



California Wool Growers Association

Unifying the voice of the California Sheep Industry since 1860

Herd the News

January 2016

The mission of the California Wool Growers Association is to be the voice of the California Sheep Industry at the local, regional, state, and national level. The Association will provide service to its members through effective communication that ensures the long-term prosperity of the industry and promotes economically viable and environmentally sound production practices.

CWGA Recipient of ASI Let's Grow Grant

In December, the American Sheep Industry's Let's Grow Committee awarded CWGA one of 15 grants funded as part of infusing more than \$200,000 back into the American sheep industry to improve productivity efficiencies. CWGA's grant entitled *Improving Sheep Carcass Quality through the Development of a Range Ram Index Utilizing Ultrasound Genetic Measures* will help to improve sheep carcass quality and increase the practice of genetic selection in commercial range operations through the development of a Range Ram Index that utilizes ultrasound technology focusing on carcass quality characteristics.

The Range Ram Index will utilize ultrasound carcass measurements collected at the 2016 California Ram Sale to measure the expected value return of the heritability of carcass characteristics of a range ram through its progeny. The Range Ram Index will be calculated using the following carcass characteristics: loin eye area, loin depth, fat thickness, and ram weight.

Ultrasound technology has been used extensively in the cattle and swine industry but has not been used much in the sheep sector. This technology provides an objective measurement of carcass traits in live animals and has proven to be an important means for the improvement of beef and swine carcass characteristics. Carcass traits are highly heritable and in utilizing range rams (or ewes) with highly desirable carcass traits, a producer can implement changes in progeny carcass traits, such as a larger loin eye size, in a relatively short period of time. This ability contributes to increased production efficiency as improvements in lamb carcass qualities can be accomplished more quickly than relying on traditional selection methods that focus on phenotypic characteristics.

Many commercial range operations do not focus on Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) due to a variety of factors. Largest among them is record management given operation size, production practices such as lot vs. individual animal tracking, ram breeding practices (i.e. two rams in one lot), etc. In addition, collecting consistent ultrasound data can be either a challenge or a virtual impossibility for many commercial operations (e.g., due to lack of facilities or access to ultrasound equipment or changes in location, etc.). The Range Ram Index will provide a tool for producers to use in selecting range rams that do not have previously established EBVs. This will give producers an alternate method to evaluate range rams that will improve progeny carcass characteristics, ultimately supplying a consumer-desired product, and increasing producer returns.

Continued on page 3.

In this issue:

- 2 President's Message
- 4 Legislative Update
- 6 Lamb Market Outlook
- 7 Fibershed "Wool Book"
- 9 Drought Impacts on Ranchers
- 10 USDA NRCS Resources
- 12 USDA FSA CRP Enrollment
- 14 Blue Tongue Update
- 15 Obituaries
- 16 Advertisements
- 20 Calendar

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Presidents Message – Frankie Iturriria



Happy New Year! I hope that all of you had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to a great 2016. A new year brings with it new hope that we will be blessed with health, happiness, green pastures, and higher market prices.

CWGA will once again hit the ground running in an effort to represent the issues facing the California sheep industry. Issues such as Grazing Rights, Trade Issues, Antibiotics, and Predator Policies will once again be hot topics in our state. For those of you in the northern part of the state, the official establishment of the Shasta wolf pack will have to be watched very closely. I want to assure you that CWGA will continue to monitor these and any other issues that arise in the next year.

CWGA is also moving forward with an analysis of our organization. Many of you answered the survey that was sent out to all. The Strategic Planning Committee has been established and will be meeting this month to look at all of the responses in an attempt to see where our organization can better serve its members.

CWGA received some good news towards the end of the year when it received word that it was the recipient of a grant from the Let's Grow Committee through ASI. I want to "Thank" those who worked on writing the grant proposal for a job well done. The ultimate goal is to improve sheep carcass quality through the development of a Range Ram Index. This will help the producers who buy Rams from our sale to have more information to improve their livestock. By the way, please mark your calendars for this year's CA Ram Sale. It will be on April 9, 2016 in Porterville, CA. Sale information is available at

<http://cawoolgrowers.org/sale/ramsale.html>.

At the end of this month, the ASI will convene in Scottsdale, AZ for its annual convention. The dates will be on January 27-30. ASI has once again put together a list of meetings and informational sessions for all involved. I encourage all of you to get on the ASI website (<http://www.sheepusa.org>) for additional information.

