Ranching Operations in California: A Year in the Life of a Cow

Clayton Koopmann

April 21, 2016 | Central Coast Rangeland Coalition – Spring Meeting
Introduction

- Fifth generation cattle rancher in the Bay Area – Koopmann Livestock / Walking C Livestock
- Public Land Rangelands Manager/Ecologist – Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
- Professional Rangeland Consultant – Koopmann Rangeland Consulting
Provide Background – Basic information regarding typical livestock operations found throughout California with a focus on the Central Coast.

Better understand today’s presentations:
– Economics, infrastructure, and challenges faced by ranchers in grazing for conservation.
Two (2) Primary Types of Grazing Operations Common to California:

- Cow/Calf Pair
- Stocker
A mature cow or a mature cow with a nursing calf at her side prior to weaning. The operator retains the mature cow and sells off a weaned calf weighing 400-700 pounds annually.

- Profit is obtained by selling the calves on a per pound basis.
- Most often grazed year-round but sometimes grazed seasonally.
- Fall Calving or Spring Calving.
Year-Round Operation
(Fall Calving)
Seasonal Operation
(Fall Calving)

Seasonal Grazing on annual rangeland

Aug → Sept → Oct → Nov → Dec → Jan → Feb → Mar → Apr → May → June → July

x2
Stockers: What are they?

Weaned calves, typically 8-16 months of age weighing between 400 and 900 pounds (teenagers).

- Pounds are profit. The more weight they gain, the more money they earn.
- Grazed seasonally (December-June)
- Multiple types of stocker operations:
**Stocker Operations:**

- **Taking cattle in on the gain:**
  - Contract with outside rancher to take in/run their stocker cattle for the season. Paid pre-determined per/lb rate for weight gained during the season or paid per head.

- **Seasoning your owned weaned calves:**
  - Retain your weaned calves from your owned cows and ‘season’ them or add additional weight before sale.
  - More Weight = More Money (Usually)
  - Contract with Feeder – deliver cattle at a specific weight

- **Purchase of outside cattle:**
  - Purchase weaned calves and put them on pasture for the season to gain weight before re-selling them.
A weaned heifer calf retained for the purpose of building and improving your cow herd and replacing cull cows. Begin around 600 pounds and carried until mature cow.

- Retained at the time of weaning and carried over similar to stocker cattle.
  - Stockers typically Dec-Jun
  - Heifers carried through summer/fall

- Bred in the fall as a yearling (1 year old).
- Carried through spring/summer until calving the following fall similar to cows.
- A year in the life of a beef cow
- Sharing Open Space with Grazing Livestock
- Benefits of Livestock Grazing on CA Annual Grasslands
- Grazing Systems Management
- Cattle, Sheep, Goats, and Horses
- Caring for Cattle and Sheep
- Water Sources, Wetlands, Riparian Areas
- Bay Area Ranching Heritage
- Public Lands – Ranching Viability

http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu
Questions
Thank you!

Clayton Koopmann
Koopmann.Consulting@gmail.com
(925) 819-0413