

Pastoralists in the modern world



"Nomadic pastoralists are people who do not live in one place. So they move from place to place looking for fresh pastures since their main occupation is cattle rearing. In this chapter you will read about different communities of pastoralists."

13.1 In the mountains

Even today the Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir are great herders of goat and sheep. They established themselves in the area, and moved annually between their summer and winter grazing grounds. In winter, when the high mountains were covered with snow, they lived with their herds in the low hills of the Siwalik range. The dry scrub forests here provided pasture for their herds. By the end of April they began their northern march for their summer grazing grounds. Several households came together for this journey, forming what is known as a *kafila*. They crossed the Pir Panjal passes and entered the valley of Kashmir. By end of September the Bakarwals were on the move again, this time on their downward journey, back to their winter base.

The Gaddi shepherds of Himachal Pradesh spent their winter in the low hills of Siwalik range, grazing their flocks in scrub forests. By April they moved north and spent the summer in Lahul and Spiti. When the snow melted and the high passes were clear, many of them moved on to higher mountain meadows. By September they began their return movement. On the way they stopped once again in the villages of Lahul and Spiti, reaping their summer harvest and sowing their winter crop. Then they descended with their flock to their winter grazing ground on the Siwalik hills.

The Gujjar cattle herders in Garhwal and Kumaon came down to the dry forests of the *bhabar* in the winter, and went up to the high meadows - the *bugyals* - in summer. Many of them were originally from Jammu and came to the UP hills in the nineteenth century in search of good pastures.

Many pastoral communities of the Himalayas, including the Bhotiyas, Sherpas and Kinnauris had to adjust to seasonal changes and make effective use of available pastures in different places. When the pasture was exhausted or unusable in one place they moved their herds and flock to new areas.

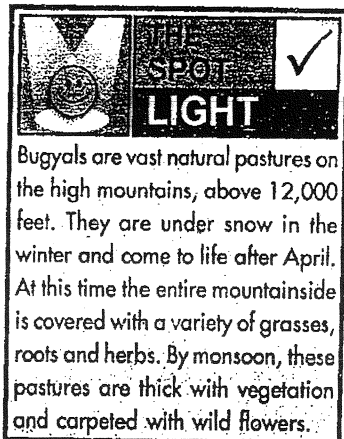




Fig.1 A Gujar Mandap on the high mountains in central Garhwal.



The Gujar cattle herders live in these mandaps made of ringal, a hill bamboo and grass from the Bugyal. A mandap was also a work place. Here the Gujar used to make ghee which they took down for sale. In recent years they have begun to transport the milk directly in buses and trucks. These mandaps are at about 10,000 to 11,000 feet. Buffaloes cannot climb any higher.

13.2 On the plateaus, plains and deserts

Dhangars of Maharashtra, most of them were shepherds, some were blanket weavers, and still others were buffalo herders. The Dhangar shepherds stayed in the central plateau of Maharashtra during the monsoon. A semi-arid region with low rainfall and poor soil. It was covered with thorny scrub. Nothing but dry crops like bajra could be sown here. In the monsoon this tract became a vast grazing ground for the Dhangar flocks. By October the Dhangars harvested their bajra and started on their move west. After a march of about a month they reached the Konkan. This was a flourishing agricultural tract with high rainfall and rich soil. Here the shepherds were welcomed by Konkani peasants. Dhangar flocks manured the fields and fed on the stubble. The Konkani peasants also gave supplies of rice which the shepherds took back to the plateau where grain was scarce. With the onset of the monsoon the Dhangars left the Konkan and the coastal areas with their flocks and returned to their settlements on the dry plateau.

In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the Gollas herded cattle, Kurumas and Kurubas reared sheep and goats and sold woven blankets. They lived near the woods, cultivated small patches of land, engaged in a variety of petty trades and took care of their herds. Unlike the mountain pastoralists, it was not the cold and the snow that defined the seasonal rhythms of their movement: rather it was the alternation of the monsoon and dry season. In the dry season they moved to the coastal tracts, and left when the rains came. Only buffaloes liked the swampy, wet conditions of the coastal areas during the monsoon months.