Along those same lines, the ASI annual Legislative Trip is set for March 14-16. This is a great opportunity for producers to go to Washington D.C. and visit with the people who make the laws that affect our operations. I ask all of you to consider attending this trip if at all possible.

Hope to see many of you in Scottsdale at the end of the month!



CWGA's Let's Grow Grant, *cont'd*

It is proven in other livestock sectors that the carcass characteristics desired by consumers translate into a higher carcass value and thus return for the producer, a fact that is evident in a value based pricing system.

In the industry's effort to improve lamb product characteristics, particularly to reduce fat content and improve consistency, ultrasound measurements can help identify those rams that will sire progeny with carcass traits for more desirable fat thickness and a higher yielding carcass or a carcass with a larger, more uniform loin eye size. There is a financial incentive for producers to incorporate such genetic information, particularly to terminal sire breeders and those producers that market on a carcass/value based pricing system. These incentives will benefit the industry as whole in producing a more desirable product for the consumer.

This grant project will contribute to the CWGA's mission to ensure the long-term prosperity of the industry by promoting economically viable and environmentally sound production practices. The educational and quantitative aspects of this project provide innovative options for producers to improve lamb consistency and quality, increase production efficiency, and help in meeting consumer market demands. This project will directly and indirectly help to improve the quality of range rams offered at the California Ram Sale and improve the quality of lamb produced by California producers. In the short-term, the impact of this project will benefit producers, but in the long-term it will impact all industry stakeholders and U.S. lamb consumers.

National Sheep Improvement Program's Estimated Breeding Values Lead the Way to Genetic Improvement

By using breeding stock with genetic predictability, all types of flocks have a foundation of genetic information upon which to build a superior and more consistent product to their customers, whether this be a feeder, packer or consumer. This genetic predictability is achievable through National Sheep Improvement Program's (NSIP) Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs).

EBVs are science-based, industry-tested measurements of heritable traits that can be tracked and measured. For those familiar with Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) used in cattle, EBVs are very similar. EPDs denotes the breeding value of an individual animal's progeny whereas EBVs denote the value of the individual animal. More simply, EBVs equal EPDs times two.

A new tool is available to help commercial producers use EBVs in ram selection. The NSIP Ram Buyers Guide is a step-by-step tool for choosing rams that will increase your productivity. It can be printed from the NSIP website at <http://nsip.org/.../NSIP-Ram-Buying-Guide-FINAL-12-21-15.pdf> or pick up your hard copy at the ASI convention in Scottsdale!

For more information on the NSIP and EBVs, go to - <http://nsip.org/>

Attention CWGA Members... CWGA Updating its Website Member Directory

CWGA is updating the Member Directory on the CWGA website. The Member Directory will be divided into categories, including but not limited to: Direct Marketer/Lamb, Breeding Sheep, Club Lambs, Wool/Fiber, Targeted Grazing, Processing, and Other Services.

If you would like to be listed, please contact the CWGA office with your information at (916) 444-8122 or info@woolgrowers.org.

Legislative Update

CDFW Releases Draft Wolf Management Plan

On December 2, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) released its Draft Conservation Plan for Gray Wolves in California (Wolf Management Plan). CDFW first began the process of developing a Wolf Management Plan in 2012, when a wolf in southern Oregon designated OR-7 first crossed the border into northern California. CDFW developed its Wolf Management Plan with the input of a diverse Stakeholder Working Group composed of environmental groups, hunting organizations, and agricultural interests including CWGA, over the course of two years.

CWGA encourages members to review the Wolf Management Plan and to provide comments prior to the February 15, 2016 comment deadline (available at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf>). CDFW also will be holding three public workshops to provide information and hear views about the plan in early 2016. All meetings will be held from 5-8 p.m. Dates and locations are as follows:

- Yreka: Jan. 21, 2016 at Miner's Inn Convention Center/Best Western, 122 E. Miner St., Yreka 96097
- Long Beach: Jan. 26, 2016 at Pointe Conference Center at CSU Long Beach, Walter Pyramid, 1250 N. Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, 90840
- Sacramento: Feb. 1, 2016 at Double Tree Hotel, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, 95815

Although CDFW is not required to do a full Response to Comments, CDFW Director Charlton Bonham has stated that CDFW will carefully consider public comments received on the draft and may incorporate public comment into finalizing the Wolf Management Plan.

