



## *The Australian Rangeland Society*

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# Range Management Newsletter



Official newsletter of the Australian Rangeland Society

Editor - Dr. W.H. Burrows, Charleville Pastoral Laboratory,  
Hood St., Charleville, Queensland 4470.

MANAGEMENT  
A.S.F.C.  
10 JAN 1978

| OFFICER TO SEE | INITIALS |
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| M.F.           |          |
|                |          |

No. 77/4 December 1977

## EDITORIAL

The final issue of your newsletter for 1977 contains a variety of subject matter. We have two contributions from grazier members, and hope they are the forerunner of more to come. What makes grazier's tick? - John Childs provides some insights. For those interested in the conference circuit desertification is the 'in' topic and notices of two such meetings are included. Also Australia's most famous nomad, Graham 'Hairy Panic' Harrington, seeks, through his associates, a range management specialist to become involved with the nomads of Afghanistan.

On behalf of your council may I wish each and everyone a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. A resolution for all: "I must contribute to the Range Management Newsletter in 1978!!"

Bill Burrows  
Editor

## Deadline:

Copy for the March issue is required by 28 February, 1978.

## LETTERS

We have obtained two responses from grazier members following our plea for newsletter contributions from that source. While this is encouraging more would be appreciated. What better excuse to stay in the office during these hot summer months - avoid the midday sun and write a contribution for your newsletter!

### Accountability of Range Scientists

From: Mr. A.G. Cunningham, "Nindethana", Wentworth 2648.

" My impression of the Rangelands Conference in Broken Hill recently is that the majority of members hope the land user and range land scientists, together with land administrators can work together for the ultimate benefit of rangeland. This is obviously a very worthwhile aim. This aim also implies the frank exchange of ideas and views within the framework of common interest.

No one will deny that we expect to see land users called for greater accountability in future. The less efficient will be automatically culled from the system, for economic reasons. With the awakening interest in ecology, it seems likely that the worst excesses of land usage will be ameliorated.

It would seem however, that no one has found a way in which range scientists shall be held accountable. No doubt each range scientist is contained within a hierarchial system which implies discipline.

It seems however, most unlikely that any mistake made by a scientist in whatever capacity, will have such drastic consequences

to himself, as that made by the hapless grazier.

We look forward to hearing from you and congratulate your organization on the important work it is currently engaged upon."

(Perhaps some of our scientist members would like to reply to this thought provoking contribution? - Ed)

Financial considerations of range management from a grazier's viewpoint

From: Mr. W. Bolton Smith, "Wilangee", Silverton 2880.

(This contribution has been summarized - Ed)

" Most management decisions made by a grazier these days are made through the pocket rather than the head. It follows that we could greatly assist Range Management by an in-depth study of the financial stresses involved and how we can ease these.

I will endeavour to outline what I believe an average grazier aims for as a reasonable result of his life time of work in comparative isolation and removed from the many 'benefits' of urban life."

The writer then lists those considerations (direct and indirect) which he suggests must be catered for if he is to be regarded as being financially successful. The prime requirement is to "rear and educate a family and support his wife and himself in a manner in keeping with a person managing (or owning) a similar sized business in any other walk of life." The difficulties of educating children and in particular the huge current cost of sending children to traditional boarding schools are highlighted.

" The second consideration is to achieve a reasonable level of 'take home pay' out of the enterprise.....It is reasonable for him to expect an income based on his level of responsibility, on a 40 hour week (or is it less now?), plus overtime, plus weekend penalties, plus workers compensation, plus holiday pay, sick leave, long service leave and superannuation. All of these he has to finance out of his 'take home pay' in some way."

Other financial considerations listed include provision and maintenance of capital improvements (including the home), provision of liquidity reserves for adverse years and freight, communication and power costs. The writer dwells at some length on the devastating effects of probate and succession duties. (As this issue goes to press the outcome of the present federal election may or may not eliminate this problem - Ed). He continues:-

" I believe it is not unreasonable and definitely in the interests of good Range Management that the property should pass on to the family, whether it be one or more sons or daughters or both. Far too often today we see properties being sold up and a new owner, often from outside of the Arid Zone and inexperienced in it's fragile character coming in simply because the Grazier was not able to offer sufficient incentive to keep his family or one member of it on the property, after having met all his commitments during the years of his greatest personal productivity.