Banjaras were found in the villages of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In search of good pastureland for their cattle, they moved over long distances, selling plough cattle and other goods to villagers in exchange for grain and fodder.

13.3 Colonial Rule and Pastoral life

Under colonial rule, the life of pastoralists changed dramatically. Their grazing grounds shrank, their movements were regulated and they had to pay more revenue. Their agricultural stock declined and their trade and crafts were adversely affected.

Wasteland Rules were enacted in various parts of the country. By these rules uncultivated land was taken over and given to select individuals. In most areas the lands taken over were actually grazing tracts used regularly by pastoralists. So expansion of cultivation inevitably meant decline of pastures and a problem for pastoralists.

Forests Acts were enacted to protect and preserve forests for timber which was of commercial importance. These acts changed the life of pastoralists. They were now prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle. They were issued permits which monitored their entry and exit into forests. They could not stay in the forests as much as they liked because the permit specified the number of days and hours they could spend in the forests. The permit ruled their lives.

Criminal Tribes Act - The colonial government wanted to rule over a settled population.

They wanted the rural population to live a settled life in villages. People who moved from place to place were looked upon with suspicion and regarded as criminals. The Criminal Tribes Act was passed in 1871 by which many nomadic communities were declared as criminal tribes. They were supposed to be criminal by nature and birth. Once this Act came into force, these communities were expected to live in notified village settlements. They were not allowed to move out without permits. The village police kept a continuous watch on them.

Grazing Tax was imposed by the colonial government to expand its revenue income.

Pastoralists had to pay a tax on every animal they grazed on the pastures. This right was now auctioned out to contractors. They extracted as high a tax as they could, to recover the money they had paid to the state and earn as much profit as they could. Later the government itself started collecting taxes. This created problems for the pastoralists who were harassed by tax collectors. It also became an economic burden on them.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 13.1

1. How did these changes affect the lives of pastoralists?
2. How did the pastoralists cope with these changes?
3. Where have the grazing lands gone?

13.4 Pastoralism in Africa

Pastoralists in Africa include communities like Bedouins, Berbers, Maasai, Somali, Boran and Turkana. Most of them now live in the semi-arid grasslands or arid deserts where rainfed agriculture is difficult. They raise cattle, camels, goats, sheep and donkeys; and they sell milk, meat, animal skin and wool. Some also earn through trade and transport, others combine pastoral activity with agriculture; still others do a variety of odd jobs to supplement their meagre and uncertain earnings from pastoralism.

One pastoral community - the Maasai - live primarily in east Africa: 300,000 in southern Kenya and another 150,000 in Tanzania. The new laws and regulations took away their land and restricted their movement. This affected their lives in times of drought and even reshaped their social relationships.

(a) The borders are closed

From the late nineteenth century, the colonial government began imposing various restrictions on their mobility.

Pastoral groups were forced to live within the confines of special reserves. They were not allowed to move out with their stock without special permits. And it was difficult to get permits without trouble and harassment. Those found guilty of disobeying the rules were severely punished.

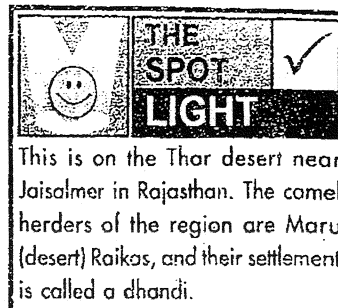
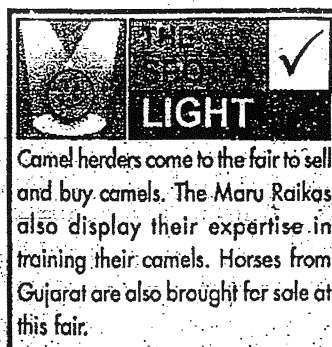


Fig.2 A camel herder in his settlement.



