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Appendix A: Grazing and Range Management

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GRAZING AND RANGE MANAGEMENT

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Livestock grazing has impacted populations of all species of quail in North America. Issues concerning the effect of grazing on wildlife populations, especially those related to public lands in the West, are among the most contentious and hotly-debated topics in the natural resource arena.

There were 4 major topics on which participants in this workshop session reached a consensus: (1) the issue of livestock grazing fees on public lands is more of an economic issue than a wildlife management one, (2) implementation of on the ground grazing improvements should be brought about by increasing public awareness through the media, (3) the need for an ecosystem approach to range management and native quail restoration as opposed to specific livestock management prescriptions, and (4) the need for financial and social incentives for better management of private and public rangelands. Topics 2-4 will provide the basis for structuring the issues and strategies listed below.

Issue 3.1

IMPLEMENTATION OF GRAZING IMPROVEMENTS

Excessive cattle grazing may be adversely affecting quail reproduction, habitat quality, and hunting opportunities.

Strategies

3.1.1-Modify grazing lease plans and reduce or eliminate overgrazing on public lands.

3.1.2-Investigate how light grazing vs. rotation affects quail populations.

Issue 3.2

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO RANGE MANAGEMENT

Use of introduced forages and intensive grazing have eliminated nesting cover and foods throughout the western portion of the geographic range of bobwhite. Exotic grasses have been promoted as a quick-fix for grazing, erosion control, and other uses. However, these plants decrease the quality of quail habitat.

Strategies

3.2.1-Continue research on influence of short, medium, and long grazing rotations on maintaining habitat quality.

3.2.2-Encourage expansion of native grass and legume ecosystems on public and private lands.

3.2.3-Promote the use of native quail-oriented vegetation and require use of these alternative plants in all federal and state agriculture and erosion control programs where appropriate.

Issue 3.3

INFORMATION LACKING ABOUT EFFECTS ON QUAIL

Elimination of grazing has increased herbaceous cover and reduction of early successional foods. However, there is little information available on the impact of various brush control activities on quail.

Strategies

3.3.1-Continue investigations on the role of managed grazing in enhancing quail habitat.

3.3.2-Perform research to assess the impact of brush control on quail population abundance.

Issue 3.4

FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL INCENTIVES

Grazing can be an important and economical quail management tool, and public land management agencies need to reduce the numbers of livestock on public lands. Moreover, proliferation of introduced grasses for pasture and erosion control has contributed to negative attitudes toward grazing. Unfortunately, native forages are not now universally available for restoring pastures.

Strategies

3.4.1-Restore native species of grasses and legumes on public land, educate landowners and ranchers in better grazing practices such as use of rotation grazing, and use complementary forage systems instead of cool-season monocultures.

3.4.2-Locate funding for seed sources of native grasses and legumes for pasture restoration.

3.4.3-Distribute information on the negative effects of how grazing affects quail.

3.4.4-Encourage agencies to adopt a proactive approach to rangeland conservation and continue efforts toward developing management plans for upland game birds on public lands.

