



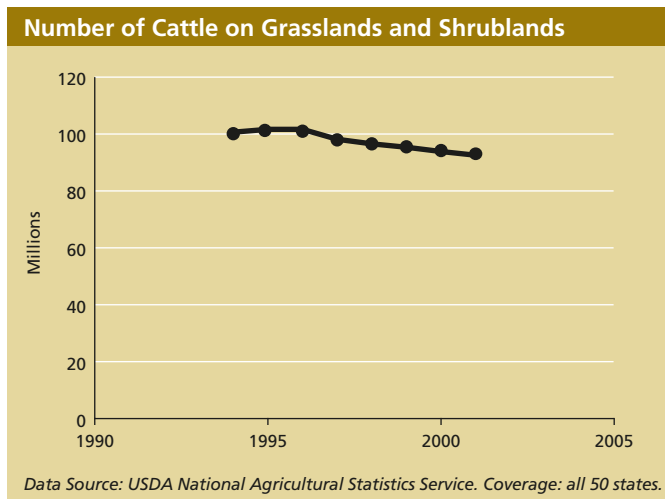
SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

● Production of Cattle

What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important? This indicator reports the number of cattle grazing on grasslands and shrublands (including pastures), rather than at feedlots, during July of each year.

Cattle are reported as an indicator of overall use of these lands for raising livestock. Cattle production is an important economic use of grasslands and shrublands and also remains an important part of the community identity of many parts of the country. Over 90% of beef cattle graze on grasslands and shrublands, at least during the summer months.

What Do the Data Show? The number of cattle on grasslands and shrublands declined from about 100 million in 1994 to 93 million in 2001.



Discussion The changes shown here may be part of a repeating pattern of roughly 10-year cycles that have occurred regularly since the 1880s. Alternatively, there are other data (also not shown here) suggesting that an historical peak in cattle production occurred in the mid-1970s, and that the national herd size has declined by about one-quarter since then. (These earlier data are not comparable to the numbers presented here, because they are based on January inventories, which are believed to underrepresent the number of cattle on grasslands and shrublands.)

July inventories of cattle grazing on grasslands and shrublands (including pastures) are believed to be the most representative of overall grazing use. While nearly all cattle spend some time in feedlots before slaughter, those that graze on grasslands or shrublands (including pastures) are likely to be in these areas during July. (Some cattle spend part of the summer in forests rather than on grasslands and shrublands, but their numbers are unknown. Finally, the distribution of cattle on public and private grasslands and shrublands may change over time for a variety of economic and policy reasons. In the future, tracking this split may be desirable.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 264.