Unfortunately, one wolf management tool absent from the Wolf Management Plan is the option for lethal take as a means of managing wolves which chronically depredate livestock. That management option was precluded by the California Fish and Game Commission's June 4, 2014 decision to list the gray wolf as an endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Lethal take is also prohibited by the federal Endangered Species Act, pending a determination by the US Fish and Wildlife Service whether to federally delist the gray wolf.

The draft Wolf Management Plan contemplates various "phases" of wolf management in California, triggered by the population of breeding pairs confirmed within the state. For instance, the third and final phase, "Phase 3," would be triggered by nine breeding pairs of wolves (which CDFW estimates to correspond to an overall wolf population of 50-75 gray wolves). The Wolf Management Plan explains that in Phase 3, wolves may be considered sufficiently abundant and recovered to recommend the species' delisting from CESA. However, questions remain as to whether there is sufficient habitat or abundant prey (e.g. deer and elk) to sustain such high numbers of gray wolves, and whether delisting will be possible.

Also of interest, is CDFW's plan for assessing and monitoring California's wolf population in an effort to communicate the threat of potential wolf/livestock conflicts to sheep and cattle ranchers. The Wolf Management Plan only states that monitoring "could include" collaring, and that wolf activity in the area of livestock production be made timely available "if data are available."

CWGA will carefully examine the Wolf Management Plan and provide detailed comments to CDFW.

Members, particularly those in the northern California, are also encouraged to provide input to CDFW prior to the February 15, 2016 public comment deadline.

Since the announcement of the establishment of the Shasta Pack of wolves, there have been concerns regarding wolf depredation. CDFW released a Wolf Depredation Protocol for Livestock Producers in an effort to ensure that potential depredation evidence is preserved and properly investigated by CDFW, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The protocol is available online at -

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf>.

Legislative Update, cont'd

EPA Broke Law in Conducting Advocacy Campaign for 'WOTUS' Rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency inappropriately engaged in “covert propaganda” and “grassroots lobbying” through social media to advance the “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) rule, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded in a report issued this week. The investigative arm of Congress found that EPA broke federal law by using during the public comment period on the proposed regulation an online campaign, utilizing Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Thunderclap to urge the public to support the WOTUS rule. The regulation was proposed in April 2013 by EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to clarify the agencies’ authority under the Clean Water Act over various waters. That jurisdiction – based on several U.S. Supreme Court decisions – included “navigable” waters and waters with a significant hydrologic connection to navigable waters. The rule broadens that to include, among other water bodies, upstream waters and intermittent and ephemeral streams such as the kind farmers use for drainage and irrigation. It also encompasses lands adjacent to such waters. A federal appeals court temporarily halted implementation of the rule, which took effect Aug. 28, 2015. Many agricultural organizations in a lawsuit against the WOTUS rule filed in July also alleged that EPA engaged in an advocacy campaign during the comment period, a violation of the federal Administrative Procedures Act.

Congress Votes to Extend Expired Tax Provisions

Before the holiday break Congress voted to extend previously expired tax provisions, including ones important to livestock producers. Among those tax provisions are the Section 179 small business expensing and bonus depreciation provisions, which allow farmers and ranchers to write off capital expenditures in the year assets are bought rather than depreciate them over time. Section 179 was made permanent and the maximum amount that can be expensed was restored to \$500,000, as it was for the 2010 through 2014 tax years. The deduction phases out when the total cost of qualifying assets exceeds \$2 million. Under the provision that expired at the end of 2014, the maximum amount was \$25,000, phasing out when total assets exceeded \$200,000. Lawmakers also voted to reinstate for five years the expired bonus depreciation for the purchase of new capital assets, including agricultural equipment. The provision allows 50 percent of the cost of such assets to be deducted for tax years 2015 through 2017; the expensing amount would be reduced to 40 percent in 2018 and 30 percent in 2019.

