



2025

# GRAZING PLAN

**WITHERS RANCH, INC.**

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# INTRODUCTION



The following grazing plan outlines the management practices for Withers Ranch over a one-year period. The management strategies in 2025 will largely reflect those from previous years. The 2009 and 2016 Management Plans involve the acquisition of additional grazing allotments, and the 2018, 2020, and 2021 plans involve adaptive management practices due to catastrophic wildfires.

Each year, the ranch aims to reduce reliance on haying and increase grazing for the herd. This goal has been supported by slight increases in the use of the Oregon State Game Commission allotment, as well as nearby private winter and spring feed. The acquisition of the Harvey Ranch and the Elder Ranch Lease has contributed 1,360 acres of meadow, dry land grazing, spring grazing, hay ground, and a small BLM allotment located 7 miles from the ranch headquarters. The management team actively seeks alternatives to replace hay usage.

The spring grazing permits on the BLM are working effectively with the ranch's operations, with minimal issues related to calving. A well expansion on the allotment has improved water access for cattle, eliminating the need for hauled water. Additionally, in fall 2008, the purchase of a Forest Service allotment allowed for extended grazing, an increase in cow numbers, and the conservation of feed at the ranch headquarters for fall use.

The Withers family is deeply committed to a well-defined succession plan and thrives on working collaboratively as a team to manage the ranch.

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# GOALS

## MISSION STATEMENT

To produce a consumer driven high quality protein product from the natural resources under our care in a long-term sustainable manner.

## GOALS

1. To improve our land and leave it in as good or better condition than when we received it. This goal is met by:

- Eradicating invasive and noxious plant species and seeding these areas with plant species that will provide stability and structure to landscapes.
- Capturing and spreading water (via dams) to create wildlife habitat and expand meadow areas.
- Managing riparian areas by fencing and minimizing grazing to prevent unstable and improper functioning water systems

2. Select herd genetics for medium frame and low birth weight

3. Obtaining additional private ground to use as winter pasture.

4. Executing succession plan.

5. Raising public awareness about the significance and benefits of ranching.

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# CONTINGENCY PLANS

## FIRE/DROUGHT

In the event of a wildfire, all cow/calf pairs and bulls are moved to forest allotments, with gates opened or fences cut to allow animals to safely move away from danger. Emergency contact numbers for the Forest Service and local fire and medical services are posted in the shop and saved on every employee and family member's cell phone. Above all, the safety of those living near or assisting with fire suppression efforts is our top priority. During extreme drought conditions, the ranch will seek alternative feed resources or reduce herd size as necessary to maintain sustainability.

## BACKUP STOCK WATER

Creeks, springs, water holes and the Sycan River provide water for all cattle on forest permits. If there is a power failure during winter months, feedlot cattle can be easily moved to creek water near the ranch headquarters or water could be hauled from creeks at the ranch headquarters. Gas powered water pumps and trucks are kept in good working order as they are used on a yearly basis for providing water to cattle on the BLM spring allotment.

## LIVESTOCK TRANSPORTATION

In the event of a truck wreck or breakdown while hauling cattle, employees will assist in moving the cattle to the nearest holding or loading facility. The local brand inspector will be contacted to arrange a suitable location for the animals. If the animals need to stay temporarily, hay and water will be delivered until transportation is arranged. Injured animals will be treated humanely. Truck drivers will also receive emergency contact information for Withers Ranch employees and details on convenient stop locations, such as the Central Oregon Livestock Auction yard in Madras, Oregon.

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## **JANUARY**

In January, the majority of the older cattle are grazed on pasture at the Game Commission and private grounds at the Silver Lake bed. The carrying capacity of these areas is approximately 1,600 AUMs for the Game Commission and 500 AUMs for Silver Lake. These pastures are utilized heavily as they are afforded a full year of recovery.

Migratory birds feed on these pastures in the spring as they journey north. Snow coverage is rare in these fields, ensuring that they remain viable pasture throughout the winter. Due to the low protein content of the grass, cattle are supplemented with a molasses-protein liquid in self-feeders. Additionally, provisions for hay are maintained in case of severe winter conditions.

Cattle not grazing at Summer/Silver Lake are housed at the ranch. This group includes first-calf heifers, second-calvers, and older or poorer-condition cows, all of which are typically fed hay beginning in mid-to-late December. All bulls and weaner calves are kept at the ranch as well. Bulls are provided with grass hay, while weaner calves receive a mixture of grass and alfalfa, chopped and fed twice daily. Weaner calves are closely monitored for signs of illness, and antibiotics are administered only when necessary.

