

Influencing Change

IN WYOMING RANGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



Day 1: Participants learn to calculate forage available using grazing sticks to measure grass height.



Day 2: Participants estimate how much forage cattle have consumed in a 24-hour period.

Situation

Rangelands comprise more than 80% of Wyoming's land base, which means sustainable rangeland management equates to economic stability in many parts of the state. The overarching goal of UW Extension programming for rangeland resource management is to sustain or improve rangeland health and ranch profitability in Wyoming.

Traditionally, Wyoming ranchers graze livestock on upland rangelands from late spring through early fall while forage is mechanically harvested on the productive irrigated hay meadows. The harvested forage is fed to livestock during the late fall, winter, and early spring. The cost of rolling that forage into bales has increased significantly in the last 20 years, coinciding with increased fuel, machinery, and overhead costs.

Management-intensive grazing is the art and science of moving livestock through a pasture using short grazing periods at a high stocking density. This can improve the harvest efficiency of grazing livestock and the productive capacity of the grassland.

To effect change in the way livestock are managed on Wyoming's rangelands, two four-day grazing schools were held in Glenrock. The schools provided ranchers with hands-on experience using management-intensive grazing on irrigated meadows and higher-producing rangelands that are typically harvested for hay. Twenty-nine individuals participated in the grazing school in May 2014, and 21 individuals participated in the June 2016 grazing school.

Impact

Through the grazing schools, participants learned the basics of management-intensive grazing, how to incorporate management-intensive grazing into their grazing plans, and how to use the tools needed for successful grazing. In the post evaluation, 100% of the participants reported an increase in knowledge about the topics covered in the class. Participants reported gaining the most knowledge by taking pasture inventories and learning about fencing materials.

Participants were also asked to estimate the profitability of their operations if learned concepts were applied. Participants indicated they would save an average of \$30 per animal as a result of attending the workshop. Because participants reported the number of livestock they managed, it can be extrapolated that the workshops could save producers approximately \$419,000. In addition, participants reported the number of acres owned or managed. From this, we can infer that the University of Wyoming Extension influenced approximately 260,000 acres across Wyoming and surrounding states through the management-intensive grazing schools.

Ashley Garrelts

UW Extension Educator
Range Management
Converse, Natrona, Niobrara Counties
(307) 358-2417
ashleyg@uwyo.edu