

## EDWIN R. "TED" RIGGS

Yes, I've seen Desert Tortoise eat cow pies. I've never seen them eat dry cow pies, but I've seen them eat a lot of fresh ones. They eat them for the moisture and their food value too.

Being a trapper, it was always my practice to stop every quarter mile or so and walk up a draw or wash to check for tracks and sign, so I had occasion to see those kinds of things.

Desert tortoise not only eat cow pies on dry years but they eat cow pies on good years too. The two best feed years I remember were 1949 and 1958. Of the two, 1949 was the best. That year the grass and Filigree were clear up above your knees everywhere, on the ridges and in the draws.

Indian Wheat was the most abundant plant found on the ridges, but, in the draws and washes it was Filigree. I remember stopping my pickup in a draw where the feed was so thick I couldn't get the pickup going again without first backing up to get a run at it.

The feed was just like an alfalfa field. Except for the trails they made, you couldn't even tell where the sheep had been. I had one herder told me that he hadn't had to take his sheep to water for three weeks (there being sufficient moisture in the vegetation to meet the needs of the animals).

When I first went to work as a trapper there on the Arizona Strip in 1945, there were 32 different outfits that wintered their sheep on the strip. I covered all the country from Lake Powell to Lake Mead, and from Kanab, Utah to the Southern tip of the Kaibab, a country 150 miles long and 85 miles wide.

It's a rough and isolated country, with very few people. There were periods when I'd never see another person for six or eight days at a time. Altogether I worked there for just two mouths less then 32 years. I really enjoyed it, I liked the country and I liked the people.

I was always welcome wherever I went. I could pull into any ranch or cow camp anytime and stay as long as necessary.

I'd trap the high country, the Kaibab, Mt. Trumbull, and the Virgin Maintains in the summer, then work my way down so I would have the low country to trap during the winter. We never put poison out in the same areas every year. We only used poison when the coyotes got ahead of our trapping.

It's unfair the way the government is putting people off the range these days. They say that the cattle and sheep have overgrazed and hurt the feed in this country, but if that were true, then why is it that the feed does so well on wet years?

It's a serious thing when government policy destroys people's livelihoods, particularly when such policy may not be backed by solid evidence. Just because it's the government that is making the decisions, doesn't mean that it's right, or that things will improve. In fact, in most instances government decisions make things worse. Take predator control as an example. Since the government began to discourage trapping and began systematically cutting back on predator control, we have lost nearly all of our deer, and we're losing our Mountain Sheep too.

