



The Australian Rangeland Society

RANGE MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER
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Range Management Newsletter

Official newsletter of the Australian Rangeland Society

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EDITORIAL

This issue of your newsletter is largely concerned with the Broken Hill conference. I believe all 140 + delegates (really an amazing roll-up!) were delighted with the organisation and conduct of the meeting. It was particularly pleasing to have so many members present who obtain their livelihood directly from our rangelands. Now that the euphoria of the Broken Hill R.S.L. Club has passed it is of deep concern to your executive to maintain the interest of these landholders (? pastoralists, graziers, squatters, farmers, managers) in our society. To this end I would like to devote the next or following issue of this newsletter to dealing with subjects of general interest to practising range managers throughout Australia. The 'catch 22' is that to do this successfully I need contributions (letters, articles, information) from the membership. Please put pen to paper! (N.B. contributions do not have to be typed).

BILL BURROWS
Editor

Deadline

Copy for the next issue of the Newsletter is required by November 30, 1971.

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT - DICK CONDON

The change over of the management of the Society from Western Australia to New South Wales took place at the Broken Hill conference at which a large proportion of the membership was present. 140 odd members from all States except Tasmania and from a wide range of disciplines and non-disciplines assured a very successful conference. It was pleasing to see such a high proportion of pastoralist members which reminds us of the need for the Society to cater for their interests as the land user. It was also pleasing to see good representation from the media and the favourable publicity which has resulted.

A large measure of thanks to those who were involved in organising the conference programme and presenting it. Many thanks also to the local soil conservationists John Lawrie and off-sider Roger Stanley for their mammoth job in organising accommodation, tours, transport, catering and lots of other minute details. The contributors of papers also deserve our thanks. The large number of papers can be taken as a measure of the enthusiasm of members.

My first duty as president must be to thank and pay due tribute to foundation president, David Wilcox, Secretary, Alan Payne and Treasurer, Malcolm Howes for their pioneering and painstaking work in getting the Society soundly established. No doubt there have been many others behind the scenes who have contributed time, effort and sound ideas.

The three N.S.W. members of council, Bill Mulham as Treasurer, Geoff Cunningham as Secretary and myself are located in different centres at Deniliquin, Condobolin and Sydney respectively, but our paths cross sufficiently to enable frequent meetings of council to be held.

Council will be soon looking at the format of the next conference to see whether the Broken Hill pattern can be improved upon. Council will also need to make an early decision on the venue of the next conference.

The Society now has a strong body of pastoralist members, mostly from N.S.W. and S.A. If it is to be effective in its role in promoting rangeland science, it must cater for the interests of those members and seek to increase their numbers. Council this year will be looking hard at this question and would appreciate suggestions as to the best method of accomplishing this. Ideas that have been successful will be more than welcome.

As I see it, pastoralist members, and their scientific confreres, can benefit most from local activities where the membership is strong enough to support such activities. S.A. has regular meetings of its State branch orientated towards the pastoralist members' needs. Members from the New England area have also taken positive steps towards involving pastoralist members in Society programmes. I consider that there is also sufficient membership from various parts of western N.S.W. to warrant local activities.

Pastoralist members can aid the process of understanding of rangeland science by making written contributions based on their observations of what has happened in response to various kinds of stimuli, whether management or otherwise. There must be hundreds of good management ideas waiting for a chance to be put on paper and be assimilated by someone else.

I would also appeal to the scientific members of the Society - when writing for the journal, or for the newsletter, remember that communication comes from using simple language. Our Society draws its membership from many disciplines, each of which may be totally or partially ignorant of the jargon used by others. It is therefore imperative that the use of technical jargon be kept to an absolute minimum, or preferably eliminated completely.

THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE 3RD GENERAL MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY,
HELD AT BROKEN HILL R.S.L. CLUB ON FRIDAY, 8TH JULY, 1977 AT 9.15 am

The meeting, chaired by the President, Mr R.W. Condon, was attended by approximately 140 members.

Opening

The President in his opening remarks thanked David Wilcox and other Western Australian members who had assisted in guiding the Society through its inaugural period. He also thanked the C.S.I.R.O. personnel at Deniliquin initially responsible for the Society's newsletter; the Editorial Board and the Editorial Committee for their work in launching the Society's Journal; and John Lawrie, Roger Stanley and John Anderson of Broken Hill for their efforts in organising the present meeting.

Following these remarks, the President invited Mr Allan Bartholomaeus, a local pastoralist member of the Society, to open the Conference.

Mr Bartholomaeus' address provided much food for thought. The text of the address is appended to these minutes.

Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the second General Meeting held at Agricola College Kalgoorlie on July 14th, 1976 were read and confirmed.

