Farmers in the southern communal areas of Namibia raised their concern that the reproduction, growth and health of their livestock were poor. Through discussions between the farmers and the Farming Systems Research and Extension team of the Hardap Region, and through observations, a number of causes were identified for this particular problem. The lack of vegetation, poor veld condition and the seasonal shortage of fodder were identified as the most hampering factors in livestock production in this Region.

In commercial farming management the implementation of rotation and the resting of veld is a common practice, but this is not the situation in communal farm management. Some problems associated with this lack of pasture management, were identified:

- Farmers do not acknowledge the importance of rangeland management.
- There is a lack of knowledge of the potential of the rangeland in these areas.

Seven demonstration camps were established in the Hardap Region and the information gathered from these camps will be used to assist farmers with finding solutions for better pasture management.

**OBJECTIVES**

These demonstration camps will be used to:

- Monitor the recovery of the veld under controlled circumstances.
- Identify plant species that occur naturally in these areas.
- Measure the rainfall for the Hardap Region.
- Disseminate information through the training of farmers.

**METHOD**

Four unrelated sites with seven camps were identified for annual evaluation (during June to August) over a period of ten years or longer. Livestock are not permitted in the camps.

The following data is collected:

- Ground cover - both basal and canopy covers are determined.
- Botanical composition - plant species are identified with a veld condition point survey - 300 points per transect, with a radius of 50 cm at each point.
- Bio-mass - determined by cutting 40 quadrants in each of the seven camps on the four sites, always in the same direction.
- Pictures of the camps - taken at fixed marked spots to be able to compare the years.
- Rainfall measurements - recorded throughout the year, starting from 1 July to 30 June.
- Any other interesting observations are also recorded.
At Hatzium I, both annual and perennial grasses increased over the four-year period. During that time, the veld was rested (excluded from grazing).

The recovery of the veld in both these demonstration camps (see pictures) is a result of a purposeful resting period for seedling establishment and growth. In communal areas, this can be achieved through herding of livestock in open access areas. Resting of veld should be for specific reasons based on plant requirements.

Authors: Chrisjan van Lill & Yanka Agenbach, Hardap Research Office, P.O. Box 464, Mariental, Namibia, Telephone 063-240389.
Bartie Burger, Hardap Extension Office, P.O. Box 275, Mariental, Namibia, Telephone 063-242197.
Editor: Andrea van Niekerk, Private Bag 13184, Windhoek, Namibia, Telephone 061-2087013, niekerka@mawrd.gov.na