

## VERNON BOSTICK

No, I never found any evidence that cattle are harmful to Desert Tortoise. In fact all the data that I've ever found indicates that cattle are beneficial to Desert Tortoise.

In fact it was at the very time that we had the greatest numbers of livestock on the ranges, in the drought years of the 1930's, that we had the greatest number of tortoise.

In study after study, out here on the Desert Sheep Range, on the Nevada Test Site, on the Beaver Dam Slope, wherever cattle have been removed desert tortoise numbers have declined.

Kristin Berry and a lot of other people would like to get cattle off the range. They make continuous claims that cattle are destroying tortoise habitat, but they have no scientific data to back up their claims. The truth is there were almost no desert tortoise throughout this region before settlement.

During the time I was researching the desert tortoise issue I spent several days at the University Library here in Las Vegas going through journal after journal and I couldn't find one pioneer account that even mentioned tortoises. Only in an account found by Karl Weikel was there mention of tortoise, and in that account, Henrich Mollhausen writing in 1854, said that in all of his travels he had never seen a live desert tortoise, that the only evidence of tortoise he had seen were shells at old Indian camps. It was his belief that the Indians had hunted the tortoise to near extinction.

The truth is, that the reason that the earliest accounts never mentioned Desert Tortoise was because those people never saw any.

No, Kristin Berry and a lot of other people would like to make everyone believe that man is destroying the tortoise, but if you challenge their source of information, you won't find sufficient data to support their accusations.

The truth is that it's not the public or the private sector that is destroying the Desert Tortoise but the government itself.

The tendency for people in government to suppress the truth is not new. It's been going on for some time.

I graduated from Colorado State University with a degree in Range Management in 1935. Then after spending a year teaching Forestry and Range Management at Washington State College I accepted a position with the Forest Service working in New Mexico and Arizona.

I spent a year in grazing surveys, two years in engineering surveys, then was Assistant Ranger for two years. Then with the help of Philip Woodhead, I was assigned to the research division doing range condition and trend studies under Ken Parker.

It was after I had been in research for five years that I was assigned to do research on the Kiabab.

I didn't fully understand what I was getting into at the time, but was warned by the head of Range Research that the people behind the study were prejudice and would not necessarily be interested in the facts, but hoped I would do an honest job.