NEW DIETARY GUIDELINES KEEP MEAT ON THE PLATE, FOCUS ON DIET, NUTRITION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services Thursday released the final 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. A review of the guidelines shows they are narrowly focused on nutrition – much more so than previous iterations. The recommendation on consuming protein calls for “a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products.” The Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) of various food groups are largely unchanged from the 2010 guidelines. The guidelines do recommend that less than 10 percent of daily calories come from saturated fat and call out meat, processed meat and meat dishes as major sources of saturated fat. But the guidelines indicate that sticking to the RDAs should meet the recommendation on saturated fat. The guidelines also note that people aren’t getting enough potassium, calcium, vitamin D, iron and dietary fiber and single out meat as the best source of iron and pork as a source of vitamin D. The bottom line: Meat remains an important part of the American diet. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans do not contain any provisions that should drive federal, institutional or consumer shifts away from meat as the major protein source in diets, and they do not include extraneous matters, such as requiring food producers to meet sustainability standards or taxing certain foods as a way to reduce their consumption.

Sheep & Lamb Market Outlook & Update – *Livestock Marketing Information Center*

All indicators, except the expectation for lower prices, point to an increasing domestic sheep flock in 2016. According to USDA-AMS, Federally Inspected (FI) mature sheep slaughter is down 9% year-over-year, to the tune of 22,000 head fewer. This decrease is especially apparent now, in the midst of what is normally a seasonal increase in mature sheep slaughter. The U.S. does send some slaughter ewes to Mexico however. Through November live exports to Mexico are down 70% compared to 2014. In 2014 the U.S. had exported over 23,000 ewes to Mexico by the end of November. Only about 7,000 head have been sent over this year, so far. Lamb and yearling FI slaughter is down 5% year-over-year, or down by 80,000 head, through middle of November. This indicates that for 2015 slaughter will be down about 10,000 more head than what the lamb crop difference would suggest based on January 1 inventory numbers. With mature ewe hold back and a possible increase in ewe lamb retention, 2016 breeding flock inventory numbers could be up slightly year-over-year.

Other factors affecting the sheep and lamb industry include cold storage levels. According to USDA-NASS, lamb and mutton in cold storage as of the end of October totaled 41 million pounds, up 6% (or 4 million pounds) compared to 2014, and the highest level ever for October since this data series was first recorded. Lamb imports are up year-over-year, predominantly coming from Australia and New Zealand. Through October, lamb imports were up 10% or by 13 million pounds.

On the price side, USDA-AMS weekly prices report shows the feeder lamb three market average (TX, CO, SD) declining since August and as of the last week of November was at \$174 per cwt. compared to \$199 per cwt. a year ago. National direct hot carcass slaughter lamb prices have been declining since October and were \$303 per cwt. compared to \$326 a year ago. Although prices are declining, lamb dressed weights continue to be consistent with 2014, suggesting there is not a backup of over fat lambs yet.

LMIC's forecast for 2016 shows annual lamb production increasing around 2%. Annual average prices for both slaughter lambs and feeder lambs are forecast to decrease about 5% to 8% compared to 2015 due to high levels of cold storage that need to be worked through and an additional increase in supply that the market will have to absorb.

Wool Market Price Outlook – *ASI Wool Journal*

There are clearly positives for wool prices as 2015 drew to a close. One of these is the better economic conditions in Europe and in the US. This recovery is helping boost retail sales of clothing in these countries. If this can continue throughout the Fall/Winter 2015, the foundation for good sales of wool clothing is set. This, in turn, will encourage improved orders from retailers for next year.

An additional positive is the likelihood that raw wool supplies will be constrained with lower production in Australia. The lower supplies will provide a firm base for wool prices.

However, there are the risks and uncertainties. One of these is the recent dip in imports of wool clothing by the US and the impact that may have on the availability of wool clothing at retail. The adjustment that the Chinese economy is undergoing (covered in previous editions of the Wool Journal) also creates uncertainty in the short term.

On balance, the start of 2016 is likely to see wool prices continue their recent recovery.

Fibershed Launches the 'Wool Book'

In the coming month, Fibershed is launching a regional collection of wool and fine fiber samples that we've coined the 'Wool Book'. This translates to a collection of tactile samples, including raw washed fiber, knit and felt swatches that have been created for each producer's farm or ranch. The book also includes bios for each producer or producer's family operation, and details on their fiber quality and annual production. The form the book has taken has been defined by our commitment to make sure each person's story and fiber is well represented, which has meant creating individual pages for each ranch or farm that are contained in two archival boxes. The Wool Book is a natural evolution of Fibershed's efforts to create an inventory of local fiber production and inspire greater use of local materials.

