



Land Managers' Decisions About Grazing Systems: Understanding the Contexts of Change

Mark W. Brunson; Utah State University; Contact Author Email: Mark.Brunson@usu.edu

Research comparing rotational and continuous grazing systems has been designed necessarily to meet criteria imposed by science. These criteria are not necessarily the same as those used by ranchers and professional advisors when planning a grazing system. For example, researchers trying to isolate an effect of grazing system are likely to hold other variables as constant as possible, whereas land managers trying to improve their operations are likely to try to change any variable they believe to be sub-optimal. This may help explain why anecdotal evidence supports contentions about the benefits of rotational systems even though those benefits are not clearly established in published research. To address the apparent discrepancy between science and experience, especially if research is to move from small-plot to operational scales, it will be helpful for researchers to understand the social and environmental contexts within which changes in grazing system are considered and made. This presentation will review recent social-psychological findings about management change and innovation by rangeland managers including motivational factors, knowledge resources, and the role of operational constraints. Recommendations will be made about how these aspects can be incorporated into ranch-level research on grazing systems.

2009. 62nd Society for Range Management Annual Meeting. Paper No. 21-4.