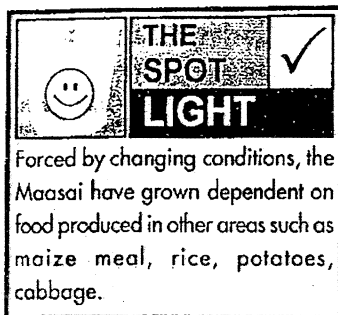
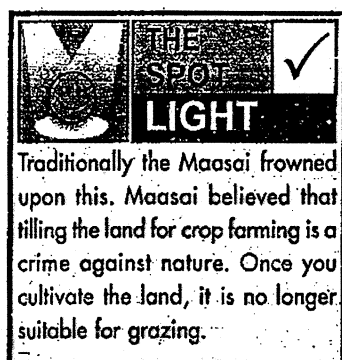


Fig.3 A view of Maasai land with Kilimanjaro in the background.



Pastoralists were also not allowed to enter the markets in white areas. In many regions, they were prohibited from participating in any form of trade. White settlers and European colonists saw pastoralists as dangerous and savage - people with whom all contact had to be minimised.

The new territorial boundaries and restrictions imposed on them suddenly changed the lives of pastoralists. This adversely affected both their pastoral and trading activities. Earlier, pastoralists not only looked after animal herds but traded in various products. The restrictions under colonial rule did not entirely stop their trading activities but they were now subject to various restrictions.

(b) When pastures dry

Drought affects the life of pastoralists everywhere. When rains fail and pastures are dry, cattle are likely to starve unless they can be moved to areas where forage is available. That is why, traditionally, pastoralists are nomadic; they move from place to place. This nomadism allows them to survive bad times and avoid crises.

But from the colonial period, the Maasai were bound down to a fixed area, confined within a reserve, and prohibited from moving in search of pastures. They were cut off from the best grazing lands and forced to live within a semi-arid tract prone to frequent droughts. Since they could not shift their cattle to places where pastures were available, large numbers of Maasai cattle died of starvation and disease in these years of drought. An enquiry in 1930 showed that the Maasai in Kenya possessed 720,000 cattle, 820,000 sheep and 171,000 donkeys. In just two years of severe drought, 1933 and 1934, over half the cattle in the Maasai Reserve died.

As the area of grazing lands shrank, the adverse effect of the droughts increased in intensity. The frequent bad years led to a steady decline of the animal stock of the pastoralists.

(c) Not all were equally affected

In pre-colonial times Maasai society was divided into two social categories - elders and warriors. The elders formed the ruling group and met in periodic councils to decide on the affairs of the community and settle disputes. The warriors consisted of younger people, mainly responsible for the protection of the tribe. They defended the community and organised cattle raids. Young men came to be recognised as members of the warrior class when they proved their manliness by raiding the cattle of other pastoral groups and participating in wars.

They appointed chiefs of different sub-groups of Maasai, who were made responsible for the affairs of the tribe. The British imposed various restrictions on raiding and warfare. Consequently, the traditional authority of both elders and warriors was adversely affected.

The chiefs appointed by the colonial government often accumulated wealth over time. They had a regular income with which they could buy animals, goods and land. They lent money to poor neighbours who needed cash to pay taxes. Many of them began living in towns, and became involved in trade. These chiefs managed to survive the devastations of war and drought.

The poor pastoralists did not have the resources to tide over bad times. In times of war and famine, they lost nearly everything. They had to go looking for work in the towns. Some eked out a living as charcoal burners, others did odd jobs.

The social changes in Maasai society occurred at two levels. First, the traditional difference based on age, between the elders and warriors, was disturbed, though it did not break down entirely. Second, a new distinction between the wealthy and poor pastoralists developed.

13.4 Conclusion

So we see that pastoral communities in different parts of the world are affected in a variety of different ways by changes in the modern world. New laws and new borders affect the patterns of their movement. With increasing restrictions on their mobility, pastoralists find it difficult to move in search of pastures. As pasture lands disappear grazing becomes a problem, while pastures that remain deteriorate through continuous over grazing. Times of drought become times of crises, when cattle die in large numbers.

Yet, pastoralists do adapt to new times. They change the paths of their annual movement, reduce their cattle numbers, press for rights to enter new areas, exert political pressure on the government for relief, subsidy and other forms of support and demand a right in the management of forests and water resources.

