

Cultural plants and livestock

"The great spirit, in placing men on the earth, desired them to take good care of the ground, and to do each other no harm...." *Young Chief, 1855 Umatilla Treaty Council*

Grazing and gathering are compatible when performed properly. Vegetation communities differ; it follows that grazing and gathering techniques will vary as well.

To protect cultural plants, one must know when the plants are actively growing. Avoid grazing at these times or find a way that minimizes removal of leaves.

If the resource is *abused*, it is invaded by cheatgrass, rabbitbrush and noxious weeds.

If the resource is *overgrazed*, then grazing should be restricted until it heals.

If the resource is *overharvested*, then gathering should be restricted until it comes back.

If the resource is *managed properly*, there will be plants around for future use.

Many cultural plants will thrive under limited grazing, that is, a few cows early on and early off.

Examples: Biscuit Root or Cough; Indian Carrot or Sawwickt; Wild Celery or Cum-see

Early On, Early Off - A livestock rotation technique that benefits range plants and spring calvers. Usually late February through late March. Remember in lower elevations, root plants are actively growing by late March.

Many cultural plants inhabit areas that are unsuitable for livestock grazing during most of the year. Very dry, rocky places and swampy high mountain meadow (where Blue Camas grows) are also sensitive areas.

Early On, Early Off won't work, of course, for high mountain meadows. Deep spring snow is for bison. Graze cattle in these areas late summer and fall.

A rule of thumb for proper livestock grazing management on grass is "graze half, leave half." For areas where roots and traditional plants are, graze 1/4 and leave 3/4. Grazing can be heavier when harvesting is finished.

Warm Springs elders say "gather half, leave half."

Cattle benefit most from range successions that have developed into bunchgrass communities.

One must know the patterns of plant growth for all plants in a community to be effective at grazing.

Proper grazing can maintain a balance between the population of grasses and forbs. Cattle can also prune shrubs to keep young shoots within the reach of deer, and remove old growth of grass in the fall so deer have ready access to nutritious young growth in the spring.

The capabilities and limitations of soil and vegetation are not infinite.

Nature cannot stand bare ground. If we kill the plant, nature replaces it with another plant - usually of lesser quality.

Graze and gather, but leave the resource better than before.