

Low Stress Stockmanship Clinic for Jackson County, Oregon

Final Report for FW00-051

Project Type: Farmer/Rancher

Funds awarded in 2000: \$5,075.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2004

Region: Western

State: Oregon

Principal Investigator:

[John Dimick](#)

Jackson County Stockman's Assoc.

Project Information

Abstract:

OBJECTIVES

To help producers better manage their livestock, the SARE-funded team will:

1. Organize a three-day seminar that will teach livestock producers handling techniques they can apply to grazing practices
2. Develop a training manual that will accompany the seminar and be available to others
3. Produce a high-quality training video during the seminar for stand-alone training or as a refresher for participants
4. Monitor Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service allotments to determine effectiveness of the newly acquired techniques.

ABSTRACT

Using low-stress handling techniques, ranchers should be able to graze their livestock in ways that will improve riparian areas, water quality and rangeland health, important in today's high-profile ranching arena. By accommodating the natural behavioral characteristics of livestock, it is possible to gain increased control with less stress on the animals.

The project members presented a hands-on Low-Stress Stockmanship School in Ashland and Eagle Point, Ore., for ranchers and agency employees involved in private and public lands grazing. The school used video, computer-generated graphics, slides, handouts and hands-on application to teach participants about moving livestock with less stress on the cattle and in ways that sustain range ecology and riparian and range health.

Evolving from the school and other efforts has been a video on the process of handling livestock with less stress and the impacts the technique can have on range and riparian health. In addition, a book on the process is being produced.

SPECIFIC RESULTS

Around 40 people attended the three-day seminar, including 30 members of the Jackson County and Dead Indian cattle associations and representatives of the

Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District, BLM, Forest Service, NRCS and Oregon State University.

A video was produced that combined footage from low-stress stock handling schools taught by Steve Cote and Tim Westfall with footage of the instructors working animals on the range and in livestock-handling facilities. Also added to the video was a discussion on range ecology and applications of low-stress handling for range health and holistic resource management. The video, currently available, is designed to take viewers from why they should use low-stress techniques through the basic techniques used on open range and in corrals and feedlots. A video is planned to present advanced techniques and more in-depth information on range and riparian ecology.

In addition to the video, Steve Cote is producing a manual that addresses low-stress stockmanship, and Tim Westfall is producing a manual on how the techniques apply to scientific horsemanship and training dogs for use in low-stress livestock handling. (The project report notes that additional sources of information on low-stress handling and planning operations for employing the techniques are available from Roger Ingram at the University of California Cooperative Extension, Davis, Westfall at the Bureau of Land Management or low-stress stock handling expert Bud Williams. Call Westfall at 541-618-2226.)

Westfall monitored the range on various allotments grazed by members of the Jackson County and Dead Indian cattle associations. He found that where low-stress handling techniques had been applied for cattle movement, rangeland health is improving, a significant finding given that the monitoring, done after the techniques were applied, was conducted during two of the driest years in the last 65.

Nested frequency monitoring indicated that the range trend was stable or upward. Utilization monitoring showed uniform distribution of livestock with slight to light utilization throughout.

Riparian areas on the allotments, which are areas of concern, especially on the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, were assessed by the National Riparian Service Team, in conjunction with proper functioning condition training for lentic and lotic systems. The areas were found to be in proper functioning condition or functioning at risk with an upward trend. Both photo-point monitoring and greenline monitoring showed marked improvement in these riparian areas.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Successful training in low-stress livestock handling techniques should improve livestock distribution, rangeland condition and riparian habitat for fisheries. Using these techniques should also improve relations between public lands livestock producers and the employees of the agencies that manage those lands.

Producers may benefit from these handling techniques by increased livestock weight gains, improved conception rates, reduced disease and more even distribution of forage use on public and private land.

FARMER ADOPTION AND DIRECT IMPACT

Many producers who attended the low-stress handling school are currently employing the methods with some success.

"The allotments and the associated riparian areas are in good to excellent health," says the project report, "and should continue to exhibit a high degree of rangeland health and evenly distributed utilization."

Project members suggest that producers considering employing the techniques first obtain tools the project has produced, then teach their animals at home in a controlled environment like corrals or small pastures before turning out on open

range.

"This allows a higher degree of control over the animals, makes the animals easier to handle in larger open areas and refines skills of the handler," the report says. "To be effective, these techniques should be applied 100% as outlined 100% of the time."

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS OR NEW HYPOTHESES

The project team suggested advertising such a school more broadly to attract more participants and seeking certification through land grant universities as a short course where continuing education credits could be earned.

Such projects should be monitored over the long term to assess the economic sustainability of livestock operations and the range and riparian health.

Citing a handful of on-ranch projects that use low-stress techniques and monitor the resulting effects on the livestock and the landscape, project members say it would be beneficial to set up several of these projects or learning sites throughout the Western United States with seed grant money from the SARE program and other sources.

In future projects of this nature, project members might consider keeping accurate records of herd health, conception rates and weight gains before and after application of low-stress handling techniques. They might also keep records of expenditures of labor in hours, medications and other associated costs to conduct a cost-benefit analysis.

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

In addition to reaching the 40 participants in the seminar with training in low-stress livestock handling techniques, parts of the video have been presented as part of the National Riparian Service team training for ranchers and members of the Siskiyou County Soil and Water Conservation District in Fort Jones, Calif. And a low-stress stockmanship school was presented to the Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District in Pendleton, Ore., and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Nation.

Copies of the instruction materials, the manuals and video are available to anyone who is interested by calling project technical advisor Tim Westfall.

Major Participants:

Randy White, Oregon State University Cooperative Extension
Jennifer Smith, Fisheries Biologist, Bureau of Land Management
Jackson County Cattleman's Association
Dead Indian Cattleman's Association
Mike Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer Ranch
Roger Ingram, University of California Cooperative Extension Service, Davis

Cooperator:

Lloyd Bradshaw, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Forest Service, Siskiyou National Forest

Research

Participation Summary



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