

## Rangeland

**Estimated Time:** ~15-20 minutes

**Age Range:** 7+

**What You Need:** paper, pencil

Have you ever explored the **rangelands** of Nevada? The Great Basin grasslands are home to many species! Out in our rangelands, you can expect to find native species such as sage grouse and sage brush, and invasive species such as wild horses and cheat grass.

### New Words

**Rangelands:** open land used for grazing or hunting animals

**Invasive Species:** species that are not native (not originally from) a specific area

**Native Species:** species that normally live in a specific area or ecosystem

**Ecosystem:** living and non-living organisms within a specific area that all interact

**Organisms:** a living thing made up of one or more cells



**Sage grouse:** The Great Basin is home to sage grouse, a large, rounded-winged, ground dwelling bird that depends on the sagebrush for food and shelter. To survive and flourish, the sage grouse need expansive sagebrush habitat and water from wetlands and natural springs. The sage grouse are famous for their mating dance. Protecting rangeland habitat, reducing invasive grasses, and controlling rangeland fire are important for the future of the sage grouse.

### Invasive species:

Invasive species, non-native species, are a major threat to sage grouse habitat loss.

- **Cheat grass:** is especially linked to unwanted wildfires.



- **Wild horses:** which first appeared during the late 1800's, roam the rangeland across Nevada at a number much greater than is good for the land.



**Public grazing:** is the use of public rangeland by domestic livestock that include cattle, goats, and sheep. Livestock grazing provides economic and social benefits to Nevada communities.



**Questions:**



What is happening to the home of the sage grouse?

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How could public grazing reduce wildfire risk?

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What invasive species is linked to unwanted wildfires?

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Why are horses considered an invasive species?

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**Explanation (The science behind it!):**

Federal agencies (including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service) are working together to protect sage grouse habitat from invasive species (wild horses and cheat grass) by effectively managing improper public grazing. Improper grazing refers to land being further degraded as a result of overgrazing. For example, if a rancher hunts or kills predators on the land, livestock (such as cows) are no longer needing to bunch together in tight herds for protection. Without predators (such as wild horses), they have little reason to move and thus do not give the land rest. In addition to land degradation, wildfire is one of the greatest threats to rangeland habitat. When sagebrush burns hot, it is hard to restore, leaving room for invasive and noxious weeds to move in. This degrades rangelands and wildlife habitat. When land is managed in a way that reintroduces natural herding patterns, land will thrive and recover from abuse and desertification.