



SHEEP SHEET

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Overgrazing on rangelands is not always caused by grazing too many animals. If stock are not properly distributed over the range, overgrazing can be severe in certain spots, even with limited stock numbers. Livestock naturally congregate in certain areas, and the stock owner must do every everything possible to move animals away from these places. These most frequently used areas of the range are the meadows, bottoms, low saddles between watersheds or drainage, around water holes, windmills, stock tanks, and the tops of mesas or table lands. Steep sloped ground and areas fairly far from stock water sources tend to be less utilized. Many overgrazed ranges can be improved and without a reduction in livestock numbers if the manager could distribute the animals more uniformly. This adjustment in grazing management would involve some of the following tools: salt-mineral supplements, stock water placement, and fencing.

SALT-MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS

Salt-mineral supplements (blocks) are possibly the easiest and perhaps the most effective means of improving livestock distribution. Salt has been referred to by some ranchers as the "*cheapest cowboy on the place*." Salt is essential for meeting the dietary needs of grazing livestock and animals will move significant distances to have access to it.

Timing is Important on Seasonal Mountain Ranges

The livestock producer must know the suitable time to graze on different parts of his/her seasonal mountain ranges. If the salt-mineral supplement is placed on most all parts of unfenced range in spring, sheep, goats and cattle will move rapidly over the entire area, reaching the higher elevations before they should be grazed. Most of these concerns could be prevent if the salt-mineral

Distributing Livestock as a Grazing Management Tool

Sheepdex G-10

supplements are distributed on the lower ranges in the early part of the season and carefully moved up the mountains as the season progresses.

Salt Away from Stock Water Sites

Livestock do not naturally require water when they consume salt. The general normal pattern is for stock to graze to salt and then graze away. Generally, 6-7 hours lapses between livestock salting and drinking. The livestock producer that puts his/her salt at or near the watering sites is not only increasing the concentration of livestock at the water but is also missing the use of a valuable tool for attracting the animals to graze in little-used areas away from water.



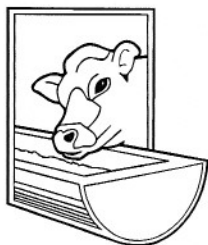
Number of Grazing Places Should Depend on Grazing Capacity

Salt-mineral supplements should be placed in lightly-grazed or ungrazed (rested) sites away from water where the soil is not highly erodible. Salt-mineral sites may be as far as 1.5 to 2.0 miles apart in rolling country with moderate to low grazing capacity. On moderate to high-capacity paddocks (range) one mile between the salt-mineral grounds is adequate. On any range pasture, it is better to have too many salt-mineral places rather than too few.

How Much Salt-Mineral Supplement is Required?

Although the amount of salt-mineral supplement consumed by grazing livestock varies with the season and the characteristics of the grazing forage, 2.5 lbs. per head per month should be allowed for cattle when feed is succulent and 1.5

lbs. Per head per month when forage is dried. Sheep and goats generally about 0.1 lb. per head per month.



LIVESTOCK WATER

Location is Important

Correct location of stock water is very important in helping the grazer obtain full use of his/her range. In the semi-arid West, livestock producers are willing to accept water from any source, but a few considerations should be considered before any permanent water developments are constructed. There should be an adequate supply of forage to support the water development. Locations should be chosen that possibilities for providing water for multiple pastures.

Dirt-Colloidal Clay (Bentonite) Tanks

Evaluate the possibilities for dirt-clay sealed tanks in areas that have good surface drainage. If tanks are constructed, they should be deeper at one end and with as small a surface area as possible to reduce evaporative losses. These may also serve as temporary water sites during the wet or snow melt run-off season if a year-round facility is impractical.

Pipelines May Be Less Expensive Than Wells

Plastic (PVC) pipe has been used effectively throughout the U.S. to move water via pipe from one paddock to another or to other locations within the same allotment, if it is large in size. Generally, this method of stock water enhancement is often the less expensive route than the installation of windmills or dirt tanks.

FENCING

Size, Vegetation Type, and Topography Should Indicate Fencing Requirements

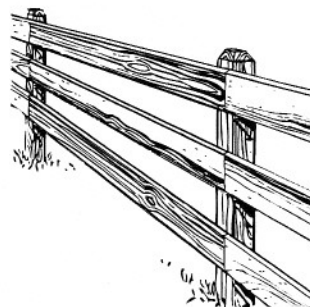
Livestock distribution can often be improved by reducing the size of extremely large pastures and/or allotments. Select fence locations which will best

utilize current water locations and vegetative types. Rough, broken country is best managed differently from flat, level and/or rolling country.

Drift Fences and Temporary Fences Could be a Viable Alternative

Drift fences may be used effectively to drift livestock into areas away from their normal or routine travel patterns. Temporary fences should be used where ranges or pastures have been burned, reseeded, chained, cleared or on areas that need to be rested from grazing.

Evaluate and study your grazing area and see if there are any means for improving grazing animal distribution. If you can encourage your animals to graze in areas that have been lightly grazed or unutilized, grazing pressure can be reduced on other parts of your grazing areas, and in turn improve animal health, nutrition and weight gains by enhancing their selection of better forage. However, initially decide if the expense of any improvements can be repaid by improvement or through increased use of otherwise unused grazing sites.



*For more information write:
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