

BLM and USFS livestock grazing stats:

Examining key data in the debate over wild horses on western public lands



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SECTION	PAGE
Overview	3
BLM and USFS data: What 2014 grazing receipts and population estimates show about commercial livestock usage vs. wild horses	4
— Sources	5
— Key finding: population ratios	6
— Supporting data	
• Wild horses and burros — BLM and USFS	7
• Cattle — BLM, USFS and combined	8, 9, 10
— Key finding: forage and acreage allocations	11
Studies on overgrazing	
— Sample studies on livestock impacts	13
— Studies on the impact of wild horses and burros	14
Conclusions	15
Credit and contact	16

“Too many wild horses overgrazing and damaging western public rangelands”... “pushing cattle off the land”... “needing to be removed”...

Most media coverage of wild horses shares this storyline, citing rising population estimates from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which, together with the US Forest Service (USFS), oversees 251 million acres of public lands for grazing (mostly cattle) and other “multiple uses.”

But 2014 BLM and USFS livestock grazing receipts (\$17.1 million) tell a different story: the equivalent of 2.1 million cattle outnumbering 56,656 federally protected wild horses and burros (WHB) by 37:1. These privately owned livestock are allocated 97 percent of western forage on all 251 million acres. This is compared to 3 percent allocated to 56,656 wild horses and burros occupying just 29.4 million acres.

Studies also show cattle, not horses, as the focus of considerable research on domestic overgrazing and a major cause of global climate change.

This analysis will present select 2014 grazing data from the BLM and USFS web sites, published reports and correspondence. Also included is a small sample of recent studies on livestock grazing’s impact on public lands missing from the present debate.

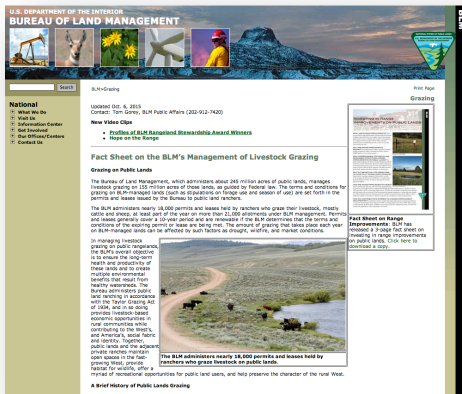
It’s critical to understand how many cattle vs. WHB exist on public lands; how many millions of acres they each graze; how much forage they’re each allotted. It’s equally important to acknowledge the abundance of research on cattle’s impact on biodiversity and wildlife and the corresponding scarcity of research regarding wild horses. This information is foundational to an understanding of the issue.

But it’s a *starting point*, not just for correcting false coverage, but for establishing common facts from which to go forward and address larger, interconnected and pressing public policy issues — not simply debate various narratives and opinions.

BLM and USFS Data

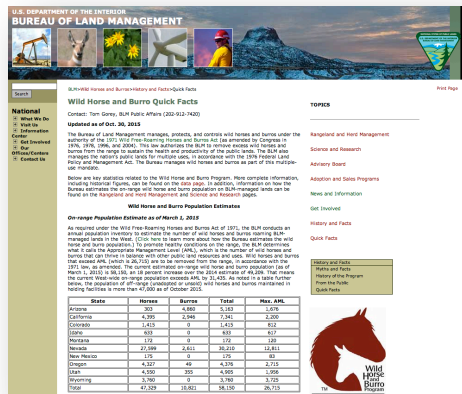
What 2014 grazing receipts and population estimates
show about livestock usage vs. wild horses

Statistical sources used



BLM Livestock Grazing Program

<http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/grazing.htm>



BLM Wild Horses and Burros Program: Quick Facts

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/quick_facts.html

Date: Mon, 21 Apr 2014 13:05:42 -0700
Subject: Fact Sheet on Livestock
From: "Hatchford, Zachary" (Senior Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, BLM)

I am sorry I have taken so long for me to get back to you. Below are the answers to your questions.

"*") In the Wild Management Areas, what is the actual allocation of AUMs for wild horses and for cattle/horses?"

