

# Education and Promotion of Range Management

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There is an axiom in educational circles that learning has not taken place unless there is a change in behavior. I cite as an example a student I taught some years ago, I think his name was Ray, at Olds College. He was giving me a particularly hard time one afternoon, so I grabbed him by the short hair of the neck—he was much smaller then, and proceeded to march him to the Principal's office. I looked down at him and said, "Ray, I think the devil's got a hold of you!" He looked up and said, "I think so too, sir!"

He changed his behavior—went to get his Masters degree—and came back and took my job!

I have chosen to interpret the topic as the education and promotion of range management principles to the primary producers. It is my conviction that the bottom line on range management is the attitude of the livestock producers whose animals are grazing the range.

What then is my *perception* of range management as an integral part of the livestock industry? Firstly, you can't sell range management as you would a bottle of snake oil—a potion to relieve all aches and pains, or horse liniment to reduce the swelling. Before a producer will buy range management principles and practices, we're looking for an attitudinal change, a change in his way of thinking, and that's a challenge for many reasons.

**We live in an instant society**, and as a result, the long-term view is not a popular one. We want things now. Instant food, instant entertainment, instant success—you name it. In this Society it is relatively easy to cut family ties and get a new wife and family if you desire. So who's interested in the long-term view? I suggest that among the total cattle producers on the ranges of Alberta, only a relative minority trace their roots on the same ranch, back two, three or four generations. New money has purchased ranches and they need cash flow and immediate results, in many instances at the expense of the long-term view.

There's a shortage of manpower. Who's got the time for range management? moving cattle? repairing fences? prescribed burns? weed control? water development? Time is a scarce commodity and it's worth money.

Return on investment is low—and if history teaches us anything, will probably remain low, relative to other alternative investments. Can the producers afford range management?

In many instances the informed and active rancher is busy meeting with Government agencies on Integrated Management Plans in his area. He's giving input on various multiple land use projects and he's got even less time for his own management functions!

In many areas of the province there is a distrust of Government policies and personnel who offer lots of advice, but don't bear the risk if the projects fail. Many producers listen for government advice—do just the opposite—and this becomes their basis for management decisions.

I see a few basic roots of the *problem*.

**There are times when the very word *management*** can become offensive. How well do you manage the various areas in your life? What's your reaction when your broker tells you how to manage your funds? When the wife tells you how to manage the kids? How well did you plan your days off this summer and fall, to do a little fishing and hunting? Don't be too hard on the producer when he doesn't manage his range the way you'd like to see it, for we're all guilty of mis-management at times.

The underlying problem is that we've all got a free will and like to do things our way. Frank Sinatra sings, "I Did It My Way". We pride ourselves on our independence, and livestock producers are among the most independent, outspoken, and individualistic people in the world. Adds great flavor to our culture—but a definite challenge when we're talking new ideas and changes in behavior! In the film "Chariots of Fire" the great Scottish runner and Missionary Eric Liddel is asked where he got the determination to run, and he answered in his thick, Scottish brogue "It comes from within".

Wouldn't it be great to work with producers who had a deep conviction that range management was paramount in their plans?

What then is the *prognosis* for the future? In my view, if we're going to promote range management at the producer's level, we first of all must have people promoting range management who are CREDIBLE. This means educated and experienced personnel who know and understand the psychology and sociology of people, not just scientific facts about range management. It's people who ultimately make judgements about land use, and we have to learn what makes them tick. Our extension people must be educated themselves in rural sociology and basic psychology. These disciplines cannot be left as electives in a range management program—they must be essentials.

We must also listen more to our producers and empathize with their difficult economic position. We must learn to see through their eyes and view the world from their perspective. This takes time, but remember, you're not peddling snake oil or horse liniment.

Furthermore, we need people who can give CREATIVE LEADERSHIP. We can't just give information. The producer is bombarded by informational stimuli at every turn. The T.V. super-sales pitch tells him life is made up of using soap that won't leave "ring around the collar", using a deodorant that'll have him driving women off with a stock prod, and some

Note: The author is co-ordinator for range development and range management for Peace River Region, Alberta, Canada. This paper was presented at the International Mountain Section, Society for Range Management, winter meeting in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada on 1 November 1985.

This paper gives some excellent pointers and tips on how to work with and motivate ranchers.

enthusiastic guy doing his best to convince him that he should quit ranching and work for C.P. Rail—where you're treated like a person not a number!