I don't think anyone can challenge the fact that most of the best Rangeland Managers are those born and reared in the bush and who, despite interruptions for schooling have a natural affinity for and understanding of its nature, it's problems and above all it's careful management."

Finally Mr. Bolton Smith indicates that financial planning must also include an allocation for covering the cost of retirement. Whether the reader agrees with all these considerations this letter indicates the

financial complexities facing the man on the land, particularly under the present conditions of low returns and high inflation.

The questions we might ask include

- (i) Are graziers financial expectations too high?
- (ii) How can the range scientist encourage better rangeland management in the present circumstances, if "decisions are made through the pocket and not the head"

(Any comments? - Ed).

#### PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH WEST QUEENSLAND

From: John Childs, Regional Extension Leader, Dept. of Primary Industries, Charleville. 4470.

The Sheep Industry Study, initiated in 1971, was an attempt to understand the property management characteristics, strategies and performance in South West Queensland. An interview survey of 25% of properties with their income derived predominantly from sheep, was undertaken in 1972 and further data was collected in 1974. In both phases of the study, climatic, biological and economic data were collected.

Analysis of these data revealed that there were four major groupings, of properties, in terms of their financial performance. Financial performance was ascertained using the measure Return to Capital and Management. This measure was derived as follows:

$$RCM = TCR - PS - TCC - AUL - DI + IC$$

where: RCM is Return to Capital and Management; TCR is Total Cash Receipts; PS is Purchases of livestock; TCC is Total Cash Costs; AUL is Allowance for unpaid labour; DI is Depreciation on Improvements; IC is change in Capital Inventory Value.

The financial performance of the four major groupings of properties over a seven year period is shown in Figure 1. The management strategies which were associated with particular financial performance levels and trends over these years were defined. The Groups which appeared to have more effective and productive management strategies were Groups "A" and "D".

Group "A" properties (See Figure 1) were above average in size. They had viable sheep and cattle enterprises. They were large enough to be conservatively stocked at all times, and still make a decent living. They had plenty of scope for cutting costs immediately.

Group "B" properties sold sheep relatively early in the drought period of 1968/69. They sold both sheep and cattle. They purchased mainly cattle in 1971 after the low wool prices.

Group "C" properties tried to hold on to their stock through the drought of 1968. They sold only cattle. In trying to keep sheep numbers up, they suffered low lambings, high stock losses, low wool cuts of poor quality wool at a time of very low wool prices. Their debt level increased.

Group "D" properties were below average in area. They were managed by conservative men. These managers carefully adjusted stock numbers so as to keep their sheep in as good condition as possible. As a consequence, their losses were low, and their wool cuts not too severely reduced. They maintained a nucleus of cattle to even out their income. And they reduced costs early and severely.

Three important aspects of management have become evident from the data collected and analysed, for the Soft Mulga Zone.

1. The rates of change of stock numbers, and therefore of wool production per unit area and per sheep, and of total cash costs, appear important as the instruments for coping with changes in the climatic and economic environment, so as to influence financial performance.
2. Flock size of sheep, herd size of cattle, property size, wool cut per sheep and losses of sheep appear important in influencing the absolute level of financial performance.
3. Effective property managers seem able to cope with changes in environmental conditions, both climatic and economic.

Why the differences in strategies used?

People differed in their ability to effectively cope with changes in their climatic and economic situation. And they still differ because we all differ, for a variety of reasons, in the rate at which we learn how best to cope with changes.

As a result of the events in the pastoral industry, particularly since 1965, people have broadly fallen into three groups in their approach to management of their properties.