Active livestock AUMs authorized in HMAA is 1,079,000

This estimate is based on the following assumptions:

1. The data is reflective of what is currently entered into GIS and BLM and may not reflect recent changes in allotment adjustments, etc. FOIs may still be correcting errors in GIS as well as making adjustments in permitted use.
2. Active livestock AUMs are the authorized Active AUMs and do not include Rangeland Use. These are NOT Actual use AUMs or Total Permitted Use.
3. Livestock grazing use is authorized on an allotment wide basis.
4. Livestock grazing capacity has not been established for the portion of the HMAA or HMA within an allotment. Livestock carrying capacity by allotment has been established based on range availability, production, achievement of standards and multiple use objectives on an allotment basis.
5. For purposes of allocating use, we often proportion the use with the acres. E.g. if we have a 1,000 ac allotment with 100 AUMs allocated livestock grazing use and if there are 500 ac of the allotment is an HMA, then 50 ac AUMs are presumed to be used within the HMA.

Furage allocated to wild horses and burros is 305,126 AUMs.



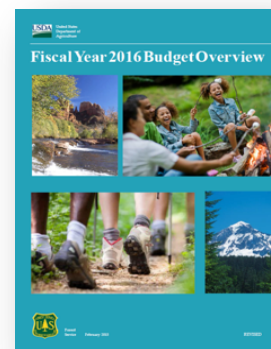
USFS Rangelands Overview

<http://www.fs.fed.us/rangelands/whoware/>



USFS Grazing Statistical Summary FY2014

www.fs.fed.us/rangelands/ftp/docs/GrazingStatisticalSummaryFY2014.pdf



FY2016 Budget Overview

<http://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/media/2015/07/fy2016-budget-overview-update.pdf>

US Forest Service Wild Horse Burro Territory Status 2014					
N/A	ACTIVE	HORSE	13,763	13,128	635
DEVIL'S GARDEN PLATEAU	ACTIVE	HORSE	232,521	224,889	7,632
N/A	ACTIVE	BURRO	28,930	28,930	0
MURDERERS CREEK	ACTIVE	HORSE	143,206	73,545	69,661
N/A	ACTIVE	HORSE	27,309	27,069	240
			6,117,996	2,530,851	3,590,145

USFS Wild Horse Burro Territory Status 2014

(provided by Tom Frolli of the USFS)

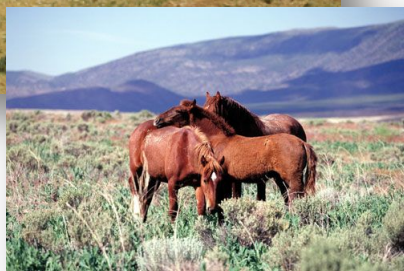
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In 2014, cattle outnumbered wild horses by 37:1 on BLM and USFS western Public Rangelands

BLM territory: USFS territory: Combined BLM & USFS:

<u>Cattle:</u>	1.5 million	617,284	2.1 million
<u>Wild horses and burros:</u>	49,209	7,447	56,656
<u>Ratio cattle vs. wild horses and burros:</u>	30:1	83:1	37:1



Photography: BLM



An estimated 56,656 wild horses and burros grazed BLM and USFS rangelands in 2014

On-range Population Estimate as of March 1, 2015

As required under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, the BLM conducts an annual population inventory to estimate the number of wild horses and burros roaming BLM-managed lands in the West. (Click here to learn more) As of March 1, 2015, the BLM estimates the wild horse population at 58,150, an increase over the 2014 estimate of 49,209.