Cattle receiving antibiotics are marked with a small white ear tag for identification to prevent them from entering the Country Natural Beef (CNB) program. The weaner calves are kept in a standard feedlot located in a sheltered, sandy area. The pens are regularly cleaned, with manure removed to a separate area, and cleaned as needed depending on the weather conditions. In the fall of 2010, approximately 45 acres of dryland brush and grass adjacent to the feedlot were fenced. This area is utilized by three of the pens, and an additional area was fenced in 2022 to accommodate the remaining pens. This has proven to be an effective management strategy.

## **FEBRUARY**

Calving begins in February, starting with the first-calf heifers. These heifers are bred during a 25-day period (April 25 to May 20), resulting in calving beginning early in February. *Due to a high occurrence of dystocia, heifers may actually be crossed with Wagyu bulls and calve at a later time in 2025-2026.* These cattle require constant supervision, though no additional help is hired during this time. Each employee follows a specific schedule for calving duties. As heifers calve, the pairs are moved to larger pastures (Home, Triangle, SE Home) and are fed a mix of alfalfa and grass hay. The older cows remain at the Game Commission and Silver Lake pastures until the end of February. These cows are gradually moved back to the ranch, with a day or two of rest between moves. Bulls and weaners continue to be fed hay daily.

## **MARCH**

By early March, most running age cattle (except first-calf heifers and those in poor condition) are trailed to the BLM permit at Twin Lakes. This grazing allotment primarily consists of crested wheatgrass, with a 45% utilization standard. The allotment is split into two pastures, allowing each to rest every other season. Feed from the previous year provides roughage for the cattle until new growth begins in late March.

Water shortages are a common issue, but water is hauled and pumped from a well located on the allotment. The deepening of the well has reduced the need for hauling, improving cattle distribution and feed utilization. In 2021, a portable pipeline was installed to better water cattle across different areas of the pastures, enhancing livestock utilization. Although cattle thrive on this feed, grass tetany and larkspur can pose occasional challenges. To mitigate grass tetany, a mineral supplement with high magnesium content is distributed throughout the grazing allotment.

Cattle remaining at the ranch continue to be fed hay for the rest of the month. Additionally, calves born in February (from the first-calf heifers) are branded, and sorting, weighing, and sizing of yearling cattle begins for CNB placements and video marketing. Replacement heifers are also selected during this period. Due to catastrophic wildfire and prolonged drought, half the yearlings are usually sold this month, with a load shipped to CNB.

Some branding of first-calf-heifer calves occurs.

## **APRIL**

In early April, the second load of yearlings is shipped to CNB, and replacement heifers are turned out on grass (Dry Creek, pivots, Paisley Flat). The remaining yearlings, slated for CNB in June and July, are moved through high-producing pastures. Second-calving pairs are turned into the East/Combine pastures around the 15th and remain there until the end of the month. Late-bred cattle are moved to the Harvey Hill pasture to calve out and staged to move to the forest. Young, dry cattle will be moved to the BLM Hill until breeding season.

Additionally, 3-year-olds are moved to one of three hill pastures: Fish Pond field, Box Hill, and the XL Hill. Each of these fields supports about 150 AUMs, and two of them are used per season before cattle are moved to the forest in June. The addition of the Elder Ranch Lease provides a fourth pasture for use, and Juniper removal has been funded through grants to aid pasture regeneration.

Approximately 80 yearlings remain in the feedlot until early May, when they will be shipped to CNB. All branding of first-calf-heifer-calves occurs.

## **MAY**

In early May, the 80 yearlings in the feedlot are shipped to CNB, and first-calf heifers are shipped to the Harris place meadows. These areas require careful management to prevent overgrazing. Irrigation is only carried out when cattle are not present to protect land and vegetation. By mid to late May, branding on the desert commences over a 3-4 day period using portable corrals. In 2025, bulls will be turned out with running age cattle around May 25-June 1 to mitigate conception issues on forest allotments due to a combination of difficult terrain, drought, and potential predation. Young, dry cattle will be bred at the Jones Place, 3-year-olds will be bred in the Box Hill Pasture, and late bred will be bred in the Harvey Hill pasture.

By May 25th, cattle that have remained home and are branded are turned out onto the Bennett Flat pasture in the forest. Bulls are also transported to the Jones Place. Yearling CNB cattle continue to be rotated through meadows at the Harvey Ranch. Additionally, in mid-May, 40 cows are sent to Mill Flat, a private mountain pasture that is stocked lightly for long-season grazing.

## **JUNE**

In early June, yearling steers now grazing at the Harvey Ranch are shipped to CNB. The remaining steers are kept at the Harvey Ranch. First-calf heifers continue to rotate through Harris meadows.

