

And now, along comes another device,  
And, we all agree that gadgets are nice,  
But the ones they call computers,  
Should be left to scientists and 3-piece suiters.

Because, can you imagine the blunder  
When the range con with all his plunder,  
Goes out with his computer to fix the fences  
And move the cows under such pretenses?

Can the winkin, blinkin green screen pull cows from the  
mire,

Or pull staples and stretch the wire?  
Can proper use be measured in a "meg-a-bite"?  
And can "floppy discs" replace dally's tight?

No, friends not for a while at least,  
In spite of the popularity of the beast,  
The old way is safe from all this nonsense  
Because the computer in all its glory can't  
replace the horse and common sense.

Or can it?

## Cattle-free by '93—A Viewpoint

**E. William Anderson**

"Cattle-free by '93" is a slogan being heard frequently enough in resource management circles to warrant careful consideration of its implications. It refers to a movement that has existed for some time which has a goal to eliminate all livestock grazing from public lands.

As desirable as it may appear to remove all livestock grazing from public lands as the remedy for solving both real and perceived resource problems, which certainly do exist, a more factual, in-depth, and practical solution is needed. People who advocate this slogan's concept need to be cautioned as to the serious second- and third-order consequences that very likely will take place—in addition to local, county, and state economic impacts—if public-land livestock grazing is terminated. The results could self-destruct the very objectives they wish to attain, which include restored riparian areas and improved watershed quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and recreational opportunities.

According to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, about 50% of eastern Oregon's critical deer and elk winter range exists on private lands. A large proportion of eastern Oregon's riparian areas, including many of the most important ones, have been in private ownership since the homestead era, when they were often the basis for filing homestead claims. Consider the potential second- and third-order consequences that will occur if livestock grazing is eliminated on public lands:

- Critical wildlife winter range usually coincides with spring turn-out range for livestock. Suitable and adequate turn-out range is the most limiting forage-related factor on many ranching enterprises, including those currently involving public rangelands. Without public-range grazing, these ranches will be faced with limited and inflexible management options which often mandates excessive utilization, especially of early-grazed units. The resulting ecological deterioration of these critical winter ranges on private lands appears contrary to the apparent

objectives of the slogan's proponents. The high proportion of critical wildlife winter range on private lands in eastern Oregon that would be affected adversely should be sufficient to cause serious reconsideration among those who are genuinely concerned with the wildlife winter-range problem.

There is a solution: increase flexibility of livestock management options so as to provide the opportunity to install practices that will improve quality and quantity of both private and public spring turn-out range. Two proven practices should be considered. First, practice moderate utilization which leaves sufficient stubble on forage plants to provide for the plant's growth requirements as well as for erosion control, watershed improvement, and wildlife habitat. Second, with management flexibility it is possible to top-off a turn-out unit, and move the livestock to another unit about mid-growing season, which allows grazed plants to produce regrowth before the end of the growing season. This regrowth is higher quality autumn-winter forage than that from ungrazed plants. This practice also contributes to improved plant vigor—more production.

- In respect to riparian restoration, removal of livestock grazing from public lands will certainly concentrate livestock grazing on private lands, including private riparian areas, thereby causing limited and inflexible management options. The result will circumvent the truly great need to restore riparian areas, no matter where they occur, for the benefit of wildlife habitat, fisheries, water quality, livestock, and other downstream benefits. In view of the high proportion of riparian areas on private lands, those who genuinely want to help restore all riparian areas should seriously rethink the approach proposed by this slogan.

The solution is to increase flexibility of livestock management options so that seasonal rotation of grazing and the use of specially created riparian units are practical options.

- Big game animals are fussy eaters. They prefer succulent forage and dislike overmature, wolfy vegetation so much that they will move to other areas where regrowth following livestock grazing provides succulent forage. Livestock grazing can be controlled and used as a tool to manipulate vegetation on a specific area whereas, wildlife grazing cannot be controlled. Without controlled livestock grazing, the forage on public rangelands soon will become wolfy, big game will move to private lands that have been grazed by livestock, and the quality of public range for big game will deteriorate, not improve, as the slogan ostensibly implies.

The fact that livestock grazing—both sheep and cattle—can be used successfully as a tool to enhance the quality of forage for big game has been demonstrated under numerous practical situations including on ranches, wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas and scientifically by research. Obviously, just having livestock out on the range is not enough; a properly designed and executed grazing system is required.

- Third-order consequences caused by eliminating all livestock grazing from public lands deserves special consideration because they potentially include drastic reactions, such as:


- court-ordered reparations, paid out of public funds badly needed for wildlife habitat projects, for verified wildlife damages to valuable private resources and lands that are essential to successful ranching;

—intensified polarization between knowledgeable resource owners, managers and users, and those perceived to be advocates of “cattle-free by ‘93”. This could cause on-going beneficial working relations and programs to diminish significantly or cease altogether, including those between the recreating public and affected ranchers.

In lieu of the “cattle-free by ‘93” approach, there is a valid solution to the situation. Continue, expand or intensify on-going programs dealing with wildlife habitat and riparian area restoration. In addition, on a case-by-case basis, resolve specific local issues and situations by using coordinated resource management planning (CRMP). CRMP is a process by which resource owners, managers, and users, working together as a team from beginning to end, formulate and implement plans for the management of all major resources and ownerships within a specific area and/or resolve specific conflicts. In this process resource owners and managers do not abrogate their authority and responsibility to make final decisions, but they make these decisions after listening to the viewpoints, experiences, and options of others. Consensus is a fundamental element in the CRMP process. The mix of interests represented in the planning group assures a broad-perspective base for decision-making, including identification of potential second-and third-order consequences.

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