U.S. Forest Service Wild Horse Burro Territory Status 2014					
N/A	ACTIVE	HORSE	13,763	13,128	635
DEVIL'S GARDEN PLATEAU	ACTIVE	HORSE	232		
N/A	ACTIVE	BURRO	28,6		
MURDERERS CREEK	ACTIVE	HORSE	143		
N/A	ACTIVE	HORSE	27,1		
			6,11		

Total Territories @ 53
Active WHBT @ 34
Inactive WHBT @ 19
Horse total @ 6539
Burro total @ 908
JMAs @ 23

BLM estimate: 49,209¹

USFS estimate: 7,447²

BLM & USFS: 56,656

Understanding the data: The BLM and USFS report WHB estimates differently. The BLM does it on its web site (the 2015 WHB number, 58,150, was published in March). The USFS provides a spread sheet. The one (at left) was emailed by Tom Froli of USFS to Suzanne Roy, Director of American Wild Horse Preservation, an advocacy group. But the estimates provided by each agency are comparable to each other.

Sources: ¹ BLM web site

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/quick_facts.html

² US Forest Service Wild Horse Burro Territory Status 2014 (last updated 2/18/15)

<http://www.wildhorsepreservation.org/media/us-forest-service-wild-horse-burro-territory-status-2014> (as shared on AWHP web site)



An estimated 2.1 million cattle grazed BLM and USFS western public rangelands in 2014



Photography: BLM

<i>Reported by BLM & USFS:</i>	<i>Average yearly animal unit equivalent:</i>	<i>Average yearly livestock equivalent:</i>
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Actual grazing receipts:

\$17.1 million
Divide by \$1.35,
then by 12 mos.

=

Rancher-reported animal units:

1.05 million
Multiply by 2

=

Rancher-reported cows + calves:

2.1 million

Authorized animal unit months:

15.0 million
Divide by 12 mos.

=

Authorized animal units:

1.3 million
Multiply by 2

=

Authorized cows + calves:

2.6 million



An estimated 1.5 million cattle grazed BLM western public rangelands in 2014

Expenditures and Collections

In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLM was allocated **\$79.9 million** for its management program. Of that figure, the agency spends approximately 10 percent on livestock grazing administration. The other activities as weed management, rangeland monitoring and administration, planning, water development, vegetation management, and riparian management. In **2014, the BLM collected \$12.1 million** in grazing fees below). The receipts from these governments.

Federal Grazing Fee

The Federal grazing fee, which applies to Federal land managed by the U.S. Forest Service, is adjusted annually and is calculated under the Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. Under this formula, the grazing fee for 2015 is \$1.69 per AUM. The **2014 fee of \$1.35.**

Number of Livestock on BLM-managed Lands

The Bureau does not make an annual national "count" of the livestock that graze on BLM-managed lands because the actual number of livestock grazing on public lands on any single day varies throughout the year and livestock are often moved from one grazing allotment to another. So an aggregate head count would provide very little information on overall livestock use. Instead, the BLM compiles information on the number of AUMs used each year, which takes into account both the number of animals and the amount of time they graze. The definition of an AUM is the amount of time that one animal grazes on one acre of public land. The amount authorized has declined from **18.2 million AUMs in 2013 to 8.4 million AUMs in 2014**. The amount authorized has declined because there has been a greater emphasis on grazing that takes place on BLM-managed land, and that trend continues today. Grazing use on public

Source:

^{1,2,3} <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/grazing.htm>

Reported by BLM:

*Average yearly
animal unit equivalent:*

*Average yearly
livestock equivalent:*

**Actual
grazing receipts:**

\$12.1 million¹

*Divide by \$1.35²,
then by 12 mos.*

=

**Rancher-reported
animal units:**

747,000

Multiply by 2

=

**Rancher-reported
cows + calves:**

1.5 million

**Authorized
animal unit months:**

8.4 million³

Divide by 12 mos.

=

**Authorized
animal units:**

700,000

Multiply by 2

=

**Authorized
cows + calves:**

1.4 million

Understanding the data: The BLM's Rangeland Administration System (RAS) tracks public grazing allotments, permits and livestock use. But the BLM website doesn't publish yearly livestock totals (the way it publishes yearly WHB estimates). These can be calculated, however, from **year-end grazing receipts** (published the following quarter on the BLM web site).

