Southeast Ranching Area

The southeast ranching area consists of rolling plains, grasslands, and semiarid tablelands across eastern and southeastern New Mexico. It encompasses all of Eddy, Chaves, Lea, and Roosevelt counties and portions of Otero, Lincoln, De Baca, and Curry counties.

Much of the region falls within the High Plains (Ecoregion 25), Southwestern Tablelands (Ecoregion 26), and Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands (Ecoregion 24) identified in the New Mexico ecoregion classification system. The landscape is characterized by broad plains, sandy soils, scattered mesas, and gently dissected rangelands. Elevations generally range from 3,000 to 5,000 feet, with precipitation averaging approximately 10 to 14 inches annually depending on location and elevation. Most rainfall occurs during the summer monsoon season from July through September.

Native vegetation includes blue grama, black grama, sideoats grama, alkali sacaton, tobosa, and galleta grasses. In some areas, shrub encroachment from mesquite, broom snakeweed, yucca, and cholla cactus has increased due to long-term drought, grazing pressure, and changing climatic conditions.

The region supports extensive livestock grazing operations on private, state trust, and federal lands. Carrying capacity varies considerably depending on rainfall, soil type, and forage availability, with average stocking rates commonly ranging from 5 to 8 AUY per section.

Oil and gas production, particularly within the Permian Basin, is also an important land use in parts of the southeast region alongside cattle ranching