1. There are the people of long experience, who have seen all these types of events before. They have built up their land and money reserves over a long period. They are confident of surviving almost any change because they know how to cope because they have actual experience of coping.
2. There are the more aggressive people. They are in the process of actively testing their ideas. They realize that they must try something new and different. They aren't tied to the past and are actively seeking other peoples' knowledge and experience.
3. There are those who are uncertain about what to do. They tried the ways of managing they had learnt when jackarooing or learning from others. They looked after their animals at all costs. But during the last decade, that has not been enough to keep the properties solvent. They have had many of their ideas of management proven wanting, and ineffective. They may have tried new ideas, but during drought and low prices was a risky time to try new ideas.

So many of their ideas and values of "good" management have been proven ineffective.

Very few people are content with remaining unsure of their future, and insecure. It's not a comfortable state to be in. But if people want to learn how better to cope, how to get information or knowledge, how to get at others experience and how to get support and confidence to try something new, then how can they do it?

One of the consequence of lower incomes, less labour and fewer services has been a reduction in social exchange; between neighbours and within groups. These exchanges were and are a vital part of learning about management. Management of a property is a "craftsmans" job. It is learnt from experience, by trial and error. And by exchanges with others practicing the skill.

When social exchange decreases, the process of learning declines and becomes more difficult. You're not sure if others are really feeling like you. And its hard to see how they are attempting to cope. Trying new ideas, and thinking about the situation, becomes a more lonely