YOUNG/WILSON

President's Report:

Finances

The President gave a brief report on the Society's finances as at 31st December, 1976 = this being the latest set of figures available since the books were currently being audited.

Proceedings of Second U.S./Australia Range Workshop

The President mentioned that the proceedings of the above workshop were available from the Society's Editor in Perth.

Reciprocal Membership with S.R.M.

The President advised that David Wilcox would continue negotiations with S.R.M. on this subject.

Change of Council Location

The President mentioned the fact that Council had now changed its location to New South Wales.

General Business

No General business arise but the President was asked to read a letter from the Director-General for Trade and Development in the South Australian Department of Economic Development listing staff required for a project in Algeria and asking interested persons to contact the Department.

Closure

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.40 am at which time the Society's scientific meeting commenced.

OPENING RANGELAND'S CONFERENCE - By Alan Bartholomaeus

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

As a representative of land users and a land user myself I am very pleased to be asked to open this second Conference of the Australian Rangelands Society. A large number have come from far and wide to attend this Conference and I extend a warm welcome to Broken Hill to you all.

The main aim of the Society is to provide a medium for communication between rangeland users, researchers and administrators.

Since the Society was formed in January '75 the membership has been badly out of balance. Not that there were too many scientists but there were not enough pastoralists.

Mercifully, Mr Chairman, we will never have a surfeit of administrators.

However the administrators can be thanked for the steady increase in pastoralist members. I know the enthusiasm of our Chairman, Mr Dick Condon and Mr Jim Vickery of the South Australian Pastoral Board has sparked many land users into joining.

On the local scene the University of N.S.W.'s work at Fowlers' Gap Research Station has generated more interest in the science and art of land use.

At the last Conference of the Australian Rangeland's Society at Deniliquin in 1975 there were no pastoralists present.

It is encouraging to see so many here today.

The imbalance is still apparent in the Range Management Newsletter and the program for the Conference today.

Most bushwhackers are good talkers and have plenty of good ideas but are much weaker at writing it down and speaking in public. As the Society expands we should see more papers on management strategies and etcetera. Ideally managers should not lose sight of the long term productivity of the land and should use what time and resources are available to work by policy rather than expediency.

Researchers should never lose sight of the level of financial return which is necessary to run a station properly.

No matter how much research is completed, proved and applied to the pastoral industry and no matter how experienced and expert the management, all will be in vain if the present inflation and trade trend continues.

All pastoral industry expenditure including wages is at inflated Australian prices.

All receipts are tied to overseas prices.

It was recently stated at a meeting of South East-Asian trading countries that Australian is exporting its unemployment problems by maintaining a high level of tariffs on imports.

At the same time Australian rural industry cannot afford to employ the labour required to improve or even maintain proper management.

Many measures can and will be taken to correct this imbalance in the economy between rural and other industries.

This Society can play a part in correcting some of the biased views on conservation that are fed to the general public and to all Governments.

There is a place for those highly trained in Rangeland Science, including economists to support our Land Administrators in advising on rangeland production and show how our semi arid land can continue to help feed and clothe the world.

Better range assessment and educating we managers on the obvious and hidden advantages of conservative stocking rates will also be in vain unless the financial pressures can be eased.

It will be difficult but perhaps not impossible to develop some positive incentive to lessees to treat the country more gently.

As we have a large number of papers to be presented and discussed, Mr Chairman I formally open proceedings and wish you all a successful Conference.

REFLECTIONS: FROM GRAHAM "HAIRY PANIC" HARRINGTON, CSIRO, DENILIQUIN

The two meetings of the Society to date at which scientific papers have been presented have been mainly notable for the variable standard and wide ranging topics of the papers. In addition many of the papers were very site specific, representing a small addition to the total body of knowledge in the subject. The criticism by graziers that some papers were telling them what they already knew, could have stemmed from three causes:

- (a) The graziers really did know all there was to know on that particular subject (unlikely in such a complicated ecosystem);
- (b) They thought that the presented papers were the sum total of knowledge or the best available summary on the subject (a horrifying thought);
- (c) They were the results of scientists testing commonly held beliefs such as "it doesn't matter if you DO graze out your saltbush, all you need is a bit of rain". Such beliefs are rarely without

foundation but equally rarely the whole truth and it is a scientist's job to demonstrate whether common practices really are the most efficient and suitable in all instances.

All this is leading up to what our meetings are trying to achieve in a formal way. The choice seems to fall between two options - a meeting designed to maximize interaction between managers and scientists or a meeting aimed at discussing current ideas and knowledge in rangeland science. In either case the current policy of accepting all written contributions without editing and refereeing is inappropriate.

