
Book Review

Game Ranch Management

Game Ranch Management by J. du P. Bothma (Editor) 1989. J.L. van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria. Pp: 672. ISBN 0 627 01589 1. Price R55-00 (excl. GST.).

This book is the result of six years' intensive research and brainstorming by a group of South Africans under the editorship of J. du P. Bothma, the incumbent of the Eugene Marais Chair of Wildlife Management at the University of Pretoria. The group, comprising professional botanists and zoologists, veterinarians and wildlife managers, emphasises the fact that game (in all its characteristics and attributes) is unquestionably a natural asset in many parts of southern Africa. As is stated in the Preface by Prof. D. M. Joubert, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, a sense of conservation awareness gradually took hold in southern Africa, bringing concepts such as game ranching strongly to the fore in the 1960s. This process was accompanied by a growing need for more profound information on the subject and eventually a need for a systematic treatment of data gleaned over the decades since World War II.

The book comprises some 24 separate chapters written by 18 different authors, either on their own or in joint authorship. Each chapter is provided with a useful list of references (even including references as recent as 1987, increasing the value of the book immeasurably). Joint efforts of this kind often result in an unevenness in quality of the chapters, but tight prescriptions and efficient editing has made this a well integrated book.

The subject of game ranch management has been introduced over a broad front, and deals with aspects varying from objectives to be attained by game ranch management procedures, and the major ecological principles which underlie (or should underlie) every such venture, the potential of specific areas in terms of natural habitat, the importance of a knowledge of ethology to adaptation and productivity, disease profiles of game and man and interactions, to concepts of carrying capacity, trophy hunting, game counts and cropping methods (particularly regarding the use of immobilisation and capture techniques).

The two longest chapters in the book are devoted to Game Ranch Planning (80 pp) and Game (102 pp) respectively, and these are the chapters around which the contents of the entire text is pivoted. They are based on solid, empirical research and portray carefully reasoned judgement as well as a sober sense of hidden possibilities inherent of game ranch management. Such

a pragmatic approach is necessary, for game ranch management holds great economic advantages and has already earned vast amounts of foreign exchange in South Africa. However, most game ranch owners still regard game ranching as an additional rather than a principal industry. Hitherto, game ranches are often still planned in a haphazard or random way and should not be undertaken in a flighty fashion — if this were to be the game ranch manager's approach, it would be a sure way to lose his money.

It is not possible adequately to summarise the many subtleties and profundities contained in this 672 p. book. It debunks many myths surrounding practices of game ranch management, while its great strength lies in its breadth and diversity of approach. A feature that I particularly like is the provision and development of mathematical formulae (step by step), leading the layman to an interpretation of formulae which are often esoteric to the uninitiated.

To my way of thinking, this is an important book. The objectives are not to arrive at a consensus of opinion, but to stimulate an interchange of ideas. The game ranch industry has developed into an important venture and the need to plan, manage and use game ranches professionally, is evident. I will not hesitate to recommend *Game Ranch Management* to anyone contemplating entering the professional field of game ranching. As I see it, it is a South African contribution which will generate game ranching interests elsewhere in the world and it contains appropriate messages applicable throughout much of the Third or Developing World. This is a distinctly down to earth text, constantly keeping the objectives of a high quality product and its successful marketing in mind. It is one of those books that will be of use as a source of reference in years to come and is a valuable addition to the library of agriculturalists, botanists, zoologists and conservationists *sensu lato* and any other natural scientist whose field of interest is influenced by the conservation concept.

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