Grazing Lessons: A Startup Perspective

- Completely from scratch - $17,000 line of credit
- Challenging, but possible
- Ranch operations span over 150,000 acres
- Leased land, leased livestock
- 30% ROI Business
- Ranching is fun & profitable
Outline

- Introduction
- History of Askin Land & Livestock
- Overview of Ranch Operations
- Challenges
- Grazing Management
- Questions?
Introduction

- Sage Askin & Faith Hoffman
- Perry & Terry Askin
- Dalton & Shelby Timm
Managing land for optimal, sustainable profitability and producing happy, healthy animals on God-given soils for your health and benefit.

“By His grace and for His glory”
Grew up near Douglas, WY
Family ranches north and south of Douglas
Family operation sized for one-two families
Already fully staffed
Worked on ranches near Douglas
Helped on many ranches while growing up
Dad, Perry, was a lifetime ranch hand/foreman
Education

- High School, Douglas, WY
  - FFA 4 years
  - 4-H 10 years
  - Raised rabbits, goats, sheep, cattle

- B.S. in Rangeland Ecology and Watershed Management, University of Wyoming
Mentors

- Perry and Terry Askin - Parents
- Dennis and Jane Irwin - Grandparents
- Walt and Delores Whitaker - Ranchers
- Dennis and Linda Isakson - Ranchers
- Pete and Sara Cameron - Lessors, Ranchers
“By His Grace and For His Glory”

- I believe this is all due to God’s hand.
- Thanks to Him, three families can do what we want, and enjoy the best life possible raising livestock and stewarding the resource.
- We grow as He allows.
After college, participated in WAGON
Worked at Isakson’s for 10 months
Gave notice in January, 2013
Put together lease proposals, fielded calls
Had operation in place, and money down
First day of self employment April 2013
Summer 2013

- One employee - Hadley Hill
- Ran 2000 yearling steers on 26,000 acres
- Medicine Bow, WY
- Bad drought
- Implemented herding techniques to preserve gains
- Low profitability, low risk
November 2013

- Started on Cameron Ranch
- Assumed actual lease of cow herd and land April 2014
- Utilized Management Intensive Grazing for the first time in winter 2013-2014
- Initiated planning for summer range
- Also consolidated leases for 2014 summer season
Winter 2013-2014
2014 Medicine Bow Unit

- Operated 20,000 acres - Medicine Bow, WY
  - Pastured 219 pair for two owners
  - Pastured 243 pair for TA Ranch
  - One FTE, Hadley Hill
  - One PTE, Terry Askin
  - Goal - to get Perry out of oil patch job
Operated 8000 acres Logan Pasture north of Lysite, WY
Irrigated 455 acres (flood) and purchased 300 ewes to eat weeds
Sold first livestock crops
Finally - some profits
2014 Livestock
2014 Livestock
2015 Overview

- Capacity of 1000 ewes, year round
- Capacity of 1200 pair, summer
- Capacity of 480 pair, winter
- 3 Units
- Employ three FTE, two PTE
- Expanding annually
Pine Draw Ranch - 11,000 acres
- 3 pastures
- No live water
- Bad fences
- 6 tanks on 11 miles of pipeline
- Electric well, over 400 feet of lift
- Very precipitation dependent
- Capacity ~300 pair, 4.5 months
Pine Draw Ranch Aerial
Cassidy River Ranch

- Subdivision property
- 9 tire tanks on 12 miles pipeline, 3 non-functional
- Split ownership
- Large, open country
- Only set of fixed corrals
- Power, water hookup
- Capacity 300 pair, 4.5 months
2015 Riverton Cattle Unit

- Headquarters
  - 455 irrigated acres
  - 300 dryland, subirrigated riverbottom
  - Alfalfa, improved grass, legume mixtures
  - Saline soils, poor drainage
Logan Pasture
- ~8000 acres, BLM, State of Wyoming, about half deeded
- Rated by BLM 290 pair for 5 months
- Turnout June 1st, shipping November 1st
- Low precip (5-7”)
- High precip (16-20”)
- Divide property - two watersheds
2015 Conant Creek Sheep Unit

- Over 120,000 BLM acres
- Less than 3,000 deeded base acres
- One large spring, fall pasture of ~80,000 acres
- 5 summer pastures of 40,000 acres
- Open range herding a must
- Guard dogs mandatory
- Mobile camp
- BLM control
Open Range Sheepherding

- Herder on call 24/7
- Lives in DOL inspected sheepwagon
- Horseback herding
- Easy to lose sheep
- Strays rarely seen again
- 9 miles wide, 22 miles long, no fences
- Move camp once per week

- Desert environment
- Marginal water
- Year round grazing
- Some winter energy supplementation
- Low input
- Portable corrals
- Pasture lambing
- Guardian dogs
Our Biggest Challenges

- Pasturing others’ livestock
- Changing paradigms in cattle production
- Building/maintaining relationships
- Cashflow, Cashflow, Cashflow
- Always be profitable
- Implementing grazing systems
Pasturing Others’ Livestock