Clearly the Society should act as a forum for discussion between managers and scientists and the most appropriate way of doing this would be a combination of prepared addresses and workshop activity.

There is an equal need for academic interaction but in this case subject matter should be limited to themes and standard of contribution should be vetted.

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF THE TWELTH COUNCIL MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY HELD AT THE WILD DOG DESTRUCTION BOARD BOARDROOM, BROKEN HILL, N.S.W. AT 8.45pm ON THURSDAY JULY 14, 1977.

General Business

(1) Discussion on How to Interest Graziers in the Society

(a) Past President David Wilcox voiced his concern that the Society should provide, and continue to provide, an interest to graziers. Mr Wilcox considered that much of this interest could be engendered through branches.

(b) R.D.B. Whalley advised that the Northern Tablelands branch had conducted a series of five field days on native grass recognition. These had been held at Armidale, Glen Innes, Walcha, Tenterfield and Bendemeer. A booklet on grass identification had been prepared by branch members and issued to the graziers attending the field days. Species usefulness was discussed at the meetings as well as management required to change species composition in native pastures. In addition a recognition competition using about 20 species of native grasses was held at each field day.

Overall, about 150 New England graziers were reached.

The meeting considered the approach good and felt that it had possibilities for use in other areas.

(c) G.N. Harrington considered that grazier members need to contribute to the Society rather than receiving information all of the time from scientifically orientated members. The Newsletter was a suitable forum to which graziers could contribute.

W.H. Burrows pointed out that many graziers were naturally reticent and that it had taken about 2 years (24 issues) to get good communication from graziers in the "Mulga Line" publication at Charleville.

(d) Further discussion ensued on this subject and it was suggested that matters of topical and vital interest to graziers (e.g. Taxation, Death Duties, Land Tenure, Education) should be discussed in the Newsletter with contributions from graziers, scientists and administrators.

(e) In conclusion it was suggested that the Society have a large number of newsletters printed whenever an issue is particularly relevant to graziers and that 2 copies of each newsletter be sent to graziers for distribution to non-members, neighbours, friends, etc.

(f) The Secretary suggested that in order to make information published in the Society's Journal more relevant to graziers (and extension people) each paper published should have an "application abstract" at the end or beginning of the paper.

The result of discussion was the moving and carrying of the motion "that Council recommended to the Editorial Committee that authors be instructed to supply application abstracts for scientific papers, and possibly articles, and that these be included in the Journal".

PERRY/WILCOX

2. Discussions on Publication of Symposia Proceedings

Discussion ensued on letters from Drs A.D. Wilson and G.N. Harrington (dated 29/9/76 and 31/5/77 respectively) relating to organisation and publication of the Proceedings of Symposia similar to those previously published by C.S.I.R.O. as "Studies of the Australian Arid Zone".

It was pointed out by W.H. Burrows that the Tropical Grassland Society will not support publication of symposia proceedings without support from outside bodies.

G.N. Harrington mentioned that his letter was written not as an attempt to find funds to cover the cost of the proposed symposium relating to Eucalyptus populnea woodlands but to give the Society a fillip in areas of interest and relevance.

It was considered that the size of papers presented at such a symposium should be limited. It was pointed out by R.D.B. Whalley that the Editorial Committee could not handle the proceedings of such a symposium in one operation because of work commitments.

G.N. Harrington indicated that he and J. Walker would produce a report of the proceedings of the proposed symposium consisting of approximately twelve papers.

The outcome of discussion was that G.N. Harrington and J. Walker resubmit a more detailed proposal of the envisaged proceedings to Council.

It was moved and carried that Council recommend to the Editorial Board that they consider a proposal from Messrs. Harrington and Walker for a supplement to the Society's Journal not exceeding 60 Journal pages in length to report the proceedings of the proposed Eucalyptus populnea workshop".

PERRY/MULHAM

Following the passing of the above motion David Wilcox pointed out that he felt that the Society should be involved but there were some problems in publishing symposium proceedings in general. These were:-

- allotment of secretarial/organising load
- provision of publication funds

He considered that reprint sales should cover the costs incurred. In fact, W.H. Burrows pointed out that the "Tropical Grassland" Board insisted that each contributor purchased 200 reprints of the paper submitted to assist in meeting publication costs. Dr Burrows also raised the possibilities of charging \$40 (estimate) per page as a contribution to publication costs.

The value of promoting "studies" symposia dealing with different areas and different subjects was outlined and it was suggested that some subjects would be primarily of scientific interest while others would be extremely topical to extension orientated and grazier members.

W.E. Mulham then raised the general query of whether or not the Society would take over the role previously played by C.S.I.R.O. in arranging symposia on arid zone topics and publishing the proceedings.

