

LANDOWNERS' ADOPTION OF LIVESTOCK AND RANGE MANAGEMENT INNOVATIONS

Investigators:

Mark Brunson, USU Dept. of Environment & Society

Elizabeth Didier, USU Dept. of Rangeland Resources (now Univ. of Arizona Extension)

Objectives:

1. To identify topics that southwest Utah livestock producers would find most useful
2. To assess attitudes of fee-hunting "target market" toward livestock grazing on their hunting grounds
3. To identify characteristics of innovators and "early adopters" of innovations in the Utah ranching community.
4. To identify factors that impede or facilitate innovation adoption among Utah ranchers.

Methodology

1. Interviews were conducted among Utah livestock producers identified as "opinion leaders" by others in the industry or by state/federal officials involved in ranching.
2. Surveys were completed by 155 hunters who held permits for the Paunsaugunt hunting unit, a limited-entry area that attracts the kind of hunters targeted by ranches that operate cooperative wildlife management units (CWMU's).
- 3/4. Interviews with "key informants" (BLM, NRCS and Extension personnel) were conducted to identify innovative producers and obtain impressions of innovation in the Utah ranching community generally. This yielded a list of 34 ranchers statewide who were identified as innovators. Of these, 44% took part in 31-question (60-90 minute) interviews about their operations, their perspectives on ranching in Utah and change in livestock production generally, factors involved in innovation decisions, and barriers to implementation of changes.

Results:

Initial producer interviews found a high level of awareness of Cedar Mountain studies. Topics of interest to producers included: forage competition with deer/elk, gophers; economic improvements (livestock, aspen, deer); predator control; poisonous plants; livestock diseases (especially in sheep); and improvements in native forage production.

Hunter surveys found that 38% felt sharing the land with livestock detracted from a hunting experience, and respondents tended to attribute resource damage to cattle rather than other potential sources (e.g., hikers, wildlife, motorized users). Many would seek a hunting experience where OHVs were not allowed – something ranchers could provide.

Key informant interviews found that most interviewees believe innovation is very rare in Utah ranching. Management changes identified included: brush control, water developments, management-intensive grazing, and CWMU participation. Barriers to change included: tradition, pessimism about the future of ranching, need to earn off-ranch income, Utah's settlement pattern, and liability concerns.

Interviews of innovators found the following common characteristics: innovators tend to be dependent on ranching for their income, work full-time on the ranch, live on the ranch rather than in town, work a ranch that has served multiple generations of family and

expect this to continue through the next generation, have larger-than-average social networks, but do not see themselves as “risk-takers.” They make changes to improve profits, improve stewardship, and demonstrate that stewardship to agency personnel and the public. Barriers to adoption include: access to labor, access to capital, attachment to tradition, uncertainty about the future, liability (for fee hunting), changes in public laws, perceptions of a saturated fee-hunting market, and design of government programs such as EQIP.

Products:

1. M.S. thesis at USU for Elizabeth Didier (2002).
2. Presentations at meetings of the Society for Range Management, International Association for Society & Resource Management, BLM National Training Center.
3. Publication in the Journal of Range Management: Didier, E.A., and M.W. Brunson. 2004. Adoption of range management innovations by Utah ranchers. Journal of Range Management 57:330-336.
4. Creation of an annotated bibliography of research on innovation adoption in livestock production and in the Intermountain West (not yet published).

Other Funding Partners:

Utah State University, Bureau of Land Management