Grazing receipts are based on the number of animal units (defined as a cow/calf pair or five sheep or one horse) ranchers *report* they grazed over the previous 12 months multiplied by \$1.35 (the 2014 grazing fee per AUM—animal unit month). The 1.5 million figure above is the annual cattle equivalent of 747,000 animal units (to get sheep equivalent, multiply AUs x 5). This figure should be considered a baseline, however, as it doesn't reflect trespass grazing, undercounting and nonpayment of grazing fees.

Authorized AUMs (animal unit months), by comparison, represent the amount of livestock grazing the BLM assigns to ranchers for the upcoming grazing year. It's what the BLM deems appropriate, given rangeland conditions. But it's not indicative of what ranchers actually *do*.



An estimated 617,284 cattle grazed USFS western public rangelands in 2014

Grazing Management	
National Forest Fund (NFF) Receipts	4,820
Grasslands and Land Utilization Projects (LUP)	159
Mandatory Transfers from NFF & Grasslands & LUP's:	
Range Betterment Fund (50 Percent Grazing)	-2,410
Acquisition of Lands for National Forests, Special Acts ^{1/}	-30
Ten-Percent Roads and Trails Fund ^{1/}	-700
Total Grazing Management Receipts	4,979

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TOTAL	
NUMBER	HMS AUMS
2,145,542	8,374,111
	8,147,702
2,020,792	6,687,150
	6,633,231
7,754	4,588
	3,590
2,028,546	6,691,738
	6,636,821

p.7

Reported by USFS:

Average yearly
animal unit equivalent:Average yearly
livestock equivalent:

**Actual
grazing receipts:**

\$5.0 million¹

Divide by \$1.35,
then by 12 mos.

=

**Rancher-reported
animal units:**

308,642

Multiply by 2

=

**Rancher-reported
cows + calves:**

617,284

**Authorized
animal unit Months:**

6.6 million²

Divide by 12 mos.

=

**Authorized
animal units:**

550,000

Multiply by 2

=

**Authorized
cows + calves:**

1.1 million

Understanding the data: The FSUS, like the BLM, doesn't publicize livestock totals, but these can also be calculated from **year-end grazing receipts** reported in the FSUS FY2016 Budget Overview, and **authorized AUMS** reported in the FY2014 Grazing Statistical Summary.

Sources:

¹ Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Overview, US Forest Service <http://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/media/2015/07/fy2016-budget-overview-update.pdf>

² Grazing Statistical Summary (FY2014), US Forest Service <http://www.fs.fed.us/rangelands/ftp/docs/GrazingStatisticalSummaryFY2014.pdf>



Cattle are allocated 97% of forage on BLM and USFS public land; wild horses are allocated just 3%

Grazing on Public Lands

The Bureau of Land Management, which administers livestock grazing on 155 million acres of public land, manages livestock grazing on 155 million acres of public land.

United States Department of Agriculture, administers half of this acreage, 96 million acres, is rangelands.

Wild Horse and Burro Acreage

Under the Wild Horses and Burros Act, these animals were found roaming across public lands. Today, the BLM manages 31.6 million acres of public land. (For an example to Myth #4 on the Myths and Facts page.) Under the 1971 Act, they were not found roaming when the law was passed.

Wild Horse and Burro Territories (HMTs)	179
Wild Horse and Burro Territories (HMTs)	31.6 million acres
Wild Horse and Burro Territories (HMTs)	26.9 million acres

U.S. Forest Service Wild Horse Burro Territory Status 2014

ACTIVE	HORSE	13,763	13,128	6
ACTIVE	HORSE	232,521	224,889	7
ACTIVE	BURRO	28,930	2,530,851	996
ACTIVE	HORSE	143,206	73,545	69

1) In the Herd Management Areas, what is the actual allocation (AUMs) for wild horses and for cattle/livestock?

Active livestock AUMs authorized in HMTs is 1,076,000

Forage allocated to wild horses and burros is 320,124 AUMs.

