

Local Perceptions of Livestock Husbandry and Rangeland Degradation in the Highlands of South Africa: Implication for Development Interventions

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ABSTRACT This study assessed communal farmers' perceptions of livestock husbandry and rangeland degradation in the highland areas of South Africa. Sixty households and 30 elders were interviewed individually and as a group, respectively. Cattle are primarily kept for cash generation, goats for cultural ceremonies, sheep equally for cash, meat and wool production, and chicken for meat consumption. Elderly people ranked shortage of feed and grazing, rangeland degradation and water scarcity as the primary constraints of livestock production. Changes in species composition, gully erosion, bare patch frequency and *Euryops floribundus* invasion were perceived as the main indicators of degradation. Elders also grouped consequences of rangeland degradation into direct effects on animals such as hair loss, weight loss and the long distance travelled by animals for foraging, and into indirect effects such as poverty, migration, less marketable animals and stock theft. Community-based rangeland and livestock development aimed at conservation, management and restoration of resources, while maintaining an assemblage of livestock species, is recommended.