



The Richland, Ore., cattleman needs all those water sources. His 650 Angus-Hereford cows depend on these sources for drinking water, both at his Eagle Valley headquarters in the winter and spread out over the 15,000 to 20,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management range they graze in the summer. In addition, he irrigates 400 to 450 acres of orchardgrass, timothy, clover and alfalfa hay.

Measures to Protect

As a result, Forsea does all he can to keep the springs, stream beds and riparian areas—the land bordering the creeks and rivers—in top-notch shape.

For starters, he depends on fences. “We try to fence off most of the creeks in the valley. If we do graze, we only keep the cattle in there for a short time. The fences keep the cattle where I want them, it makes them easier to manage, and it keeps the streambanks in [good] condition.”

The creek through his feedlot was probably the most in need of help. “The cattle made a mess. I was going to do the work on my own but the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] helped me with cost-share money. We fenced it out and put in four troughs. Now we have a good buffer. Even the feedlot is grassy. I could hay it if it wasn’t so rocky.”

Amanda Halawell, range and riparian specialist for the Alberta Riparian Management Society, likes the way Forsea thinks. “After cattle have grazed riparian areas, give the forage a sufficient period of rest to allow the plants to recover. Their root systems help resist erosion.”

She adds, “Avoid grazing in riparian areas at the times of the year when it is flooding. Here in Alberta, it is the springtime during snowmelt. The banks get saturated and are prone to erosion, and compaction inhibits the amount of vegetation growth.”

She also agrees with Forsea’s use of buffer areas between creeks and the areas he hays and/or grazes. “The buffer areas capture and slow down water so the surrounding land is more productive.” If most of a producer’s land is grazed, she says, hayfields can actually serve as the buffer.

Alternative Methods

On Forsea’s summer rangeland, it often isn’t practical to fence his cattle out of the creeks, so he gets creative. Since much of the land is too steep for even 4-wheelers to navigate, the 64-year-old rancher and his 90-year-old father pack salt in with their horses. “We put it on the ridges. It draws the cattle out of the riparian areas.”