Fibershed is producing a series of these books as part of our education and economic development programs; we seek to expand and illuminate the potentials of regional garment and durable good creation, and drive a healthy demand for fibers grown in our home communities.

We were asked repeatedly for fiber samples and material swatches from designers, brands, and artisans alike for several years. Taking this demand seriously we decided to archive what we could given the relationships we've currently established through our [Fibershed Producer Program](#). In contrast to traditional fashion industry sample books, the Wool Book serves as a stakeholder catalogue and a tool to initiate collaborations between artisans and fiber producers. Through providing physical samples the book offers real material that can be shared, studied, and utilized to build more connections between farmers and artisans for the explicit purpose of helping to move more fiber into the local economy.

Our process for creating the Wool Book began by engaging the Fibershed Producer community, which is our membership program for fiber producers throughout the Northern California region. We requested washed or processed fiber samples and worked with hand spinners, a knitwear professional, and one-woman operated felting machine business to assemble swatches. We then created a custom biography and page layout for each producer. The resulting Wool Book is a living library that is already garnering much positive attention from the creative community.

We look forward to sharing the Wool Book with design brands and independent artisans alike, and will be offering a lending library system for sharing copies of the Wool Book throughout the region and with communities farther afield. We plan to update the Wool Book on a yearly basis and welcome interested flock managers and owners to join the Fibershed Producer community and participate in the Wool Book. If you are interested in membership information, additional Wool Book details, or accessing the Wool Book through the lending library, please email office@fibershed.com.

Fibershed develops regenerative textile systems that are based on carbon farming, regional manufacturing, and public education. To learn more about Fibershed, visit their website at - <http://www.fibershed.com/>

Eat Lamb...Wear Wool License Plate Frames are Back!

"EAT LAMB...WEAR WOOL" LICENSE PLATE FRAMES ARE BACK!

THE CHROME FRAMES ARE A THIN RIM LICENSE PLATE FRAME THAT READS *AMERICAN SHEEP INDUSTRY -- EAT LAMB...WEAR WOOL*

MEMBER COST \$15.00 PLUS TAX & SHIPPING.

PLACE YOUR ORDER NOW BEFORE THEY SELL OUT!

CALL THE CWGA OFFICE AT (916) 444-8122 OR INFO@WOOLGROWERS.ORG



Upcoming Producer Meetings & Workshops

January 21 – 22, 2016 – Wildfire and Rangeland Management – Mediating Impacts to Conservation and Ranching

California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (CRCC) 2016 Summit and tours will address challenges and opportunities to improve rangeland management to reduce the incidence (scope and severity) of catastrophic wildfire and reduce the impacts of wildfire to ranch sustainability and conservation interests. Group discussions about lessons learned and where we go from here will be compiled into an advocacy paper.

Co-sponsored by University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources. CWGA members Doug and Loree Joses (Mountain Ranch) are hosting one of the tours on Thursday, January 21st.

Registration and information available at - <http://carangeland.org/2016-summit/>.

March 14 – 16, 2016 – ASI Spring Legislative Action Trip to Washington, D.C.

This a great opportunity for sheep ranchers to share their concerns with Congressional and Regulatory officials in Washington DC and be updated on current ASI lobbying efforts.

February 3, 2016 – Nonlethal Tools: Ranching with Wolves and Other Large Predators

On February 3, 2016, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services will be hosting an integrated wildlife damage workshop on nonlethal tools available for reducing livestock conflicts with wolves and other large predators. The workshop will cover a number of topics including producer resources, nonlethal tools and methods, livestock producer perspectives on ranching with wolves, and open discussion. The workshop will be held at the McArthur Fairgrounds. This is a free workshop with lunch and dinner included at no cost. Registration is required. To register contact - Stacy Schneider at (530) 336-5784 or srschneider@ucanr.edu.

UC Cooperative Extension, Placer & Nevada Counties 2016 Shepherding School Workshop Series

UCCE Placer/Nevada is offering a series of hands-on and classroom workshops for new and aspiring sheep producers. These programs are designed to help students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to operate a small-scale commercial sheep operation!

