

UNDERSTANDING WORKING RANGELANDS

Cattle, Sheep, Goats, and Horses: What's the Difference for Working Rangelands?

INTRODUCTION

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Domestic livestock commonly raised in California include cattle (bovines), sheep (ovines), goats (caprines), and horses (equines). Cattle, sheep, and goats can be used for the production of meat or dairy products, depending on their breed and management. Horses are kept primarily for recreation and for use in ranch work. Each livestock species has dissimilar feed and husbandry needs, interacts with humans differently, and has varying effects on the land and vegetation.

Livestock affect land and vegetation in several interrelated ways, including removal of leaves, stems, and other plant parts; removal or redistribution of nutrients; and mechanical impacts on soil and plants through trampling (Vallentine 1990). All of these factors vary by animal species, depending on dietary preference, digestive system, mouth anatomy, and

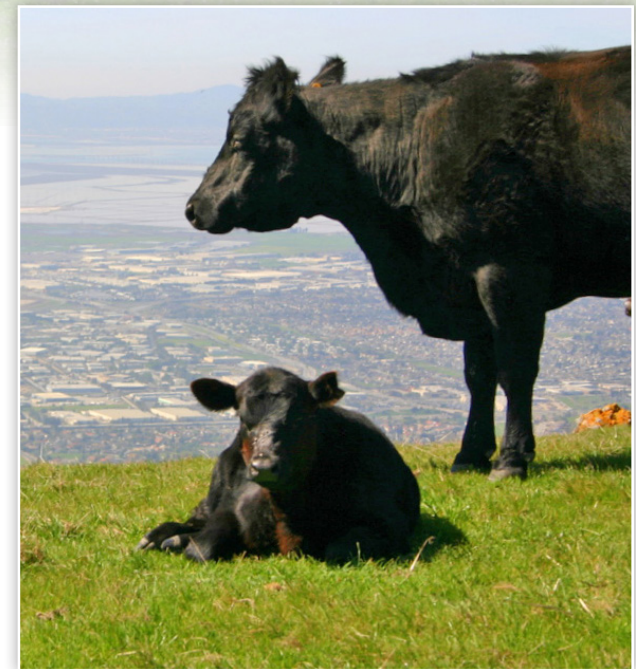


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Working rangelands are public or privately owned open space lands that are managed with livestock grazing and rancher stewardship. Their management contributes to the production of a variety of ecosystem services, including food, clean water, weed control, wildlife habitat, fire fuel reduction, carbon sequestration, pollination, aesthetic views, cultural heritage, recreational and educational opportunities, and open space conservation.