

pilot, and a \$20,000 Piper Super Cub bought specifically for coyote hunting.

The aircraft has more than justified itself already. In the past year, it has accounted for 285 coyote kills, while trappers, using steel traps, game calls, and rifles, have accounted for another 100.

But predators aren't sheep ranchers' only problem with nature. Like farmers and livestock men everywhere, the Iberlins are vulnerable to the weather. They're still recovering from the Easter weekend of 1973 when a heavy blizzard pushed by 100-mile-an-hour winds howled down across northern Wyoming.

When the storm abated, the scene was grim. Flocks of sheep had suffocated under several feet of snow. Many of these that were dug out alive were badly chilled and later died of pneumonia. When the snows melted and the carcasses were counted, the Iberlins had lost 2,500 ewes, 90 head of cattle and 140 calves.

With the severe loss in breeding stock, the sheep and cattle operation lost money in 1973, 1974, and 1975, recording a

battering \$33,000 deficit in the latest year. Even with the improved market outlook in 1977, which served the Iberlins well, they were hurt again by last spring's snows which killed 600 ewes and 30 rams.

But the hardships fail to dampen the Basques' irrefragable devotion to dancing, wine and song.

Once the work is done, the life style here becomes anything but Spartan and is marked by a penchant for marathon parties.

And there has been plenty of that around Johnson County since the Basques arrived at the turn of the century. The local Basques used to throw mountainside parties on a large openair concrete dance floor built into the side of the mountain. But people in Buffalo, Wyoming, county seat of Johnson County, today prefer smaller gatherings, such as neighborhood and block parties.

But it still takes little to motivate Basques to gather. The arrival of a newsman here on a recent Sunday triggered a Basque party the following night. ●

Grazing Outlook on Public Lands Managed by the Bureau of Land Management

Maxwell T. Lieurance

The following was presented by Maxwell T. Lieurance, Associate State Director, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico at the annual meeting of the New Mexico Section of the Society for Range Management at Albuquerque, New Mexico on December 3, 1976.

In a word, the grazing outlook on public lands, managed by the Bureau of Land Management is good!

There are many in the livestock industry today who will disagree with me, but from where I sit, the picture for long-term stability of livestock grazing on public lands has never been better. With the intensity of interest in these lands being displayed today, it sometimes seems that there is a concentrated effort by environmental and conservation groups to eliminate domestic grazing, and there certainly are some who do feel this way. By and large, however, responsible representatives from these and other public land user groups recognize the multiple use considerations that have to be made, and we know that livestock grazing can be a very important tool in improving the quality of vegetative cover.

Let me explain why I say the outlook is good. In order to do this you have to take a historical look at what has happened to these lands, and what we started with. In the 50-year period following the turn of the century in 1800, the United States acquired 1.4

billion acres in the West by purchase or treaty. This land acquisition period ended with the purchase of Alaska in 1867, making a total of 1.8 billion acres. This was the original "public domain" and it covered three-fourths of the continental United States and all of Alaska. These lands were then used to "subsidize" the settlement of the West. Literally thousands of laws were passed to provide the transfer to private ownership. Land was cheap. In addition to the laws permitting individual ownership, of which the most memorable was the "Homestead Act," there were:

- grants to the railroads;
- grants to the builders of wagon roads and military roads;
- grants to the States as they were added to the Union;
- beginning with Yellowstone Park in 1872, the National Parks and Monuments were set aside;
- following the turn of the century in 1900, the National Forests began to be carved out of the public domain;
- then came the Wildlife Refuges;
- and on and on the "public domain dwindled."

Along with this movement came the tremendous build-up of domestic livestock on the open ranges of the West, which peaked out late in the century. Grazing was uncontrolled and much of the real damage to the range resource occurred then. The contemporary ranching industry as well as the Bureau of Land Management fell heir to what was left after everyone else got their "cut" of the public domain. Today, there remain about

Editor's Note: On June 4, 1978, Mr. Lieurance assumed responsibility for range management in the Washington, D.C. office of the Bureau of Land Management. Prior to his coming to New Mexico he engineered the Vale Rangeland Rehabilitation Program in Oregon—known as fine example of intensive management system.

