

Ranching and Rangeland

Nearly three-quarters of the gross receipts from agriculture in New Mexico come from the livestock industry. Ranged cattle and sheep are the leading agricultural products of the state by value and provide a great deal of secondary employment in the feedlot industry, in slaughter and processing houses, and in meatpacking and wholesaling. More than 40 million acres of private, state, and Indian land are used as livestock rangeland in New Mexico. When the federal land that is leased to ranchers for grazing is added to this total, the rangeland covers more than four-fifths of the area of the state. In order to assess problems that ranchers may have in common, five geographic regions (northeast, central, northwest, southwest, southeast) called ranch budget study areas have been established to classify the grass cover and characteristics of livestock operations found in each region. Despite the geographic diversity

throughout the state, rangeland production practices and problems are quite similar overall. Particular climatic conditions do affect feeding practices, and topographic conditions affect breeding, calving, and other management practices. Other factors, such as death losses and types of range improvements, have not shown much variation by geographic location.

For the most part, cattle and sheep are fed protein supplements or hay during the winter months, which may be four or five months in the southeast or as long as six months in the northern areas. In the southwestern ranching areas, year-long grazing is possible, except for periods of drought or when grasses are dormant from January to March. During these times the ranchers need to feed livestock a variety of supplements.

Breeding programs are seasonal in most of the state but generally range from May to August. In the southern

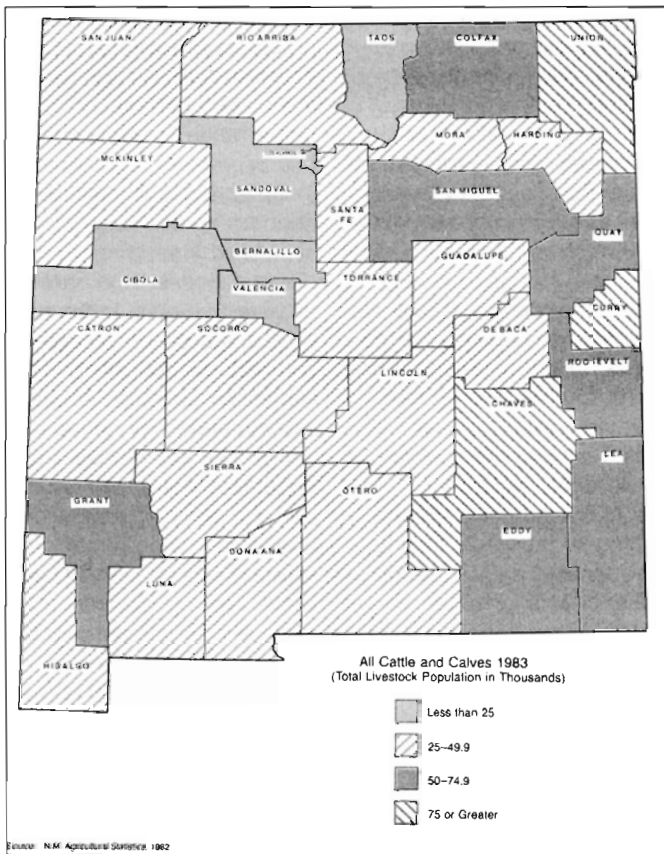
portion of the state, year-long breeding programs are common, especially in the southwest. Breeding pastures are rare in this state and nearly all breeding is done under range conditions. Crossbreeding has become a popular practice. Calving in the spring is closely monitored in the northern areas. Heifers may be separated from the older cows to allow closer supervision in order to avoid calving problems. In the central mountain area of the state, calving percentages can become critically low if cows are not well cared for. Supplemental feeding is recommended for spring-calving cows.

Cow/calf enterprises are found throughout the state. Yearling operations are also common statewide but are most important in the northern ranching areas, where they are used to help reduce winter feeding requirements. Yearling cattle are purchased only for the grazing season and their numbers can be adjusted quite readily in response to

Production Trends for Ranching, 1958-1982

Year	Cattle Calves			Sheep/Lambs			Wool			Mohair		
	Production (million lbs)	Market (million lbs)	Value of Production (\$ million)	Production (million lbs)	Market (million lbs)	Value of Production (\$ million)	Sheep Shorn (1,000s)	Production (million lbs)	Value (\$ million)	Goats Clipped (1,000s)	Production (1,000 lbs)	Value (\$1,000)
1958	364.6	486.1	89.4	44.7	39.2	7.7	1110	10.0	3.5	47	200	92
1960	380.5	535.5	78.9	41.7	40.1	5.4	1113	10.4	3.9	48	221	179
1962	423.1	617.6	96.3	41.2	47.1	5.7	1122	10.6	5.0	59	277	152
1964	394.9	609.7	70.5	33.0	46.8	4.8	1029	9.5	4.7	65	292	216
1966	467.1	745.8	113.0	32.7	37.2	6.0	924	8.8	4.2	52	234	98
1968	481.0	853.6	122.0	35.2	37.9	6.7	806	7.4	3.2	61	249	107
1970	613.2	1113.8	178.5	31.1	38.9	6.2	730	6.5	2.2	55	204	78
1972	614.4	1171.0	226.9	25.1	30.9	5.8	668	6.1	2.1			
1974	592.4	943.9	214.3	18.7	37.6	6.0	610	6.0	3.6			
1976	648.0	1165.8	234.6	16.3	27.3	7.1	500	4.9	3.2			
1978	587.6	1224.7	315.2	14.4	20.2	9.9	532	5.1	3.7			
1980	645.1	1199.1	423.5	16.2	27.8	9.2	555	5.1	4.6			
1982	457.4	957.1	223.1	21.3	26.5	9.2	525	5.0	4.4			

Ranching and Rangeland



pasture (and market) conditions. In the northeast, ranges are leased out for yearling contract grazing arrangements.

The leading counties for cattle and calves in the state are Chaves, Union, and Curry. These counties are also in the top five annually for total cash receipts of all farm commodities. From 1978 to 1982, the cash receipts for cattle and calves ranged from a high of \$777 million in 1980 to a low of \$457 million in 1982.

In the southeast, sheep ranching is prominent and ewes are lambled in the spring. Sheep are of the fine wool type, and more than 5 million pounds of it was marketed (at more than \$4 million) in 1980. Some crossbreeding has been done to improve the carcass quality of lambs as well as to retain the fine wool traits. Sheep and lambs were marketed for more than \$40 million in New Mexico during 1980 and 1981. During the lambing season, it is recommended that ewes be fed supplements to improve the quality of the lamb and to aid the condition of the ewe. The leading areas of the state in production of sheep and lambs are Chaves, McKinley, Lincoln, and San Juan counties.

The other major types of livestock produced in New Mexico are dairy cattle, hogs, and poultry (chickens). Doña Ana County is the leading milk-producing area (followed by Roosevelt and Valencia), Luna and Hidalgo counties are the leading hog-farming areas, and chickens (including eggs) are raised mainly in the urban counties of Doña Ana and Bernalillo.