Environmentalists and economists have increasingly come to recognise that pastoral nomadism is a form of life that is perfectly suited to many hilly and dry regions of the world.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 13.1

1. These measures led to a serious shortage of pastures. The available area of pastureland declined. Similarly, the reservation of forests meant that shepherds and cattle herders could no longer freely pasture their cattle in the forests.

The existing animal stock had to feed on whatever grazing land remained. This led to continuous intensive grazing of these pastures. When restrictions were imposed on pastoral movements, grazing lands came to be continuously used and the quality of pastures declined. This in turn created a further shortage of forage for animals and the deterioration of animal stock. Underfed cattle died in large numbers during scarcities and famines.

Some reduced the number of cattle in their herds, since there was not enough pasture to feed large numbers. Others discovered new pastures when movement to old grazing grounds became difficult. After 1947, the camel and sheep herding Raikas, for instance, could no longer move into Sindh and graze their camels on the banks of the Indus, as they had done earlier. The new political boundaries between India and Pakistan stopped their movement. So they had to find new places to go.

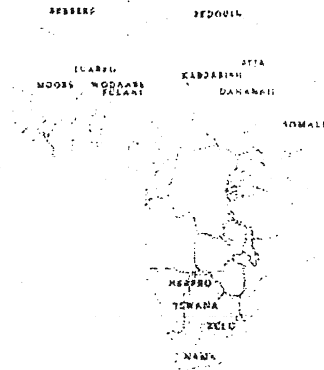




Fig.4 Pastoral communities in Africa.



**THE
SPOTLIGHT**



On Tanganyika Britain conquered what had been German East Africa during the First World War. In 1919 Tanganyika came under British control. It attained independence in 1961 and united with Zanzibar to form Tanzania in 1964.



The title Maasai derives from the word Maa. Maa-sai means 'My People'. The Maasai are traditionally nomadic and pastoral people who depend on milk and meat for subsistence. High temperatures combine with low rainfall to create conditions which are dry, dusty, and extremely hot.

2. Over the years, some richer pastoralists began buying land and settling down, giving up their nomadic life. Some became settled peasants cultivating land, others took to more extensive trading. Many poor pastoralists, on the other hand, borrowed money from moneylenders to survive. At times they lost their cattle and sheep and became labourers, working on fields or in small towns.

When pasturelands in one place was closed to them, they changed the direction of their movement, reduced the size of the herd, combined pastoral activity with other forms of income and adapted to the changes in the modern world.

3. Maasailand stretched over a vast area from north Kenya to the steppes of northern Tanzania. In the late nineteenth century, European imperial powers scrambled for territorial possessions in Africa, slicing up the region into different colonies. In 1885, Maasailand was cut into half with an international boundary between British Kenya and German Tanganyika. Subsequently, the best grazing lands were gradually taken over for white settlement and the Maasai were pushed into a small area in south Kenya and north Tanzania. They were confined to an arid zone with uncertain rainfall and poor pastures.

From the late nineteenth century, the British colonial government in east Africa also encouraged local peasant communities to expand cultivation. As cultivation expanded, pasturelands were turned into cultivated fields.

Large areas of grazing land were also turned into game reserves like the Maasai Mara and Samburu National Park in Kenya and Serengeti Park in Tanzania. Very often these reserves were in areas that had traditionally been regular grazing grounds for Maasai herds.

The loss of the finest grazing lands and water resources created pressure on the small area of land that the Maasai were confined within. Continuous grazing within a small area inevitably meant a deterioration of the quality of pastures. Fodder was always in short supply. Feeding the cattle became a persistent problem.