Date	Workshop	Location
January 14, 2016	Introduction to Sheep Production	UCCE—Auburn, CA
January 16, 2016	Introduction to Sheep Husbandry Field Day	Auburn, CA (TBD)
March 8, 2016	Lambing on Pasture Field Day	Auburn, CA (TBD)
May 2016	Shearing and Wool Handling Field Day	Flying Mule Farm, Auburn, CA
September 16-18, 2016	California Multi-Species Grazing Academy	Auburn, CA

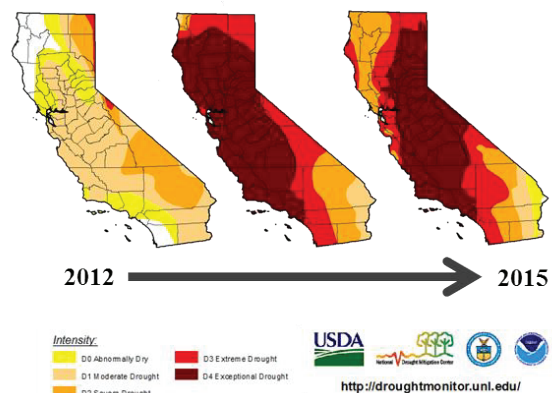
For more information—and to register for workshops—go to <http://ucanr.edu/sites/placernevadasmallfarms/>.

Drought Impacts on California Ranches

Evaluating drought response and recovery strategies

Drought is nothing new for ranchers; in fact, ranchers largely depend on dryland grazing and are among the first impacted by drought. Over 90% of California has endured severe to exceptional drought since 2012. Given the extent, and severity of the current drought, we are interviewing livestock producers to learn more about the real impacts of this drought on their operations.

The Drought Impacts on California Ranches Survey is a collaboration between UC Davis, UC Cooperative Extension, the California Cattlemen's Association, and the California Wool Growers Association. We will conduct telephone surveys with ranchers to examine drought management strategies, economic and ecological impacts, and drought adaptation and recovery strategies resulting from one of our most severe droughts on record.



Project Outcomes

- Compile expertise of experienced ranchers on effective drought planning and strategies for recovery.
- Quantify real-world economic, social, and ecological impacts of drought to inform future drought planning and policies.
- Develop a California Ranch Drought Hub that integrates existing research and outreach resources with survey information.

In winter of 2015, we will conduct ~200 interviews. Interviews will include questions on drought management strategies, economic and ecological impacts, drought recovery strategies, and general operation characteristics.

Interested in participating or want more information? Please contact **Dan Macon** (dmacon@ucdavis.edu; 530/889-7324), **Leslie Roche** (lmroche@ucdavis.edu; 530/752-5583), or **Tracy Schohr** (tkchohr@ucdavis.edu; 530/754-8766).

UCRANGELANDS
Supporting Working Landscapes



Russell L. Rustici
Rangeland and Cattle
Research Endowment

UC Rangelands Research and Education Website

The UC Rangelands Research and Education Archive hosts 100s of rangeland and pasture publications as well as educational resources. The website includes the following resources:

- ***Ecology and Management of Annual Rangeland Series*** (which is under development).
- ***Online Learning Resources*** which is a repository of rangeland education materials including the Annual Rangeland Handbook and California Rangeland Topics.
- ***Teaching Clearinghouse*** of online courses such as the Ranch Water Quality Planning Short Course and NRCS Short Course.

To access the website go to - <http://californiarangeland.ucdavis.edu/>



Assisting California Ranchers

OVERVIEW

California has some of the most diverse rangelands in the nation—from alpine meadows to sage steppe, and from coastal prairie to Mediterranean annual grasses. Ranchers have been working to sustain their operations within these various ecosystems for generations. Many operations move livestock from low to high elevations to match available forage quality with their animals' nutritional needs. Other operations use irrigated pastures to sustain their livestock during the dry season. Taking care of livestock needs, while maintaining the health of the grazing lands, are interdependent management goals.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

For more than 75 years, NRCS has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers meet their environmental and economic goals through conservation planning. A conservation plan is a written record of management goals, decisions and the conservation practices identified to maintain the sustainability of the ranch. A conservation plan often begins with identifying resource concerns (such as livestock concentration areas or erosion along stream banks) that keep ranchers from meeting their goals.

