

Identify the Grazer

Grazing behavior (what and how animals eat) varies by species. Herbivores can be browsers, intermediate feeders (“nibblers”), or roughage feeders (“grazers”). Goats are the typical browsers of domestic livestock on rangelands, and consume shrubs, trees, and other woody plants. Deer also eat mostly shrubs like Bitterbrush and Curleaf Mountainmahogany. Although sheep may also browse on woody plants, they prefer eating forbs. Sheep and pronghorn antelope eat mostly forbs in the spring and summer, and coming winter rely on nutrition from shrubs such as Shadscale Saltbrush and Big Sagebrush to fill their rumens. On the other hand, cattle typically consume mostly grasses, but may browse on some available forbs or woody plants that they consider palatable. Grasses such as Mountain Brome, Timothy, Sandberg Bluegrass, Idaho Fescue, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Great Basin Wildrye, Needle-and-Thread, Crested Wheatgrass, and Bottlebrush Squirreltail provide nutritious diets for cattle and other grazing animals like elk. Any animal foraging on rangelands must use caution and learn what plants cannot be eaten to avoid poisoning.

Look at the list of some herbivores and from your knowledge of their forage habits. See if you can identify whether each animal is a grazer (G), intermediate feeder (N), or browser (B).

- _____ cattle
- _____ elk
- _____ muledeer
- _____ jack rabbits
- _____ wild horses
- _____ sagegrouse
- _____ prairie dogs
- _____ domestic sheep
- _____ pronghorn antelope