EXERCISE # 1

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Multiple choice questions

1. Nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another because of _____.
(1) seasonal changes
(2) their mobile nature
(3) their poor background
(4) all of the above
2. Dhangars are an important pastoral community of which state?
(1) Himachal Pradesh (2) Maharashtra
(3) Jammu and Kashmir (4) Rajasthan
3. The life of pastoralists greatly changed under colonial rule. What are these changes?
(1) their grazing grounds shrank
(2) their movements were regulated
(3) they had to pay increased revenue
(4) all the above
4. When was the Criminal Tribes Act passed?
(1) 1889 (2) 1871 (3) 1878 (4) 1870
5. Why did the colonial government introduce the grazing tax in the mid 19th century?
(1) to expand its revenue
(2) to ban cattle herder from entering grazing tracts
(3) both (1) and (2)
(4) none of these
6. How many people in Africa are dependent on some form of pastoral activity for their livelihood?
(1) less than 22 million
(2) over 22 million
(3) Over 12 million
(4) less than 12 million
7. What percentage of the grazing lands did massai lose when European imperial powers divided Africa into different colonies?
(1) 50% (2) 49% (3) 80% (4) 60%
8. The word massai means
(1) my people (2) mother and people
(3) their people (4) tribal people
9. Which one of the following pastoral nomads is not found in the mountains?
(1) gaddi shepherds (2) raikas
(3) gujjar bakarwals (4) bhotiyas
10. The settlement of maru raikas is known as
(1) dhandi (2) mandi
(3) mandap (4) bugyal
11. Pushkar is famous place in rajasthan where _____ is held every year.
(1) elephant fair (2) cattle fair
(3) buffalo fair (4) camel fair
12. The massai cattle herders live primarily in _____.
(1) east Africa (2) west Africa
(3) south Africa (4) north Africa
13. Waste land rules were enacted by the colonial officials in order to _____.
(1) harass the pastoral in india
(2) uplift the condition of Indian pastoralist
(3) turn the uncultivated lands into cultivable lands
(4) turn cultivable land into forest
14. When did European imperial powers divide Africa into different colonies?
(1) 1805 (2) 1882
(3) 1885 (4) 1815
15. The waste land rule completely changed the life of the _____.
(1) pastoralists (2) communist
(3) peasant (4) nobles
16. Forest having commercially valuable wood are termed as _____.
(1) protected (2) village
(3) reserved (4) none of these
17. Over half of the world's pastoral population lives in _____.
(1) India (2) Africa
(3) Somalia (4) Bali
18. Which community lives in Africa
(1) berbers (2) maasai
(3) bakarwals (4) both (1) and (2)
19. Samburu National Park is in _____.
(1) Tanzania (2) South America
(3) Kenya (4) Taiwan
20. Serengeti National Park lie in _____.
(1) Tanzania (2) South America
(3) Kenya (4) Taiwan

True or false

1. The Kurumas lived in Karnataka.
2. Banjaras were found in the villages of MP.
3. Customary rights are those rights that are used by people as custom and tradition.
4. In 1871, the criminal tribes act was passed.
5. The gujar bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir were herders of camel.
6. The maasai mara is a national park in Tanzania.

Fill in the blanks

1. The gujar cattle herders came down to the dry forest of the _____ in the winter.
2. _____ were found in the central plateau of Maharashtra.
3. _____ a well known groups of graziers were found in the villages of UP.

4. The _____ cattle herders live primarily in east Africa.
5. _____ people don't live on one place and wander from one place to other.
6. _____ is a spring crop usually harvested after march.

Match the column

Column-I		Column-II	
(1)	Dhangars	(a)	great herders of goat and sheep
(2)	gujar bakarwals	(b)	found in the central plateau of maharashtra
(3)	banjaras	(c)	herded camel and are found in rajasthan
(4)	Ralkas	(d)	a well known group of graziers found in UP
(5)	massai	(e)	lived primarily in east Africa

EXERCISE # 1

ANSWER KEY FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Multiple choice questions

Ans.	1	2	4	2	1	2	4	1	2	1	4	1	3	3	1	3	2	4	3	1
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True or false

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. False

Fill in the blanks

1. bhabar
2. Dhangars
3. Banjaras
4. massal
5. massal
6. rabi

Match the column

1. (1) → b ; (2) → a ; (3) → d ; (4) → c ; (5) → e

EXERCISE # 2**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT****Short answer type questions**

1. Who were berbers ?
2. Name the pastoralist who lived in the plateaus of India ?
3. Who were the raikas and where they lived?
4. What are the customary rights?
5. What duties was assigned to the warriors?
6. Give a brief account of the gaddi shepherds of Himachal Pradesh?
7. Explain why nomadic people need to move from one area to another.
8. Why were the pastoralist not allowed to enter the markets in white areas?
9. Distinguish between the reserved and protected forest.