Cattle-only
present:

BLM acres:
128.1 million

USFS acres:
93.5 million

**BLM &
USFS acres:**
221.6 million (88%)

**AUM Forage
Allocation:**
100% cattle
0% WHB

Cattle +
WHB present:

BLM acres:
26.9 million³

USFS acres:
2.5 million⁴

**BLM &
USFS acres:**
29.4 million (12%)

**AUM Forage
Allocation:**
77% cattle⁵
23% WHB

Total cattle
+ WHB present:

BLM acres:
155 million¹

USFS acres:
96 million²

**BLM &
USFS acres:**
251 million

**AUM Forage
Allocation:**
97% cattle
3% WHB

Sources:

¹ BLM web site for grazing: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/grazing.htm>

² USFS web site for grazing: <http://www.fs.fed.us/rangelands/whoware/>

^{3,4} BLM website WHB "Quick Facts":

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/quick_facts.html

⁵ E-mail from senior BLM WHB specialist Zach Reichold

https://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/233249122?access_key=key-jl1GqIE8TuzUXE659mtC&allow_share=true&escape=false&view_mode=scroll

Studies on Livestock Grazing

The impact of commercial livestock production on western public range and forest preserve has been studied for decades. Google Scholar searches on the topic yield thousands of results.

Not so for wild horses, which, despite years of debate, have simply failed to motivate people to study them as the cause of the overgrazing reported by the media.

This tells you something very simple: when researchers and conservation groups study the problem of overgrazing, drought and climate change, they study *cattle* and propose *cattle-based* solutions. That's important to know.

Sample studies on livestock impacts

“Monthly grazing fees on federal lands are currently set at a paltry \$1.35 per cow and calf. Despite the extreme damage done, western federal rangelands account for less than 3 percent of all forage fed to livestock in the United States.”¹ ***Costs and Consequences: The Real Price of Livestock Grazing on America’s Public Lands***

“The effects of livestock grazing on ecosystems are numerous, and effects on riparian systems in particular have been the subject of much study. Hydrology, plant and animal species composition, and soil characteristics can all be dramatically altered with the presence of cattle.”² ***Restoration of Riparian Areas Following the Removal of Cattle in the Northwestern Great Basin***

“...livestock grazing has been a major factor affecting fire frequency, fire severity, and ecosystem trajectories in the western US for over a century; and the removal or reduction of grazing impacts in these altered ecosystems is the most effective means of initiating ecological recovery.”³ ***Reducing Livestock Effects on Public Lands in the Western United States as the Climate Changes***

"Over 3 billion hectares of lands worldwide are grazed by livestock, with a majority suffering degradation in ecological condition. Losses in plant productivity, biodiversity of plant and animal communities, and carbon storage are occurring as a result of livestock grazing ... Worldwide, livestock production accounts for about 37 percent of global anthropogenic methane emissions and 65 percent of anthropogenic nitrous oxide emissions with as much as 18% of current global greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂ equivalent) generated from the livestock industry."⁴ ***Holistic Management: Misinformation on the Science of Grazed Ecosystems***

“Livestock production is a chief contributor to many significant and intractable environmental problems. This article examines the causal role of livestock (especially beef) production in global climate change, predator control in the western United States, and winter elk feeding in Wyoming.”⁵

Trampling the Public Trust



¹ Center for Biological Diversity
http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/grazing/pdfs/CostsAndConsequences_01-2015.pdf

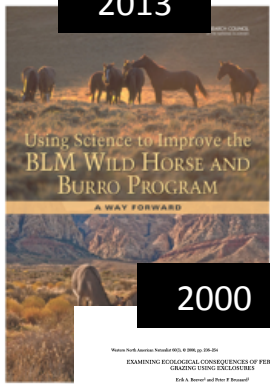
² Environmental Management http://www.cof.orst.edu/hart/Batchelor2015_EM.pdf and <http://www.cof.orst.edu/hart/hartimages.html>

³ Environmental Management
<http://tinyurl.com/q2k26mb>

⁴ International Journal
of Biodiversity
[http://dx.doi.org/
10.1155/2014/163431](http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/163431)

³ Boston College Environmental
Affairs Law Review
[http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/
cgi/viewcontent.cgi?
article=1052&context=earl](http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=earl) 13

