

# Improve rangelands through stockmanship

BY JESSE BUSSARD

**R**ESearch and ongoing field projects offer evidence that stockmanship, and more specifically low-stress live-stock handling (LSLH), can prove beneficial to rangelands when integrated with grazing management. Essentially, how you handle cattle can offer big dividends for your herd and the land you graze.

Cattle, by nature, are selective foragers. Strategies such as fencing and intensive grazing management have commonly been used to manage this behavior. However, in more extensively managed systems, such as a grazing lease on public rangelands, these solutions may not always be feasible or practical with the remote locations and sheer acreage volume that grazing leases frequently cover.

Instead, says Steve Cote, "Stockmanship is probably the most powerful range management tool ever developed."

Cote, a former Natural Resources



**ATTENTION TO DETAIL:** Moving cattle within their natural "day cycle" can keep them grazing where you want them while preserving rangeland condition.

Conservation Service soil conservationist in Idaho, relies upon past success stories working with ranchers, range conservationists and Idaho grazing associations during his time with NRCS. He notes that high control of livestock is vital to pro-

tecting and improving rangeland health. By combining LSLH with holistic planned grazing, Cote describes how he was able to place cattle to graze in locations of large public allotments that many people would find undesirable. His work

showed that cattle herded using these methods spent less time in riparian areas. Additionally, allotment grazing times were extended while meeting or exceeding agency stubble height requirements. Derek Bailey of New Mexico State

**THE FEEDING SYSTEM THAT EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT.**

Find us on Facebook

"We're able to feed out exactly what we need and we just have zero waste." Eric Elsner, University of Georgia.

"It's been a real money saver for us" David Fiske, Virginia Tech, University



LEARN MORE ONLINE AT [www.hustler-equipment.com](http://www.hustler-equipment.com)  
OR Call 1-(844)-249-2092

**HUSTLER**  
Rethinking the Everyday

**xforce**  
More control. Less effort.

All the power and convenience of hydraulics with no electric power. Bolt on the squeeze and head control kit to your current Pearson chute. Call us or visit our website for more details!

**PEARSON**  
LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT  
QUALITY PRODUCTS SINCE 1961

308-645-2231 [pearsonlivestockeq.com](http://pearsonlivestockeq.com)

WE HAVE A SOLUTION TO YOUR LIVESTOCK NEEDS!

**NEW SCRAPE-ALL**  
HEAVY & MEDIUM DUTY BOX SCRAPER

**SHADE-ALL**  
30' X 30' LIVESTOCK SHADE

**SPREAD-ALL**  
TRAILER & TRUCK MOUNT SPREADERS

West Point Implement & West Point Design  
2074 S. Hwy 275 West Point, NE 68788  
(402) 372-2408 [www.westpointimp.com](http://www.westpointimp.com)



University offers his own research on the use of LSLH to manage grazing on rangelands across Montana, Idaho and New Mexico. According to Bailey, grazing distribution of livestock is a significant issue on rangelands, and while he believes many of these problems can be solved with fencing, he jokes, "I am not a recreational fencer."

As an alternative to fencing, Bailey suggests stockmanship is an ideal tool to manipulate grazing distribution. "It can reduce labor costs, facilitate movement between pastures and likely improves livestock productivity," he says.

### Research reported

In his research, Bailey compares LSLH to conventional herding methods to move cattle away from riparian areas to targeted grazing locations in uplands. Cattle herded using LSLH grazed upland areas more frequently and spent less time near streams, in turn reducing grazing use of these delicate habitats.

Bailey's results show that midday, from around noon to midafternoon, is the most ideal time to herd cattle away from riparian zones. This timing takes into consideration the cows' daily behavior patterns, allowing cattle plenty of time to drink, which subsequently reduces their desire to return to riparian areas later in the day as they might if moved during morning hours.

Rancher Bob Kinford of West Texas echoes Bailey's observations on timing of herding, "I move my cattle at the speed of cow, showing up about the time they are ready to go off water [midday], and then move them out to where I want them to graze."

Kinford emphasizes that to get cattle to stay where you place them requires having adequate feed. He recommends having a grazing plan in place to make this easier.

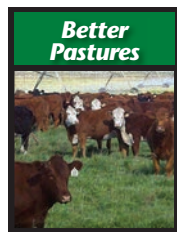
In addition to timing of herding, Bailey's findings suggest that strategic placement of supplements like liquid mineral blocks and salt help make herding and settling of cattle in targeted grazing areas easier by serving as an attractant, especially during times when forage quality is low. Using a combination of liquid mineral blocks and salt and moving them frequently to new targeted grazing areas proved to be the strategy that worked best.

To do all this effectively, Bailey makes it clear animals must be adequately prepared. This means teaching cattle to take pressure and release to guide their direction of movement. While this is difficult at first, he assures it becomes easier with time as cattle become accustomed to being handled this way.

In his experience, says Bailey, "cattle began to expect that we would begin herding at midday. Near the end of the study, cattle would often travel to water at the normal time, drink, and then leave the stream and spend the afternoon on uplands."

To obtain successful integration of LSLH with rangelands grazing management, experts emphasize that handlers must have a firm understanding of LSLH principles and a strong commitment to continued skill improvement. In turn, stockmanship has the ability to be a valuable strategy to improve grazing management and rangeland health.

*Bussard writes from Billings, Mont.*



Better Pastures

## Check out these resources

TO learn more about stockmanship and low-stress livestock handling methods, consider the following resources.

### ■ Read about it.

Check out the Stockmanship Journal ([stockmanshipjournal.com](http://stockmanshipjournal.com)), a biannual professional journal dedicated to sharing scientific and well-researched information on stockmanship from experts in the field.

Get a copy of Steve Cote's book "Stockmanship: A Powerful Tool for Grazing Lands Management." It's available online as a PDF file or in print.

### ■ Head back to where it all began.

DVDs and a discussion forum are available on the late Bud Williams' website, [stockmanship.com](http://stockmanship.com). Williams' wife, Eunice, still operates the website and sells many educational DVDs on the topic.

### ■ Go to a school.

Attend a stockmanship school with Hand 'n Hand Livestock Solutions ([handnlivestocksolutions.com](http://handnlivestocksolutions.com)), operated by Bud Williams' daughter, Tina Williams, and her husband, Richard McConnell. Email [richard@handnlivestocksolutions.com](mailto:richard@handnlivestocksolutions.com) to find out about upcoming school dates.



# DID YOU KNOW

**that safeguarding beef's image and reputation is a 'round-the-clock effort made possible by your checkoff?**

*"Consumers don't always go to reliable sources to get the facts on beef production. Today especially, the world revolves around social media, and it doesn't take long for an untrue comment to spread like wildfire. Your checkoff is providing information to reassure consumers that beef is a safe and wholesome choice for their families."*

While you and Jana are managing your cattle business, your checkoff is developing strategies and delivering information that shares the true story about beef and beef production.



[MyBeefCheckoff.com](http://MyBeefCheckoff.com)



Funded by the Beef Checkoff.

*Jana Malot*  
Cow-calf producer