

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Range livestock symposium offers participants industry relevant information

AT A GLANCE

Idaho's rangelands are used/managed by livestock producers and government agencies. Symposium participants gained knowledge to improve range use and productivity and operation profitability.

The Situation

Approximately 55% of Idaho's land base is composed of rangelands which are used for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat and recreation. These rangelands are owned by private landowners, various government agencies, and non-government organizations and are managed to meet the needs of each of the entities. Livestock industries and the management of rangelands are ever-changing. Livestock producers and rangeland professionals must be kept abreast of current issues, trends and information to ensure that operations remain profitable, and rangelands are used sustainably.

Our Response

The Idaho Range Livestock Symposium (IRLS) initially began in 1995 as the Intermountain Cow Symposium, which was a single location, biennial event. This collaborative effort provided an opportunity for Idaho's livestock producers to learn about the latest research/science in livestock production and management by bringing together several entities and organizations (e.g., University of Idaho Extension, University of Idaho Department of Animal, Veterinary & Food Sciences, Idaho Cattle Association, Idaho State Depart-



2023 Idaho Range Livestock Symposium – Twin Falls session. Photo by Benton Glaze.

ment of Agriculture, Idaho Veterinary Medical Association).

Since most livestock in Idaho use rangelands during some part of their production cycles, the IRLS was revamped in 2015 to include range-based information and allow livestock producers to interact with range professionals and agency personnel. Additionally, the symposium was expanded to include multiple locations in southwestern, south central and southeastern Idaho and is now offered on an annual basis. Each year, an advisory group consisting of livestock producers, range professionals, association representatives, agency personnel and university faculty is engaged in the planning of the symposium (select sites, identify topics, secure speakers, raise funds, etc.).

The 2023 IRLS included in-person events in Homedale, Twin Falls and Idaho Falls with the Twin Falls event being broadcast via Zoom to participants that were unable to travel to one of the designated locations. Speakers at the 2023 IRLS shared science-based, industry-relevant information on beef cattle nutrition, hay testing and quality, poisonous plants and animal health, green energy project challenges and opportunities, water quality and virtual fencing.

Program Outcomes

Total in-person attendance for the 2023 IRLS was 150 and 45 registered for the Zoom meeting option. Each participant was given the opportunity to evaluate the symposium and 63 submitted evaluations. Attendees included ranchers (51%), federal employees (21%), state employees (10%), educators (5%) and students (10%). When asked about the value of the symposium, respondents provided a ranking of 4.06 on a five-point scale. Ninety-two percent of the participants that submitted evaluations planned to implement a practice that was taught at the IRLS. The most frequently mentioned practice was related to hay testing/sampling.

Pre- and post-test results, using a five-point Likert-type scale (one = very low; five = very high), were used to gauge the knowledge gained by participants for each topic (see Table). Overall, the knowledge gained was 58.43%.

Using the Zoom recordings from the Twin Falls session, videos of each presentation were compiled and uploaded to YouTube and links were posted on the University of Idaho Rangeland Center website. To date, the view count for each of the videos are as follows: feed costs (22), poisonous plants (25), hay testing (39), green energy (53), water quality (18) and virtual fencing (69).

Comments submitted by respondents about the symposium were complementary and supportive. One comment in particular (“Great, valuable information from a land management standpoint. Also provides an

awesome opportunity to network with other professionals and producers within range management.”) exemplifies some of the reasons for, and value of, the symposium revamp in 2015.

Knowledge gained by participants by topic

Topic	Knowledge Before	Knowledge After	Percent Change
Feed Costs	2.68	3.83	+42.91%
Poisonous Plants	2.58	3.75	+45.35%
Hay Testing	2.61	3.72	+42.53%
Green Energy	2.31	3.51	+51.95%
Water Quality	2.21	3.65	+65.16%
Virtual Fencing	1.86	3.77	+102.69%

The Future

Based on in-person comments and those provided in the symposium evaluations, the IRLS will continue to be held. Future meetings will be planned by the advisory committee.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- University of Idaho Extension
- University of Idaho Rangeland Center
- University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
- University of Idaho College of Natural Resources
- Department of Animal, Veterinary and Food Sciences
- Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission
- Idaho State Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Cattle Association
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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