw fire whenever it is mentioned.

I am convinced that wildlife has a growing place of importance on our ranges. First, because the voice of those who demand more hunting and fishing from Game Departments is growing stronger each year. Secondly, because in many areas the rangeland has become so depleted by overuse that it will support little if anything BUT a wildlife crop.

On what we have left of our ranges we are in the middle of an argument as to their proper use. It must be wildlife AND cattle, not wildlife OR cattle. It is the DEGREE to which a range is used by either wildlife or livestock that is the very heart of our problem.

Generally speaking, there is little conflict between deer and cattle in the choice of food. Cattle prefer grass. . . . deer prefer browse. When a range is overgrazed, the grass dies and browse appears in greater amounts. The cattle are slowly starved out and the deer herd increases. When the deer herd has increased to a point where it has reduced the entire range to well-chewed stubs, the herd dies of malnutrition and disease at a rapid

rate. The Kaibab herd is the classic example.

What is left? A range that is useless for years and years for *both* livestock or deer. A herd of cattle may be built up rapidly . . . a deer herd will multiply with astonishing speed . . . but a devastated range may take decades to regain its former vigor and should climatic conditions prove right, it could degenerate into a barren wasteland for thousands of years.

Most western ranges are dry, and the production of forage is slow. Even well-managed ranges, under drought conditions, will have the look of heavy overgrazing. In dry climates plants struggle for their existence even under the best conditions. On some ranges even moderate grazing by either livestock or wildlife will seriously and quickly kill the best forage and leave the less valuable, seldom-grazed plants.

Obviously, we have many areas in the West with too many big game animals, just as there are many areas with too many livestock. The fact that a range has too many big game animals is just as important to us, the game managers, as over-abundance of cattle. In either case, the result is costly.

There have been efforts to develop a concept of separate range use. One range on each area for each species of animal. This may seem rather far fetched but it may be a solution to the problem.

When a range is stocked with either wildlife or livestock there is an immediate use of the most palatable plant species in the areas most accessible to that species. Then, each species begins to consume the foods of secondary preference, which might well be the primary food of the other species. We can readily see that conflict begins when one class of animal or the other has eaten beyond the list of its primary preferences and has

begun to eat its second or third choices.

In any event, severe misuse generally results from overstocking by either one species or the other . . . *at any one time*. The class of animal over-using the range can be determined by range examination. When this is done that class of animal causing the depletion should be reduced in numbers until range conditions are brought into balance.

Every effort is being made by the Arizona Department to do just that in the case of deer and elk. In spite of criticism from some quarters, it is our belief that *continued* good hunting can only be accomplished by continuing good range conditions. Providing hunting and fishing is our business . . . we are charged with the wise management of our wildlife resource now and for the future . . . and devastated rangeland from *whatever* cause, is not going to provide good hunting in the future.

Let me be specific, in what we are doing. First, we are making every effort to broaden the scope of our hunts. Each year our deer and elk hunts have taken more animals through relaxed regulations, broader hunting areas, the use of the "any sex" hunt and the opening of many areas to unlimited number of hunters.

These steps were not undertaken in the face of pressure from certain groups, but strictly because we felt that the state of the range in many areas demanded a reduction in deer and elk numbers.

In the case of elk, our elk-proof plots on the Sitgreaves National Forest gave us the first indication that elk herds were increasing in this area. Because of the hunts held in the past several years, we have every reason to believe that the elk herd has been scattered and pressure relieved on critical portions of the range.

Our efforts to control the growing

Kaibab deer herd are almost too well known to mention. Our take of deer on the Kaibab has increased yearly and we feel that we are on top of this herd.

The number of deer harvested in Arizona has doubled in the last five years. We harvested 18,803 deer during the 1953 season. About one-third of this total was from the Kaibab. And through the relaxation of regulations our number of deer hunters last year went to over 57,000.

We certainly believe that we are doing *something* about this problem. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission budget for range development and rehabilitation will be over 180 thousand dollars for fiscal 1954-55. We feel that this is far more than any other organization in the state is spending on direct range rehabilitation.

We have areas that sorely need attention. The south Kaibab is one. On the Bill Williams our men have made continuous range investigations. They feel that there has been severe overuse by both deer and livestock. This range is in such poor condition that although deer numbers are not heavy as compared to other areas, the range is not responding to decreased deer use.

The Moqui has received a good deal of attention from our Department and we have had "any sex" hunting and increased hunting pressure for several years.

These are some of the concrete things we have started in an effort to control wildlife populations to the betterment of the range. However, I must again bring up the subject of DEGREE of use.

It does not necessarily follow that because livestock grazing permits

have been reduced by 25 or 30 percent that the wildlife using the range should also be reduced that much. In some cases the wildlife might not be reduced *at all*, and in other cases it would be proper to reduce the wildlife species by many times the reduction in cattle numbers.

How are we going to determine the degree of stocking on our ranges? There is no practical answer . . . yet. A good many men with the tools of modern research . . . and a good many men with years of practical experience will be needed to find the answer.

Our first step must be the accurate inventory of what we now have. We cannot possibly progress any further until such an inventory is made. Our next step is an expanded program of research . . . research that will show us what we can do with what we have.

I sometimes feel that we have been so caught up in catch phrases like "wise land use" and "good land management" that we *say* these things, but usually don't know what we're talking about.

How do we know what is "wise land use" or "proper range management?" And if we actually do not know, then we must very quickly start finding out. Fighting the battle of multiple use of public lands over and over again is a waste of time. While the fight may still be hot the handwriting is on the wall for the opponents of multiple use, and the battle is already lost. The 30 billion, 600 million dollar recreation business that has boomed in the past decade has seen to that.

Let us take a look at a sister industry that has learned a great lesson. Timber resources in the United States were being depleted

at a faster rate than any other resource. When the situation became intolerable the fighting between the timber interests, the conservation interests and the federal government ceased and the modern concept of sustained-yield timber production and tree-farming was instituted. That the results of cooperation and understanding have been successful is plain. The timbering interests are now in the forefront in supplying money and research for sustained yield timber management. The public, the government and the timbering interests have all benefitted.

We are going to have to take a lesson from the foresters. Their problem was solved in the most part and our problem of livestock versus big game on our rangelands can be solved, too.

There is a place for both . . . and a need for both . . . and it is not yet too late for a solution that will benefit everyone.

This meeting is as good a time as any to begin concrete accomplishments. Talking and arguing are not the answer. We must work together and work more closely. Every month that goes by reduces the possibility of our ever having better ranges for both livestock AND wildlife.

We are like a posse without a sheriff. We know the bank has been robbed but we stand around arguing about which direction to go. We know that our rangelands need immediate attention—and arguments are not going to give the ranges that attention.

If you *must* have a catch phrase then let me suggest two words: Cooperation and Moderation. Cooperation among ourselves—and moderation in our use of the range.