NRCS conservationists work one-on-one with ranchers to design a conservation plan that provides scientifically sound alternatives for accomplishing their goals. Conservation planning services are free and receiving technical assistance does not obligate ranchers to participate in Farm Bill programs. All services are voluntary and all information shared with NRCS for conservation planning purposes is strictly confidential. The conservation plan belongs to the rancher and can (and should!) adapt and change as the operation changes.

GRAZING PLAN

A grazing plan is a subset of a conservation plan. It helps ranchers design livestock movement patterns to address resource concerns. An early step in this collaborative planning process includes on-site visits by the NRCS conservationist to work with a rancher to understand the natural resources available on the ranch. The conservationist will inventory the soils types, the forage species and composition, the water sources and types, and other aspects of the ranch. NRCS can provide soils and forage composition maps for the rancher's use.

Using these tools NRCS can estimate average forage production that can be expected and determine the carrying capacity of the ranch. This information, along with the rancher's goals and resource concerns, are used to devise a grazing plan that will enhance resources while improving forage quality and animal health. Other likely components of the plan include current and potential fences, wildlife habitats, a contingency plan (when natural disaster occurs that reduces available forage), and a monitoring plan. Keeping in mind the variability of nature, these prescribed grazing plans must remain flexible to accommodate fluctuations in climate, forage production, and water availability.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to help ranchers (and other agricultural producers) address resource concerns using a mix of these and other conservation options: fencing, range or pasture planting, weed control, water development, livestock wells, brush management, riparian improvements, soil health improvements, grazing management, and upland wildlife habitat management.



USDA NRCS Resources, *cont'd*

Most EQIP contracts pay producers approximately half of the cost of structural or vegetative improvements. Payments may also include incentives to test—and possibly adopt—management practices that improve resource conditions. Payment rates are typically higher for those who have ranched less than 10 years (considered a beginning rancher) and for those with limited financial resources (defined on a county-by-county basis). Ranchers who have served in the U.S. Armed Services will receive an application preference in certain Farm Bill program application fund pools. Inquire with your local NRCS office for more information.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

The CSP program provides technical and financial assistance to producers who already have applied the basic conservation practices and are willing and able to implement a higher level of conservation on their operation. Producers participating under CSP receive incentive payments for the specified higher levels of conservation treatment. Ranchers can choose from a suite of CSP enhancements. Typical ranch CSP enhancements include monitoring key grazing areas, improving pasture irrigation, rotation of supplement and feeding areas, improving wildlife habitat, intensive rotational grazing, managing calving to coincide with forage availability, and other options.

HOW TO APPLY

Persons interested in participating in EQIP or any other programs should contact their local NRCS field office. Applications are taken year-round at all NRCS field offices. Eligible projects will be periodically evaluated and prioritized for funding.

For more information on NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs, visit:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/

Ranching Practices Available

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance on conservation practices for healthy ranching. Here are available conservation practices ranches throughout California:



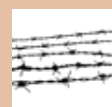
HERBACEOUS WEED CONTROL

Removal or control of herbaceous weeds including invasive, noxious and prohibited plants to enhance the quality and quantity of forage, prevent wildfire, and create desired plant communities.



BRUSH MANAGEMENT

Removal of woody debris to restore natural plant community balance, restore vegetative cover, and enhance wildlife habitat.



FENCING

Construction of a barrier to control the movement of animals or vehicles. May be permanent or temporary based on need.



LIVESTOCK WELL AND WATER FACILITY

Installation of a permanent or portable device to provide an adequate amount and quality of drinking water for livestock and or wildlife.



RANGE AND PASTURE PLANTING

Establishing herbaceous species suitable for pasture or hay production to provide or increase forage supply for livestock nutrition.



PRESCRIBED GRAZING

Managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals to improve desired species composition and improve riparian and watershed function.

USDA Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program General Enrollment

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits.

CRP Grasslands helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. For information on enrolling land in CRP contact a local FSA office. To find a local office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

For both general and continuous CRP:

- Applicants must have owned operated the land 12 months prior to submitting, unless exceptions apply.
- Land must be cropland planted to an agricultural commodity for 4 of the previous six years, and must be legally capable of being planted.
- Contracts are 10-15 years, and in exchange the agency will provide annual rental payments and cost share assistance.
- Participants establish vegetative species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

CRP general vs. CRP continuous:

- Under general enrollment authority, producers can offer land for CRP general enrollment only during announced enrollment periods. There is a general enrollment period scheduled to begin December 1, 2015, through February 26, 2016. Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI).
- Under CRP continuous enrollment authority, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time. Certain eligibility requirements still apply, but offers are not subject to competitive bidding.

