



Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West

George Wuerthner, Mollie Matteson

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Welfare Ranching reveals the deplorable practices that are ripping apart the ecological fabric of the arid West, where subsidized livestock grazing occurs on more than 300 million acres of publicly owned land. The book offers a graphic look at the consequences of using taxpayer dollars to turn the West into a giant feedlot for cattle and sheep - the slaughter of predators, a growing number of endangered species, polluted rivers and streams, an increase in soil erosion, and weed invasion, to name just a few. Through dramatic photographs and scientifically supported essays, the book shows that wherever cattle are grazing at the public trough, severe and sometimes irreversible ecological damage results. Fauna of all kinds are extirpated, endangered, or driven to extinction; riparian zones are trampled and degraded; introductions of exotic grasses and foiled mitigation attempts abound. For years the true impacts of livestock grazing have gone unnoticed as the landscape has been altered slowly over time, making the changes difficult to discern. With more than 150 powerful photographs, Welfare Ranching vividly illustrates the difference between lands appropriated for livestock production and the spectacular deserts, grasslands and forests that have been protected from its shattering effects. Essays by leading scientists, historians, and economic and policy experts - including Edward Abbey, Joy Belsky, Carl Bock, John Carter, Thomas Fleischner, Terrence Frest, and T.H. Watkins - document the many costs of ranching on public lands. Welfare Ranching is testimony to an environmental tragedy but it is also an expression of hope that America's heritage of wild and vibrant western landscapes will be restored and renewed. It offers a clear path toward healing more than a century of reckless ranching in the arid West - towards a new West with a healthy and living landscape, the revival of extirpated species, and beautiful testimony to true human values.

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