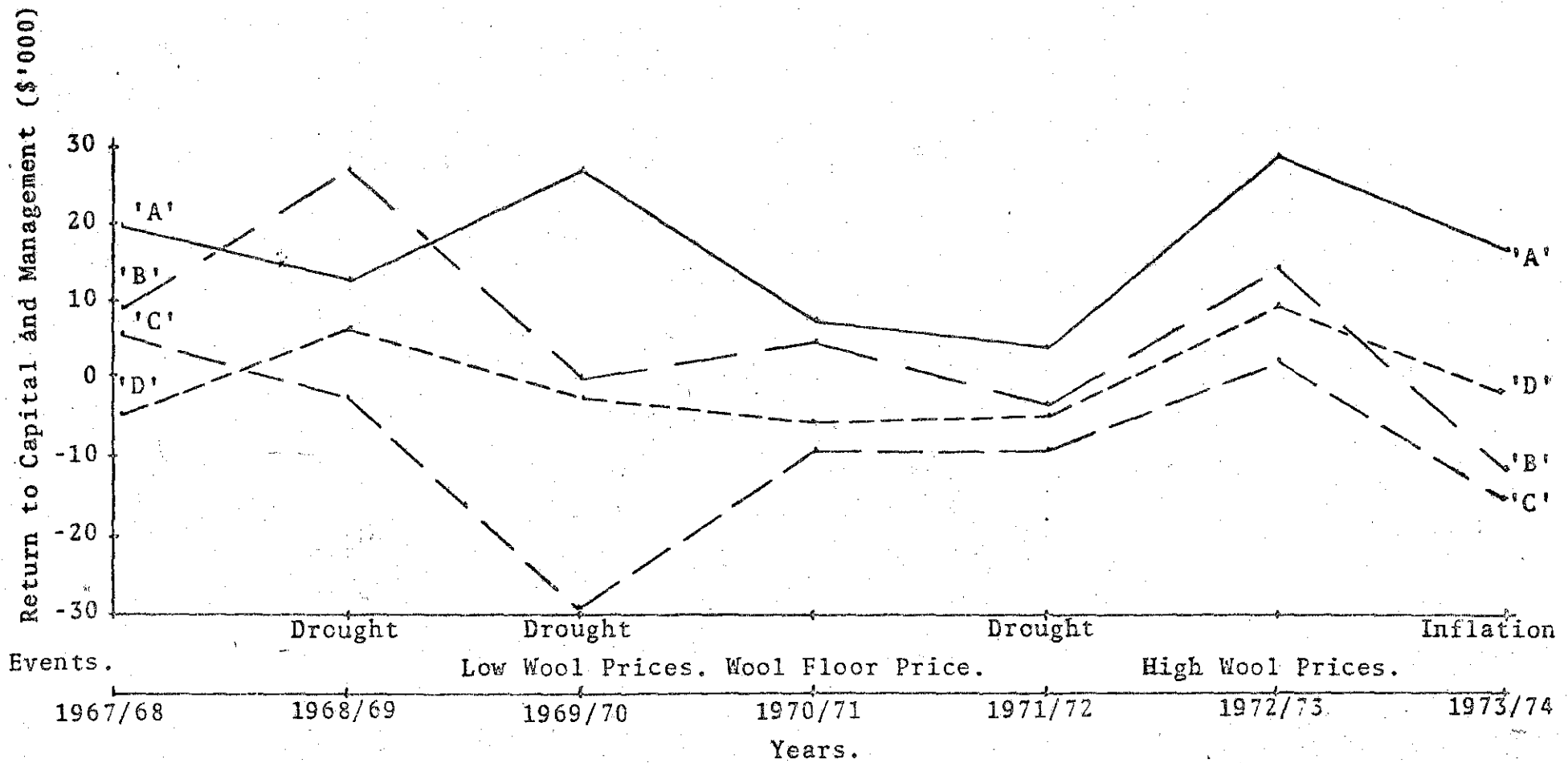


Figure 1. Return to Capital and Management - Soft Mulga Zone.

Average Values for Four Performance Groupings. From 1967/68 to 1973/74.

experience. Personal isolation, from people you know really well; who you trust and who would support you in trying new ideas, has increased enormously over recent years. And this has made the task of coping with these pressures to change more difficult.

#### COUNCIL

The governing council of the society met at Condobolin on 9 November, 1977.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND JOURNAL

Due to production difficulties the 1977 issue of the Journal has been delayed. It will be forwarded early in 1978. This will not affect the publication of the normal issue for 1978 so keep supporting your journal with articles, contributions etc. You are reminded of the policy of the Australian Rangeland Journal.

"The purposes of this journal are: to develop communication between all those involved with rangelands, i.e. graziers, "agency" land managers, extension workers, administrators, educators and scientists; to develop and foster a philosophy of rangeland use attuned to Australian needs both social and environmental; to speak authoritatively on matters affecting rangeland and its uses; to represent the body of rangeland users by presenting a consensus of their aspirations and ideals; and to point out deficiencies in our present approaches to rangeland use, to extension effort, to education and to research activity.

We do not intend it to become a Journal written by range scientists for range scientists, or a Journal written by range scientists alone.

The Editorial Board invites contributions of merit dealing with:

- (a) new or tried approaches for rangeland management at the agency of property level;
- (b) approaches to the education of rangeland workers and users;
- (c) new concepts of objectives for research;
- (d) research results;
- (e) the integration of economic imperatives;
- (f) ideas on multiple use of rangeland resources.

It is intended to include contributions under the following headings:

|                      |                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Scientific Papers    | Book reviews (invited)                |
| Short communications | Thesis summaries                      |
| Articles             | Editorials (guest)                    |
| Society business     | Editorials (Editorial Board Members)" |

#### FOR GUERNSEY GATHERERS

1. The Arid Zone Research Association of India, Jodhpur is organising an International Symposium on Arid Zone Research and Development at the Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur, from 14th to 18th February, 1978, to coincide with the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the C.A.Z.R.I. The symposium will have the following major objectives:

- (a) To review and make an inventory of the technology available for development of the arid lands
- (b) To evaluate areas of research where the developed technology can be immediately transferred to the field for the benefit of the rural population
- (c) To pinpoint the gaps in the existing scientific knowledge on desert reclamation technology for the purpose of adequately strengthening the weaker areas of research
- (d) To evolve a futuristic research programme for the arid lands and drought prone areas

The organizers are looking forward to an international gathering of eminent arid zone workers at the symposium. Participation, contribution of papers, suggestions and support of all concerned, particularly of scientists working in arid zone research organizations would be welcome. Enquiries regarding the symposium may please be addressed to the Convener -

Dr. H.S. Mann,  
Director,  
Central Arid Zone Research Institute,  
Jodhpur 342 003  
INDIA.