We must show by example. We need creative, practical innovative projects in range management that incorporate the latest scientific facts. New ideas and systems must be implemented at a level where the producer sees them as economically and ecologically sound for his benefit.

We must work more through established groups that are in our community. Work more with the leaders and innovators in forage associations, livestock associations, community organizations and the like. They've already identified themselves as leaders. We must win their confidence, listen to them, work with them, and perhaps be content with small—but significant, attitude changes.

**We need to exercise creative discipline also.** Some ranges, unfortunately, are abused through mis-management. Stupid decisions are made. How does an extension worker remedy the bad situations and still remain on terms with the active producer? Many times the decision to discipline either makes or breaks credibility, but will continue to be a critical factor in education and promotion of range management.

Finally, we must make personal *CONTACT* with the livestock producer on his home range. Don't expect him to come to you. Get to know him as a person.

In the Church I belong to, we say that our faith is "more caught—than taught". If you're around people who share a particular view of the world, you begin to think the way they do. In this room there are people like Alex Johnston and Silver Smoliak who have influenced many of us personally by their publications and by our personal contacts with them. This same principle applies to range management.

Be available when the livestock producer calls and take time to be interested in his concerns. Speak at every opportunity, such as 4H functions, stock growers associations and career days in local schools, and work with them on selected projects if possible.

Realize that our mandate is more than just administrative in nature. Use the media where applicable, and recognize that in today's very impersonal world there is no substitute for personal contact.

I was in the small hamlet of Eaglesham—not quite at the end of the world, but so close that I thought I might fall off if I took a walk—when I observed the following incident.

I was in the general store. It had everything the rural community needs, and I observed an older lady looking through the galvanized pails. She selected one at long last with a sizeable dent and proceeded to ask the storekeeper for a discount. Price on the tag was \$10.00, but she proudly walked out with her new pail for only \$7.00 with the storekeeper exclaiming, "Ask and it shall be given you".

I smiled at the transaction and comment, and turned to see a man observing various items on the shelf next to me. He was mumbling and in a hurry, and muttered he was looking for a paste to hold his dentures. I spotted it for him, he dug into his pocket, paid and left. The storekeeper glanced at the closing door and said "Seek and ye shall find".

At that moment a fancy truck and horse trailer pulled up and a cowboy rushed in wanting to buy a blanket for his high-priced Appaloosa. He was heading to a rodeo in Teepee Creek and had forgotten his horse blanket.

I had been in the back room where the tack was, and I had only seen one multi-colored blanket.

The storekeeper brought out the blanket, threw it on the counter and said "that'll be \$15.00".

"Don't you have anything better?", exclaimed the cowboy, "This here horse needs somethin' better than that!"

"See what I can find," said the storekeeper. He disappeared into the back room—with the blanket—and when he returned the blanket was folded with a different pattern on the top side. "That'll be \$25.00," he said, "little better quality—and one that'll do your horse proud".

"Is that the very top of the line?" enquired the cowboy—"I want the best one you've got".

"Just a moment," said the storekeeper and he disappeared into the back room again with the same blanket. This time he emerged with the blanket very neatly folded, dusted off and proudly displayed with a different pattern on top.

"This is my very best," he said "and the price is a mere \$40.00".

The cowboy smiled, gave him two twenties and dashed out the door as the storekeeper explained, "He was a stranger and I took him in."

I suggest we've got some selling to do. I trust our producers aren't strangers to us and I trust they don't think we're trying to take them in. We do have to move the blanket, however, so maybe in the future we'll have to brush it off, clean it up, re-fold it and present it proudly because if nobody buys, we'll soon be going out of business.

## The "7-P's of Rangeland"

Contribution from **James T. Nichols**

Rangeland is an important and valuable natural resource because rangeland:

- produces forage for livestock which is the major forage component supporting the beef cattle and sheep industry.
- provides a varied habitat for many species of wildlife.
- protects our soil from wind and water erosion.
- preserves a "germplasm" bank for many plant species that may become important for as yet unknown uses.
- purifies and enhances our environment by cleansing the air, filtering runoff to streams, increasing the intake of precipitation aiding the recharge of groundwater.
- perseveres in the face of adversity and renews itself when provided the opportunity by those who use and sometimes abuse it.
- pleases those who have learned to appreciate the beauty and aesthetic qualities of rangeland.

FROM: "Range Judging Handbook for Nebraska" by James T. Nichols, Peter N. Jensen, and J. Stubbendieck, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.