In the ensuing discussion it was suggested by G.N. Harrington that Council could decide on relevant subjects for symposia at appropriate time intervals and form committees of members to organise them.

Finally it was moved and carried "that Council supports in principle the holding of "Studies of the Australian Arid Zone" type symposia on selected topics and that Council will only commit itself to such symposia when the organisation requirements of the symposia and the funding of publications has been fully investigated".

WILCOX/CONDON

(3) Tenure of Executive Positions

David Wilcox suggested that consideration be given to Executive positions being held for a 2 year term to save the delays involved in complete shifting of the Society's accounts and papers from State to State each year.

It was pointed out during discussion that the regular change of Council gave an impetus to the Society in the State holding the majority of positions and from this viewpoint this change was useful.

It was decided that any decision on this suggestion would be held in abeyance until the end of the present year and that at that stage the matter should be discussed by the President and Vice-President and if any action was required the matter should be then brought before Council.

RECORDING OF POINT QUADRAT DATA

From: Alex Williams, Health Physics Research Section, A.A.E.C.,
Lucas Heights.

"I would like to respond further to Guy Robinson's reply in RMN 77/2 on the recording of point quadrat data.

I agree with Guy that the issue is a matter of theory versus practice. He says the results of the exercise (RMN 76/4) were sufficient to satisfy him that the data provided an adequate measure of pasture changes. I'm not disputing his satisfaction, and have no intention of calling into question the usefulness of his data. However, the facts satisfy him because he has his field experience to interpret them with, but in order to communicate his facts to the reader who does not have that field experience, he must use the theory that his measurements are based on because his readers are, at least to some extent, familiar with that theory and that is all they have to interpret his data with.

To illustrate this point, refer to the data he presented in RMN 77/1. The data looks good, but that is all we can say about it. There is not enough information given for me to draw any conclusion from it. The missing information that I require so that I can interpret it in the way Guy does is the standard deviation associated with each measurement.

To summarise my objections I would like to say that the original study in which the method was used may well have been a useful piece of research, but neither of the two articles presented in this newsletter are able to demonstrate the adequacy of the method because there is no basis given for judging the significance of differences between any of the numbers. Therefore, despite the claim of trustworthiness and the good looking data, the matter remains unresolved."

(This discussion is now closed - Ed)

1. Was Hanrahan Right? (We'll all be ruined, said Hanrahan)
- D.B. Trebeck, Executive Officer,
Australian Woolgrowers' and Graziers' Council

Overcoming difficulties also comes in the growing awareness at all levels of interindustry questions, such as the tariff, and their effects on rural industries.

However, awareness is not enough. It must be translated into pressure - pressure on all politicians, especially rural politicians, to establish the need for all sectors of the economy to accept an equitable share of the total adjustment burden, rather than unprotected rural export industries being totally exposed, while many manufacturers are totally insulated. From pressure there must come commitment. And finally, and most importantly, from commitment, there must be action.

2. Wool Harvesting and Handling - Bruce Mackay, Australian Wool Corporation.

Because chemical shearing would combine unskilled labour costs with low capital costs, it is still considered to be the eventual "best bet" for cost reduction in the future - it offers the possibility of reducing shearing costs by up to one-third if a successful technique can be developed. A major attack on its development continues to be mounted by C.S.I.R.O.. Particular attention has been paid in the last 15 months to animal husbandry aspects, and work has commenced recently on the "mini-break" method to produce a zone of fibre weakness, rather than a complete fibre break. This method could allow wool removal by mechanical brushing, leaving a short stubble to protect the sheep from sunburn and cold. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries pioneered this method in 1976, and is continuing its work on this and other aspects of chemical shearing and crutching. Nevertheless, the major problem of finding an effective, reliable, trouble-free chemical method for shearing remains to be solved. Success could result in a largely-automatic chemical shearing system for larger properties, and a do-it-yourself system for small flocks.

3. On Rural Adjustment - O.T. Kingma.
Assistant Director,
Pastoral Resources Economics Branch
Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Efficiency in resource use requires that the less efficient producers leave agriculture while the more efficient producers remain in agriculture, invariably absorbing the assets sold (increasing farm size) by those leaving agriculture. However, this dual movement will not occur unaided unless the purchase price offered by potential buyers is at least equal to the sale price required by prospective sellers. These prices must differ by definition for an adjustment problem to emerge. That is a gap has to emerge between the sale price and offer price.

The implications of this are that, given that the State and Federal Governments are concerned to assist the process of structural adjustment, government assistance should ideally be aimed at narrowing the critical gap between these sale and offer prices. The gap concept is relevant regardless of whether the State wishes to compensate for unwanted assets, create more attractive off-farm opportunities or provide assistance containing some mix of both elements.