2013

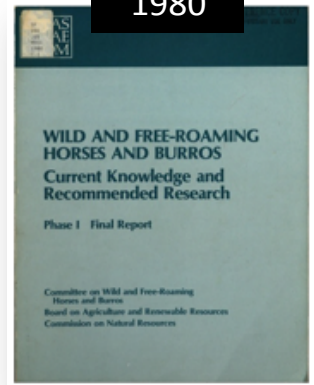


2000

Western North American Naturalist 155(3) 1999, pp. 158-161
EXAMINING ECOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF FERAL HORSE
GRAZING USING ENCLOSURES

Abstract—Although feral horses have inhabited western North America since the end of the 16th century, relatively little synecological research has been conducted to quantitatively characterize how they interact with ecosystem components. Although a number of published, peer-reviewed studies have been done on the effects of feral horse grazing on vegetation, the majority of these studies have been done on individual plants or small areas of land. This study was designed to examine the effects of feral horse grazing on a larger area of land, using a series of enclosures. The results of this study suggest that feral horse grazing has a significant impact on the vegetation in the study area, and that the impact is more severe in areas with higher horse densities. The study also found that the impact of feral horse grazing on vegetation is more severe in areas with higher horse densities. The study also found that the impact of feral horse grazing on vegetation is more severe in areas with higher horse densities.

1980



“Science alone, even the best science, cannot resolve the divergent viewpoints on how best to manage free-ranging horses and burros on public lands. Evidence-based science can, however, center debate about management options on the basis of confidence in the data, predictable outcomes of specific options, and understanding of both what is known and where uncertainty remains.”¹ **The National Academy of Sciences, *Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward***

“Although feral horses have inhabited western North America since the end of the 16th century, relatively little synecological research has been conducted to quantitatively characterize how they interact with ecosystem components.”² **Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum, Brigham Young University, *Examining Consequences of Feral Horse Grazing Using Enclosures***

“Although it is widely alleged that horses and burros have severe grazing impacts on western rangelands, there are few published studies about the nature and extent of these impacts...Little controlled research has been done on the impact of grazing horses...The legacy of past grazing impacts (domestic sheep or cattle particularly between 1890 and 1920) may confound differences currently observed. This is nearly impossible to assess quantitatively because historical records from grazing from that time can rarely be found today.”³ **The National Research Council, *Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros: Current Knowledge and Recommended Research***

¹ National Academy of Sciences http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_landsgrazing/pdfs/CostsAndConsequences_01-2015.pdf

² Western North American Naturalist http://www.jstor.org/stable/41717041?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

³ National Academy Press <http://tinyurl.com/pgtsgu9>

Key Findings

Understanding how private livestock graze BLM and USFS lands is a starting point from which to better report on public land uses and costs, the drought, climate change, conservation efforts and policy making.

- An estimated 2.1 million cattle outnumbered 56,656 WHB on 251 million acres of land according to 2014 BLM and USFS data. Cattle outnumbered WHB by 30:1 on 155 million acres of BLM land; 83:1 on 96 million acres of USFS land and 37:1 overall.
- Cattle are allocated 97 percent of the forage on those 251 million acres. WHB are allocated 3 percent of it, sharing just 12 percent of those lands (29.4 million acres) with cattle.
- Those 251 million acres supply less than 3 percent of the forage used by the nation's livestock industry. The ranchers holding federal grazing permits constitute just 2.7 percent of the nation's livestock producers. It's a lot of land and expense to aid a miniscule slice of livestock production.

When researchers and conservation groups study overgrazing, rangeland health and climate change, they study the impact of cattle, not WHB.

- Mentions within their studies may include WHB (in a minor way), among other wildlife.
- Removing livestock/retiring grazing permits is a primary solution for addressing overgrazing and climate change.
- The three studies on WHB (1980, 2000, 2013) agree that more science-based data will improve the management of wild horses and burros on public lands, given arid conditions and competition with other ungulates.

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For questions on this presentation or additional stats
and information on WHB and public lands ranching, contact:

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