## 2. 6th Argentine Ecology Meeting

The 6th Argentine Ecology Meeting will be held in the city of Corrientes, Argentine, March 19-26th, 1978.

For more information write to

Doctor Ricardo Luti,  
Presidente Asociacion Argentina de Ecologia,  
Centro de Ecologia y Recursos Naturales Renovables,  
Universidad Nacional de Cordoba,  
C.C. 395  
5000 - Cordoba, Argentina

or to:

Comite Organizador Local,  
VI Reunion Argentine de Ecologia,  
Ing Agr Hugo Maldonado,  
Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias,  
Universidad Nacional del Nordeste,  
Sargento Cabral 2139  
C.C. 308  
3400 - Corrientes, Argentina

### A POST IN RANGE MANAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

The Herat Livestock Development Corporation is seeking to fill the position of Range Management Specialist in a multi-disciplinary team engaged in developing the livestock industry in western Afghanistan. The team covers all aspects of the sheep industry: animal husbandry, forage cropping, disease control through to management of international marketing by a modern abattoir. The Range Management Specialist is particularly concerned with nomads, their flock management, potential for and improvement of offtake, and adjustments to land tenure. The position involves considerable field work in an arduous but interesting environment. Residence is in Herat which is a large city but offers few recreational facilities. Remuneration is generous for the right applicant. The cost of living is low. House, fares, education expenses etc are supplied. For full details contact C.M. Chisholm & Asscos. Mere, Wilts, U.K.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT - More extracts from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries Newsletter - "The Mulga Line" (November '77 issue)

1. Life wasn't meant to be easy - Lex Stephenson, "Avenel Park", Cunnamulla.

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
We are programmed for pleasure and pain  
And designed to get up off our haunches  
And use our Muscles and brain.

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
In spite of political touts  
Who promise the Garden of Eden  
Knowing well it won't come about.

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
But today the rewards aren't the same  
When we're taxed for using our muscles  
And taxed for using our brains.

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
We should help the sick and the lame  
But why penalise the hard worker  
To prop up those who don't do the same?

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
Don't listen to Political Bids  
The work force that sticks to Australia  
Is Mum and Dad and the Kids.

Life wasn't meant to be easy  
We can't spend our lives in a chair  
When it's time to clean out the TREASURY  
And let in a bit of fresh air.

2. Farmers, agricultural scientists and economists - H.P. Schapper, Reader in Agricultural Economics, University of Western Australia. (see J. Aust. Inst. Agric. Sci. 43:5)

The process whereby society culls out its unneeded farmers is silent, anonymous, unplanned and often painful. As we have already seen, it is engineered through the cost-price squeeze. This is a thoroughly good private enterprise mechanism, yet thoroughly disliked by farmers despite their alleged commitments to private enterprise.

It is economists rather than farmers who have expressed concern at the pain of the cost-price squeeze and the adjustments it generates. And it is economists rather than farmers who have proposed rural reconstruction policies, negative income-tax and welfare policies to help farmers who are unduly hurt by economic change.

Farmers' organizations seem embarrassed by their members who are in need of social welfare assistance. This is partly because farmers' organizations are run by better-off farmers. Naturally most of their proposals serve the interests of the better-off farmers rather than those of the needy farmers.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

The Society's financial year commences January 1, 1978 and annual subscriptions are due on that date. Council would appreciate, and the Hon. Treasurer would be delighted, if prompt payment of subs could be made. To assist the Treasurer in deciphering your scrawl please tear off the attached form and forward with your payment.

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TO: Hon. Treasurer,  
Australian Rangeland Society,  
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DENILIQUN N.S.W. 2710

Enclosed please find my cheque/money order for fifteen dollars (\$15.00) being annual subscription to the Australian Rangeland Society for 1978.

NAME: Dr/Mr/Ms .....

ADDRESS: .....

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Signed: .....

Date: .....