- Assume no more risk than you must
- Find the price, and stick to it
- Protect yourself against disaster
- Be prompt in reporting
- Accept full care conditions only
- Be honest
- Reputation is everything
- Never overstock or run out of water
Changing Paradigms in Commercial Cattle Operations

- Low input
- Grazing based, no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ ton hay feeding per cow
- Early summer calving
- Calving ease, no assistance
- Good mineral program
- Low-stress handling
Building People Skills

- **Relationships**
  - 7 current long-term leases
  - 5 different livestock owners
- **They are always right**
- **Be flexible**
- **Always be prepared for the worst**
- **Plan, plan, replan**
- **Be honest, always do what you say**
Never be unprofitable
If it doesn’t work, change it
Cash flow is the most important thing
Most businesses fail, don’t be one
Think outside the box
Marketing a must
Implementing Grazing Strategies

- Utilization, Stocking Density, Stocking Rate
- Smaller pasture sizes on range
- Water development
- Fencing development
- Daily moves, especially wintertime
- Pasture sward quality more important than quantity for winter feed
Tools for Successful Ranching

- Marketing
- Genetics
- Grazing
- Stockmanship
Diverse Grazing

- Riverton valley climate, precip regime
- Desert environment
- 8-10” precip zone, most in the spring
- Cold dry winter, average snowfall 5 inches
- 5000 feet elevation
- Great for wintering livestock
- So we send them out for the summer, in for the winter
Summer Grazing

- Higher elevation
- Cooler average temps
- Short, nutritious grass
- Lysite - great live water
- Medicine Bow - poor water
- Get home before storms in fall
- Best performance June-August
Logan Pasture
Fall Grazing, Nov-Dec

- November 1, cows come home
- Fenceline wean our fall weaning right away
- Able to pasture calves with no hay or supplements
- Strip graze cows and unweaned calves (heifer calves)
- Implement daily moves
Winter Grazing, Jan-Mar

- Cold temps, high forage consumption
- Biuret additive in mineral, if needed
- Daily moves, start pushing cows
- Balance alfalfa in windrows with low-protein swampgrasses
- Maintain even nutritional plane with daily moves
- Sort for condition by April 1, if necessary
- Wean Mar 1 - any unweaned cows
Late Weaning

- Easier on calves
- Management of one herd versus 2 (+)
- Cows make future cows
- Calves have protein boost and do very well
- Must have genetics in line and late spring/summer calving
Spring Grazing, April-June

- Cows entering third trimester pregnancy
- Must be on rising plane of nutrition
- Supplement hay if necessary during major storm events lasting over 2 days
- Maintain adequate forage stockpile to have last year’s feed to June 1
- Give bigger paddock size
- Less density
- Go to twice daily moves, if necessary, can use selective grazing for thin cows
Spring Grazing (continued)

- Hardest time of year on the livestock
- Prevent chasing green
- Prevent urge to open gates
- Animal control most important as grass comes on
- Drylot and feed hay to let pastures get ahead if overstocked
- 8 inches of growth on meadows, OK to graze
MIG Grazing: Recovered 65 Days

Alfalfa vs Grass Recovery

Average Height: July 25, 2015
- Ungrazed Alfalfa: 32”
- Ungrazed Smooth Brome: 49”
- Grazed Alfalfa: 22”
- Grazed Smooth Brome: 26”
Summer Grazing, June-Oct

- Open range
- High degree of selectivity
- Lower utilization
- Keep 1/4 - 1/3 in season-long rest
- Most important in the more brittle environments
- Control with water
Summer MIG: July 25 Pictures

- Left side: 55 days Rest
- Above: 23 days Rest
- Left: 23 Days Rest, Right: 15 Days Rest
- Left: 15 Days, Right: 7 Days
- Rested: 7 days
- Rested: 7 days
- Watering July 25
271 pair and bulls June 15-August 30
Allows regrowth for winter feed
No machinery req./hay production
Grazing alfalfa - no problem

Typical Sward
Alfalfa Utilization
Grazed Alfalfa (was 3 feet Tall)

Canada Thistle?
100% Consumption
Example:
65 acres
29 days
271 A.U
Ave. Paddock size:
2.24 acres
Ave Pair Wt:
1500#
406,500# Beef
181,473 lb/ac
120AUD/Acre
Utilization:90 %
The Smallest Cow Is a Sheep

Sheep Advantages

- Grazing control via herding
- Better browsers
- Better adapted to utilize short grass
- Less water requirements, especially in summer
- “Match the animal to the resource,” Jim Waggoner, Assoc. Prof., University of Wyoming
- Highly marketable
Hope for the Future

- You can do it, too!
- Change the paradigms
- Jump in and work hard
- Use better grazing techniques
- Profit/acre most important
- Be willing to diversify
- Take the opportunity nobody else wants
Thank You!!!

- Any Questions?
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