



MOUNTAIN CATTLEMENS NEWS

Newsletter of the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria
PO BOX 294, Mansfield Vic 3722

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GRAZING FEES - THIRD REVIEW IN AS MANY YEARS

The struggle over grazing fees is still continuing.

The fees are being reviewed again - this time in conjunction with the VFF. Ian Lobban has been appointed by the VFF to a review Panel which is considering all Crown land rental charges including ours.

The MCAV Council agreed at its May meeting that the following should be the basis of agreement and this has now been presented to the Department of Conservation and Environment. Under this proposal, alpine and bush runs would be treated the same and be known as "Eastern Forests".

1. The Eastern Forests region would include undeveloped Crown land in eastern Victoria traditionally used for alpine or bush grazing. It would include the following area:

1.1 land that falls within the area known as the Alpine Study Area as defined in the Land Conservation Council's "Report on the Alpine Study Area" July 1977.

1.2 all licences which have at least some land within the area defined in 1.1 above, or immediately abut the defined area, and,

1.3 any lease proximate to but outside the defined area, and which to the satisfaction of the Regional Manager,

has been traditionally regarded as an alpine or bush run.

2. Consideration should also be given to making the boundary of the Eastern Forests region - the Hume, Melba and Midland Highways and the sea.

3. For the purposes of setting charges, a yearling, a cow and suckling calf unit and a bullock should all count as one cattle unit. It is important to note that a cow and calf is one cattle unit.

4. Licence fees for all broad area grazing allotments in the Eastern Forests region should be calculated by multiplying the number of cattle that represents the unimproved carrying capacity by the recommended fee.

5. The recommended fee would be derived by direct negotiation and be based on previously acceptable charges. This is appropriate given that there are no comparable markets and the landlord, DC&E, and representatives of the proposed licensees can meet "in the market place".

6. Rental charges should be revised every three years and the revised price reflect the up or down movement in ABARE cattle price statistics.

7. Productivity improvements for a licence area undertaken by the existing licensee should be disregarded from the rental charge. Therefore, if a runholder funds improvements which facilitate the accommodation of extra cattle then, this would be confirmed with the Regional Manager as the permissible stocking level, and there would be no charge for the extra numbers.

8. The Basic Agreed Average Carrying Capacity should be negotiated by the licence holder with appropriate DC&E Regional Staff.

9. Appeals should be allowed against the figure for Basic Agreed Average Carrying Capacity and that any Appeal be directed in the first instance to the local Regional Manager.

We still expect a major battle over the level of the prices for these runs. At least we are in the same situation as the VFF which is also facing an argument about the level of the charges.



DEFINITIONS OF CATTLE RUNS

There is still some concern about the definition of alpine, contiguous, and bush runs. The Department of Conservation and Environment is not prepared to further negotiate on this issue and has set out the following definitions.

Alpine grazing areas. An area above 1220 metres in whole or part, and where entry and exit dates for stock are set by DC&E or the summer grazing season is approximately 16 weeks.

Contiguous grazing areas. An area with a common boundary to a licensed alpine area and the licensee holds an alpine licence for an alpine grazing area, though not necessarily the adjacent alpine area.

Bush grazing areas. All other grazing areas will be defined as bush grazing (whether annual or seasonal)

Any member dissatisfied with the definitions should contact the Secretary.



GET-TOGETHER NEWS

Excellent result from the North East

The May Council meeting was delighted with the results of the North East Get-together and the meeting carried a resolution congratulating the Branch on its efforts in organising such a successful event.

Cattlemens Cup race to be run by the Association

In order to take some of the pressure off the Branch running the Get-together, it was decided at the May meeting that the Association's Race Committee should be totally responsible for the pre-planning, administration, and running of the race on the day, including the appointment of marshalls and safety procedures.



NO MORE WILDERNESS

The May Council considered the Land Conservation Council's investigation into wilderness in which it highlighted about 15 possible sites in the Alpine Area for designation. Proclamation of any of the areas would require the termination of grazing. The meeting agreed to reject any further wilderness proclamations because:-

- * The minimal management requirements and resultant fire risks make it an inappropriate classification,
- * No areas now meet the proposed definition of wilderness area as sought by Government, and,
- * The cost and impractical aspects of policing regulations make it undesirable.

The Public Land Council has made a strong submission on the question of Wilderness and will soon be building up some publicity on the issue.

The Association will also be pointing out to the LCC some basic errors in its report and expressing concern that wilderness areas are being considered on the basis of incorrect information.

Additionally, Buff Rogers has reported that he has two freehold blocks which would be surrounded by a proposed wilderness, and that it had been reported to him that DC&E intended compulsorily acquiring these areas. Not only do they want the runs back - now they want freehold land as well!



ASSOCIATES

There continues to be a high level of interest from associates in the operations of the Association and the membership of associates is still very strong. The mountain cattlemen derive great strength from the membership of the associates and appreciate this continuing support. It is likely that in the near future action will be taken to bring the relationship between the cattlemen and the associates into clearer focus.



ACTION ON THE BOGONG HIGH PLAINS

The May Council decided that now that the 1990 fees issue had been resolved, DC&E should be asked to continue the negotiations on the relocation of cattlemen evicted from the Bogong High Plains. In seeking a re-opening of these negotiations DC&E officers will be reminded that the Minister has stated that no cattlemen would be disadvantaged by relocation.

Mr. Harry Ryder advised the meeting that the exit date for the Bogong High Plains had been set for two weeks earlier than usual and that it had been set without the involvement of the Local Advisory Committee. Mr. Ryder noted that the attitude of the Department of Conservation and Environment towards cattle grazing appears to be hardening.



THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY

In a major move in the preparation of scientific data of the effect of cattle grazing on the high country, the Association has engaged the services of a former CSIRO rangelands expert, Roger Oxley. Roger's initial tasks will be:-

- * A thorough literature review of the KNP and effects of the removal of grazing based on published material.
- * A thorough literature review and critique of published material on the effect of cattle grazing on the Bogong High Plains.
- * A literature review of material on the effects of fire on the Bogong High Plains and the role of grazing under various fire regimes.

This work, funded by the Australian Farmers Fighting Fund allocation will be critical in the debate over the years ahead. This part of the project should be completed by about the end of September.



BANS ON CLEARING NATIVE VEGETATION

The May Council meeting expressed concern about the effect of the Statewide planning

controls which prevent the clearing of native vegetation without a permit. This has caused serious hardship to some landowners and is clearly unnecessary in heavily forested areas of the State. The meeting expressed support for the strong stand that the VFF is taking over this issue.



YOU WORK IT OUT

We recently wrote to the LCC, stating that if, on the Bogong High Plains, there is little difference between the area around Marm Point and around Mount Bundara, why has grazing been phased out on one area and not the other.

Mr. David Scott, Chairman of the LCC has responded:- "... when the Land Conservation Council was preparing its final recommendations for the Alps it sought to ensure that some part of the national park should be without grazing. It therefore recommended that a consolidated area of the Bogong High Plains be excluded from grazing because of the need to include in the Alpine park system a representative area where the uses were fully compatible with the generally accepted concept of national parks."

What was that about the damage that cattle are supposed to cause?



EUROPEANS CARING FOR THEIR ALPS

Picked up from SKITOUR magazine and reporting comments by Fredric Briand, the head of ecology programmes for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature: "... mountain agriculture is essential for maintaining the Alpine environment, and it needs investment. ... The Alps cannot simply be turned back to nature ... Soil may deteriorate in unmanaged forest. A sudden eruption of wilderness could lead

to unpredictable changes in patterns of water runoff and forest fires. This could endanger the heavily populated lowlands which lie in surrounding areas."



WODONGA PARADE

The Wodonga Chamber of Commerce is having a street parade on Saturday 24, November, 1990 and has requested the mountain cattlemen to be part of the parade. If you are interested in joining in, please contact Alan Brewer on 060 208 652



MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscription forms are included in this Newsletter and are due and payable by July 31, 1990. Please do not put this form away somewhere (like down the back of the fridge) and forget about it. For the sake of administrative costs and the sanity of several executive members - fees must be paid promptly.

The 1989 Annual General Meeting of the Association agreed that fees should be set as **\$1.00 per head flat**. This replaces the former arrangement where members paid a fee for the first hundred head etc. and was introduced to make the contribution of members more equitable. Please note the new arrangement is \$1.00 per head.

At the same meeting it was decided that the fees for **associates** should remain at their present level. Please complete the enclosed card and return with your cheque.

Complimentary copies of "Voice of the Mountains" have been sent to all members and associates. If you missed your copy please contact the Secretary, at PO Box 294, Mansfield.

NOW, NOT BEHIND THE FRIDGE, REMEMBER!

Homelands
Stratford, Vic. 3862
3rd July, 1990

Hi folks,

They say time flies when you are having fun. Being M.C.A.V. President must be fun, because it is almost a year already, since I became President. It certainly doesn't seem a year ago - but then there is always something going on - sometimes trivial, other times more important. The number of phone calls coming into our house has increased manyfold, some ring for chat, some give encouragement, others want to sympathise with our position - these get put straight. Yes, we want support, but we are holding our own in this current seemingly hostile environment.

Others call for information - many doing school projects. These I refer to Sue at Mansfield who handles them along with the dozens that go direct to her each month. It is only after ten months that I am becoming aware of the paper warfare that our Secretary handles - from dealing with Departmental heads, to sending a sticker to a student. Our organisation is very blessed to have such a devoted and capable person as we have in Sue Silvers. Thanks Sue! We have many other top operators in their field also, who work consistently for the Association. Because of this teamwork, we are a very effective organisation.

Well, the cows are calving. They have been in the lower country for some weeks now. Yes its Winter. We all know its coming, but until it happens we don't know how severe it will be. I recently heard it said that this winter seems cold and miserable because we have had it a bit too comfortable for a winter or two. Perhaps our economic climate is going to seem wintery for a season or two, and for the same reason. This country Australia - the 'lucky country' - is facing problems not seen for 60 years. Like the seasons it seems that our money system goes in cycles. Unlike our seasons, the money system responds to management. Because the 'lucky country' has had things so good for so long, the ultimate judges - the voting public - have lost sight of a few basic management principles. They have allowed Governments to pursue policies of resource and economic management which are soon to land us in a tough time. The public has not questioned enough about what has been going on. The trend has been to wait for a lead from the Government. Most Governments don't lead, they follow public opinion. Public opinion also goes in cycles. The theoretical notions of locking up our resources and importing our requirements will swing back to more practical, conservation, attainable by sustainable management.

In the Alpine grazing arena, we see the Government desperate to get more money. The management values of grazing are not recognised by the policy makers, because

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politics has had precedent over management. When the Government of the day finally realises that to balance the budget, expenditure must be reduced, because the taxed voter has had enough, we will see improved resource management.

The present problems of the pricing of runs for members results from the Department of Conservation and Environment looking at the situation from its own viewpoint. Government Departments are meant to serve the public - not to have the public serve the Department. I know there are many capable and dedicated (and frustrated) people in all Departments. The problems stem from the policy makers.

Much has just been written about the problems. I believe the economic Winter ahead will auger well for the real wealth producers of the nation - the primary producers. We may not see an increase in our personal wealth, but we are the survivors. We have had more practice at survival than the rest of the community, so our improvement may only be in comparative terms.

Remember, Spring always comes after Winter!

Cheers,

Doug Treasure.