Long answer type questions

1. How did various forest acts affect the lives of Indian pastoralist?
2. What happened to the animal stock when pasture lands were turned into cultivated lands?
3. How did the waste land rules change the life of the pastoralist?
4. Where were the raikas found? Write briefly about thire way of living.
5. What restrictions were imposed by the colonial rule on the african pastoralist?
6. Write a brief note on the pastoralism in Africa?
7. Write briefly about the pastoral nomad found in different parts of india?
8. What was the impact of frequent droughts on the pasture lands of the massai community?

NCERT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Explain why nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another. What are the advantages to the environment of this continuous movement?

Ans. Nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another to adjust to seasonal changes and make effective use of available pastures in different places. This pattern of cyclical movement between summer and winter pastures is typical of many pastoral communities of the Himalayas, including the Bhotias, Sherpas and Kinnauris. When the pastures were exhausted or unusable in one place they move with their flock to new areas. This continuous movement also allowed the pastures to recover, it prevented their overuse.

2. Discuss why the colonial government in India brought in the following laws. In case, explain how the law changed the lives of pastoralists :

(a) Wasteland rules (b) Forest acts (c) Criminal tribes act (d) Grazing tax

Ans. (a) Wasteland Rules : Were enacted in various parts of the country. By these rules uncultivated land was taken over and given to selected individuals. In most areas the lands taken over were actually grazing tracts used regularly by pastoralists. So expansion of cultivation inevitably meant decline of pastures and a problem for pastoralists.

(b) Forests acts : Were enacted to protect and preserve forests for timber which was of commercial importance. These acts changed the life of pastoralists. They were now prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle. They were issued permits which monitored their entry and exit into forests. They could not stay in the forests as much as they liked because the permit specified the number of days and hours they could spend in the forests. The permit ruled their lives.

(c) Criminal tribes act :- The colonial government wanted to rule over a settled population. They wanted the rural population to live a settled life in villages. People who moved from place to place were looked upon with suspicion and regraded as criminals. The criminal tribes act was passed in 1871 by which many nomadic communities were declared as criminal tribes. They were supposed to be criminal by nature and birth. Once this act came into force, these communities were expected to live in notified village settlements. They were not allowed to move out without permits. The village police kept a continuous watch on them.

(d) Grazing tax : Was imposed by the colonial government to expand its revenue income. Pastoralists had to pay a tax on every animal they grazed on the pastures. This right was now auctioned out to contractors. They extracted as high a tax as they could, to recover the money they had paid to the state and earn as much profit as they could. Later the government itself started collecting taxes. This created problems for the pastoralists who were harassed by tax collectors. It also became an economic burden on them.

3. Give reasons to explain why the Maasai community lost their grazing lands.

Ans. The Maasais lost their grazing lands due to the following reasons :

(a) In 1885, Maasailand was cut into half with an international boundary between the British Kenya and German Tanganyika. The best grazing lands were gradually taken over for white settlement. The Maasai lost 60% of their pre-colonial lands.

(b) From the late 18th century, the British colonial government in East Africa also encouraged local peasant communities to expand cultivation. As cultivation expanded, pasture lands were turned into cultivated fields.

(c) Large areas of grazing land were also turned into game reserves like the Maasai Mara and Samburu National Park in Kenya. Pastoralists were not allowed to enter these reserves. Very often these reserves were in areas that had traditionally been regular grazing grounds for Maasai herds. The loss of the finest grazing lands and water resources created pressure on the small area of land that the Maasai were confined within.

4. There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Write about any two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders.

Ans. There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Here are two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders.

- (a) All uncultivated land was seen as wasteland by colonial powers. It produced neither revenue nor agricultural produce. This land was brought under cultivation. In most areas the lands taken over were actually grazing tracts used regularly by pastoralists, so expansion of cultivation inevitably meant the decline of pastures and a problem both for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai.
 - (b) From the 19th century onwards, the colonial government started imposing restrictions on the pastoral communities. They were issued permits which allowed them to move out with their stock and it was difficult to get permits without trouble and harassment. Those found guilty of disobeying the rules were severely punished.
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Important Notes

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