

**Ranchers and Landowners Association of Texas
September 2024 Article**

**Synopsis of an Article from Texas A&M Agrilife Extension
Reading Your Landscape:
Are your Pastures Healthy?**

Water has always been a major limiting factor on Texas rangelands. Every drought reminds us that forage production is not guaranteed every year and that property owners must be prepared for the inevitable forage shortfall even if livestock are properly stocked for the normal year.

While the amount and timing of rainfall are important, the productivity of rangeland is more closely tied to the amount of soil moisture captured when it rains and the presence of desirable plant species to use that moisture.

It is your *current and past* land management practices that determine how much rainfall penetrates the soil, the kinds of plants on your land, and the amount of runoff that take place.

It is your *current and future* land management practices that will determine the condition of the soil and the vegetation, and that can make the difference between capturing rainfall for the production of desirable rangeland plants or seeing your land erode and your forage disappear.

A certain amount of vegetative cover should be left ungrazed at all times. This is called the threshold residue. It varies with plant species, soil type and climate, and it determines the amount of rainfall captured and the potential for future grass production. Also, being able to identify the plants on your land is very important. Plants reflect the environment produced by your management and the natural climatic and soil factors of your property.

An important indicator of the health of your landscape is the soil surface itself. Large areas of bare ground, pedestaled plants, litter dams, rills and gullies are signs that rainfall is running off the land rather than having the desired effect of infiltrating the soil.

How Can You Maintain Healthy Range Resources? Know what is happening on your land. Learning to read your landscape will pay off in greater productivity now and sustainable productivity in the future

For more information and the full report on pasture health, go to:
<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>

[rangeland-watershed-management-for-texans-are-your-pastures-healthy.pdf](#)