150 million acres in the western states, exclusive of Alaska.

In 1934 the Taylor Grazing Act was passed to "provide orderly administration" of livestock use and conservation of what we now call public lands. While no really good figures are available, Senate Document No. 199 "The Western Range," which was published in 1936, showed the following:

1% Improving
6% Stable
93% Declining

It was reported that 84% of the public domain had lost more than half of its forage value, and the entire area had been depleted an average of 67%. Subsequent administration and management have slowed the rate of decline, but have not reversed it, except on the approximately 25 million acres or 16% under intensive management, and in some localized areas. Present studies show about 17% in satisfactory or better condition, but 83% or about 135 million acres are producing less than their potential. An encouraging point is that on the 25+ million acres that are under intensive grazing management (areas with successful allotment management plans), the declining trend in range condition has all but been halted. We show:

54% Improving
42% Static

Following the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act, real management came about slowly. Even though this act has some multiple use features, the implication was there that the public domain would ultimately be disposed of. It was not a clear mandate for long-term federal management. The early years of administration were devoted largely to the determination of individual range qualifications for grazing use on the public lands and what we called the "adjudication" process. This process required, among other things, adjusting grazing use to the allowable or proper grazing capacity of the range.

Since this quite frequently resulted in a reduction in grazing qualifications, we experienced a stormy period during the 1950's and early 1960's while adjudication was carried out. The live-

stock industry was concerned about tenure in their continued use of these lands. The Bureau's position was that there can be no long-term stability if the ranges are overstocked and range condition continues to decline. It was obvious, also, that reducing livestock numbers alone was not the answer. There had to be a systematic plan of management considering both the needs of the resource and the needs of the livestock. This needs to be a very carefully developed program and it requires close cooperation between the livestock owner and the land manager. We need to foster an atmosphere of mutual trust. We are in a rather stormy environmental period right now, but I really believe that, in the end, we are going to find that it has all been to the good.

Since the mid-1960's, BLM has been operating under a comprehensive multiple-use planning system. We begin with an inventory of all of the known resources, and through the planning system process, weigh the various demands on the resources and make the management decisions on how or if these demands will be met. Quite often these demands are competing and we must decide to what extent the various interests can be accommodated. This process is conducted with input by the concerned public, who have an opportunity to be heard. With the variety of interest in public lands today, not everyone can get everything they would like. Public lands have been grazed by domestic livestock in a relatively stable situation in the 42 years since the Taylor Grazing Act provided the base for the beginning of management of these lands. On October 21, 1976, the President signed into law the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. This Act provides, finally, a clear mandate for retention in Federal ownership and management. Grazing by domestic livestock is very much a part of this Act and is one of the uses that will be provided for. I will not say that all the problems are solved, because they are not. Undoubtedly, adjustments will have to be made when they are necessary to protect the resource. But, as long as livestock grazing is conducted in a professional manner and we observe the basic principles of good range management and good livestock management, in my opinion, the future looks good on public lands. ●

Employment Service

Area Range Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, to conduct educational programs in the Edwards Plateau of Texas with headquarters at San Angelo. PhD in range management is required, as well as 2 years experience in Extension teaching and the ability and desire to work with people. Contact *Dr. Delbert Black, Personnel Officer, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, RM. 104K, System Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.*

Area Range Specialist, Agricultural Extension Service, to conduct educational programs in the Trans-Pecos area of Texas with headquarters at Fort Stockton. PhD in range management is required, as well as 2 years experience in Extension teaching and the ability and desire to work with people. Contact *Dr. Delbert Black, Personnel Officer, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, RM. 104K, System Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.*

Enforcement personnel for EPA Regional office in Denver needed to assist with inspections related to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and Toxic Substances Control Act. Applicant must be a full-time employee of an institution of higher learning, state government, local government, or Indian tribal governing body. Requires commitment of 1 to 2 years, with residency in Denver or Grand Junction, Colo. Contact: *Robert Harding, Chief, Field Operations, Toxic Substances Branch, EPA. (303) 837-3926.*