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Audit examines Douglas Lake Cattle Company range practices

MERRITT – The Forest Practices Board audited Douglas Lake Cattle Company’s 217,556-hectare range agreement near Merritt, one of the largest grazing tenures in British Columbia.

Auditors examined planning and practices under the agreement between August 2022 and August 2024, assessing 24 pastures for compliance with the Forest and Range Practices Act and Range Planning and Practices Regulation.

The audit found that the company complied with many requirements in the 24 pastures examined, such as protecting fish habitat and water quality, meeting stubble height standards and maintaining upland areas, which make up more than 90% of the agreement area. At the same time, auditors also found localized problems.

“This audit confirms that most practices on this tenure met legal requirements,” said Gerry Grant, vice-chair, Forest Practices Board. “It also highlights shortcomings in protecting riparian areas and species-at-risk habitat.”

The report identifies three areas of significant non-compliance:

- **Riparian areas:** About 6.7 kilometres of riparian area around nine wetlands were in not-functional conditions due to livestock use.
- **General wildlife measures:** One wetland within a designated wildlife habitat area for Great Basin spadefoot toad suffered extensive damage from livestock use.
- **Range-use plan requirements:** The company did not fully comply with range-use plan actions intended to protect riparian area and aquatic habitat for Great Basin spadefoot toad in two pastures.

In addition, auditors noted areas requiring improvement, including occasional grazing outside approved schedules and some fence maintenance issues. These were limited in scope and did not result in impacts to range resources.

The range agreement area is within the territories of 19 First Nations. These Indigenous people have been stewards of the land since time immemorial, and the Forest Practices Board recognizes their deep connection with the land that continues to this day.

Learn more:

To read the full report, visit: <https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/audit-douglas-lake-cattle-company-ran076915>

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