



# Cattle Producer's Handbook

Miscellaneous Section

1055

## Recreational Enterprises Can Complement Beef Production

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Providing opportunities for non-ranch people to enjoy a piece of your way of life generally is not within the objectives of most ranchers. Many, perhaps most, ranchers and their families would rather not even think about recreation as a business form of income. However, leisure time and opportunity still are on the increase and this means the demand for high-quality recreation will be satisfied by someone. Perhaps it is time to consider advantages and disadvantages to ranch-based recreation.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are highly sought after. In the West, this has occurred traditionally on public land, but private land now is recognized as having important attributes. Private lands, or ranches if you will, have not only better soils and more diverse vegetation but often better accessibility and more desirable water regimes and scenery than public lands. Big game may spend a significant part of their time on private lands. If game animals are on your property during hunting season, charging people access to your property to hunt might well make up for the amount of forage they consume. Given these general facts and trends in people's demands, should you be looking at providing recreational opportunities on a profit basis?

### Forms of Recreation

Obviously, each ranch is different so only general statements can be made. Proximity to public land need not be a disadvantage although many people do recreate on public land. With rare exceptions, however, public land recreation is dispersed and undeveloped with few services offered or available. Generally, being close to public land will be an advantage as long as private land provides sufficient complementarity.

The list of recreational opportunities for your ranch could be rather lengthy. Often, we are limited only by our ingenuity and creativity. A partial list, all for a fee or charge, could include hunting for big game, small game, upland birds or waterfowl; angling (streams, lakes, or reservoirs); all forms of ranch stays or bed and breakfast which do not have to be

activity-centered or oriented; camping of all sorts including RV's; horseback riding, both trail rides and cross country; participating in actual ranch work; hiking or backpacking; all forms of water, snow, or ice-based sports, or straight-forward loafing. If you value your rural way of life, you can bet others will also. Why not consider marketing it? All ranches have unique scenery and an abundance of solitude. Both are "commodities" in demand.

### Characteristics of Recreation Enterprises

By definition, recreation enterprises are people-based. This may be perceived by many ranchers as something they would rather not deal with. The numbers of people depend on just what services and opportunities may be offered, however. Example: a fee hunting set-up where you deal with a management consultant, or an agent for a group of hunters. If you are concerned about the people management part, there are ways that can be addressed. At the conclusion of this fact sheet are listed several references that will help you assess some of the concerns you may have.

One strong attribute of a recreation enterprise is that you are the master of market prices, schedules, services, etc. You are not dependent on someone else to control your market price. And, with rare exceptions, you will be offering unique services and experiences. By recognizing that people are creatures of habit, you can cultivate repeat clientele. Generally the market for such services is nowhere near being saturated. In other words, you will have a relatively scarce resource in relation to the demand for it.

### Recreation Enterprise Considerations

The basic similarity among all private land recreational enterprises is the fact that fees are received for a service provided to a client. This is true whether the service is access to your property in order to hunt or for something like camping or horseback riding.