In speaking of grasslands, both pasture and range are included. A pasture is defined generally as a small area used primarily for grazing, while a range is an extensive area used for the same purpose. In most cases, pastures are fenced, while a large part of the range land is not. While most of the range land is in the West, there are extensive areas of range land in the Gulf and South Atlantic States. An additional distinction may be made in that pastures have consisted of deeded land and were used exclusively by one operator, while ranges have included both public and private land often used in common, by two or more operators. Previous to the time that federal legislation was passed in 1885 to prohibit the fencing of public domain, there was a rather extensive movement by stockmen to fence such land. The ownership of water on the western range, obtained through the homesteading of land adjacent to springs and along water courses, has enabled stockmen in many cases to exercise control of open range land without the use of fence.

The gradual increase in private land ownership in the West to the point where practically fifty per cent of the land is privately owned, the provision for individual allotments and occasional fencing on the National Forests, and the grazing districts set up under the Taylor Grazing Act being administered by the Department of the interior, have put an end to use in common on most of the better grazing land in the West. Under the administration of the Taylor Grazing Act, the public domain is allotted to individual operators who have commensurate facilities for livestock production, and they are allowed to fence these allotments to confine their own stock and keep out trespassing stock.

In a recent publication of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station (1), reference is made to large areas of Grades 4 and 5 grazing land in eastern Montana on which the carrying capacity is so low that fencing and developing water and other improvements on the basis of township units cannot be economically justified. While such areas may remain open range, they should be operated on a pasture basis through establishment of grazing districts, exclusion of stock owned by non-members, Natural boundaries, drift fences, and natural boundaries, drift fences, and natural boundaries, drift fences, and range riding must be depended upon for the enforcement of such exclusive use. As a result of the development of the agricultural conservation program, and the necessity for distinguishing between conservation practices on improved pasture land in the humid area of the East, and practices which can be justified on grazing land of lower carrying capacity in the West, it has become necessary to make definite specifications for range land. Consequently, the Secretary of Agriculture has ruled that grazing land considered as range where its carrying capacity is such that ten acres or more are necessary to carry one head of cattle, or the equivalent in small stock units, for a period of twelve months or the equivalent in shorter season grazing. According to this definition, the range area includes much of the Great Plains which has been divided in and the pastures fenced for one or more generations.

Fully thirty-seven per cent of the total area of the United States is grassland (2). This figure does not include woodlands or woodland pastures on public or private owned forests which are used for grazing. If such areas were included, one finds that grazing is an important land use for fifty-five per cent of the land of the country. This does not include the use of cropland for grazing, but application of the principles of agricultural conservation is limited to perennial grassland and woodland areas used for this purpose. This agricultural land used for grazing, which is two and one-half times as large as the area of cropland in the country, supplies practically fifty per cent of the feed requirements of all livestock. Obviously, the other fifty per cent of livestock feed requirements obtained from cropland, the equivalent seventy per cent of the cropland area being used for grazing. 

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