By mid-June, cattle are trailed off the Twin Lakes BLM permit. This process involves multiple trips to ensure that new pairs remain with their mothers. Cattle are sorted and trailed to the BLM Hill and Jones Place (summer forest permits), with only branded pairs being taken to these areas. Around 150 head will be shipped to the North end of the forest allotments to the Bagley pasture.

Cattle from the BLM Hill and Jones Place are gathered and moved to the Summer Lake field by June 20th, where they will be rotated through four pastures with a 45% utilization standard. Special care is taken to prevent damage to the Sycan River, a designated wild and scenic river. Cattle in the Bennett Flat field are moved to the Winter Rim allotment by June 20th, where they are rotated through three pastures at 45% utilization.

## **JULY**

In July, cattle from the Currier allotment are rotated to the next pasture, and more yearlings are shipped to CNB. Regular moves are made at the Harris place to ensure fresh feed. By the end of the month, cattle at the Special Use mountain meadow are moved to the Watson place, and Winter Rim cattle are rotated to the next field.

## **AUGUST**

Replacement heifers are pregnancy-checked, with open heifers shipped to CNB. Haying is largely completed until the third cutting. Cattle from both the Currier and Winter Rim allotments are rotated to the final pastures. Pairs at the Harris place continue to be rotated to fresh feed. These pastures are highly productive but require close attention due to slowed regrowth. Early shipment of yearlings is prioritized to allow for regrowth to serve as fall feed for the main cow herd. August is also a time for infrastructure improvements, including rebuilding corrals. By the end of the month, bred replacements are moved to the County Road Field on the Game Commission. This area, designated for goose habitat improvement, is grazed to allow fresh grass to grow for migrating birds. In 2022, wolf activity in the Fremont pasture required increased monitoring of cattle in this area.

## **SEPTEMBER**

By mid-September, cattle from the forest allotments are gathered. Cattle from the Watson place are moved to join the Currier cattle and trailed home together. This process typically takes five days, with the majority of cattle returned by the 20th. Bulls are removed from the herd and placed on fall pasture. The remaining two weeks of the month are dedicated to re-riding the Currier allotment and gathering the Winter Rim allotment. The goal is to return all cattle to the ranch prior to hunting season to avoid potential conflicts with hunters. Approximately 450 cattle are moved to the Kelley field, a meadow and sagebrush area with a capacity of about 500 AUMs, while the remaining cattle are moved to the 80 field. Utilization of these fields is monitored based on stubble height.

## **OCTOBER**

By early October, all cattle have been processed. Open cows, culls, and older cattle are shipped to auction. Vaccinations are administered, and calves are weaned. Weaning occurs through an “across the fence” method, with calves held in the upper Hankins field while the cows are placed across the fence in the lower Hankins, Kelley, 80 field, and Harvey meadows. This method minimizes stress on the calves and reduces the need for antibiotics. Once weaning is completed, many cows are shipped to the Porter Ranch in Silver Lake to graze bunched hay.

Bred heifers are moved from the County Road field to the Harris place and will be trailed home to finish grazing the fields where the weaned calves were held.

## **NOVEMBER**

By late November, most fall feed has been consumed, and approximately 800 cattle are trailed to the Silver Lake bed (depending on feed availability), Harris place, and Summer Lake pivot. Additional smaller fields adjacent to the pivot are also grazed. These areas are critical for improving bird habitat by removing old forage and promoting fresh growth.

Cows that have just weaned their first calf and cows in poor condition remain at the ranch, utilizing the Cabin and Robinson fields as well as some of the Homestead and Paisley pivots.

By November 20th, weaned calves are moved to the feedlot and fed chopped hay. Pens are checked daily to ensure the health of the animals, and sick animals are treated as necessary. Antibiotics are used sparingly, and animals that receive antibiotics are tagged to prevent them from entering the CNB program.

## **DECEMBER**

In December, bred heifers are trailed back to the ranch and placed on hay. Bulls are also fed hay, and by mid-December, any remaining cows not at Summer Lake are fed hay in the 80 field. By Christmas, cattle at the Harris place are moved to the Summer Lake Game Commission for the winter, and cattle at the Summer Lake pivot utilize some smaller fields of the Game Commission. Severe winter weather may require additional hay provisions to ensure proper feeding during this time.

# SUMMARY

This report concludes a full grazing year for the cattle at Withers Ranch, a year marked by considerable time spent on horseback. This lifestyle is deeply enjoyed by each member of the Withers family, and our commitment to thoughtful management decisions remains at the heart of our operations. It is the shared goal of all family members and employees to continually enhance the ranch, ensuring that we leave it in as good, if not better, condition than when we first received it.