For more information, contact James Ottem at (707) 448-0106 Ext. 101. To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

California Department of Water Resources Owned Property for Lease

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will be releasing a number of properties to the public for lease within the next several months. Historically, DWR has mailed information to anyone interested in leasing DWR property; however, DWR is in the process of switching to a web-based bidding system for all future leases.

DWR-owned properties feature a wide range of sizes, shapes, locations, and site amenities. Lease activities vary based on property type and have previously included: grazing, agriculture (row crop, dry farming), equipment storage, hunting clubs, and water-ski clubs, etc.

If you are interested in viewing the lease properties when available, the information can now be found here: <http://www.bidsync.com/bid-notifications/>

If you have any questions about the bid process, contact Bradley.Johnson@water.ca.gov.

Funding Programs Available for Sheep Producers

National Livestock Producers Association (NLPA)

It is the mission of the National Livestock Producers Association's (NLPA) Sheep & Goat Fund to encourage innovation and efficiency in the sheep and goat industries by providing credit to eligible and qualified entities.

The purpose of the fund has been to assist in financing projects beyond the farm gate; however, as of June 2013 the fund has the ability to make term loans to sheep producers for the purpose of flock expansion.

Up to \$2 million of the Sheep and Goat Fund has been identified for qualified applicants to be used specifically for the purchase of breeding animals (ewes and rams). This new loan program is the result of a joint effort between NLPA and the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) in the spirit of ASI's Let's Grow initiative.

"One of the hurdles that new and current sheep producers encounter when looking to purchase breeding stock is adequate financing options," explains Scott Stuart, NLPA president. "To address this problem, leaders of the Sheep and Goat Fund Committee, in concert with ASI, developed a specific loan program to help provide credit for flock expansion. We are excited to assist ASI in its Let's Grow initiative by providing a valuable opportunity for producers looking to expand their flocks."

A few of the conditions of the lending program include:

- a minimum loan amount of \$35,000 *[see application for current minimum loan amount]* with the maximum loan amount based on credit worthiness of the borrower;
- a five-year maturity date;
- proceeds may only be used for the purchase of breeding animals and may not be used for other operating expenses; and prospective borrowers must demonstrate their ability to successfully produce sheep in a production setting which may include the establishment of a mentor relationship, participation in educational programming for sheep and financial management and the development of a marketing plan for the enterprise.

Additional information is available on the NLPA website at www.sheepandgoatfund.com

USDA Farm Service Agency Micro-Loan Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) designed to help small and family operations, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers secure loans under \$35,000. The new microloan program is aimed at bolstering the progress of producers through their start-up years by providing needed resources and helping to increase equity so that farmers may eventually graduate to commercial credit and expand their operations. The microloan program will also provide a less burdensome, more simplified application process in comparison to traditional farm loans.

Microloans can be used for all approved operating expenses as authorized by the FSA Operating Loan Program, including but not limited to:

- Initial start-up expenses;
- Annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents;
- Marketing and distribution expenses;
- Family living expenses;
- Purchase of livestock, equipment, and other materials essential to farm operations;
- Minor farm improvements such as wells and coolers.
- Essential tools;
- Irrigation;

Additional information is available on the USDA website at www.fsa.usda.gov

Blue Tongue & Foot Rot Vaccine Update – Nancy East, DVM, Chair CWGA Vaccine Committee

During the past six months, CWGA has been diligently working to develop two new sheep vaccines for members – a killed Blue Tongue vaccine and a new Foot Rot Vaccine. These vaccines, once available for sale, will only be available to CWGA members.

A killed Blue Tongue vaccine is in the early production phase. Initial testing is planned for this winter. Vaccine availability will depend on these test results. CWGA faces a number of technical and regulatory challenges with this new Blue Tongue vaccine. However, CWGA believes it will be able to bypass these hurdles in an effort to offer the vaccine as quickly as possible to members. CWGA will continue to update members on the developments of this new Blue Tongue vaccine.

CWGA is working to produce a foot rot vaccine using isolates from California affected sheep. Development of this vaccine will require producer participation as CWGA will need to collect cultures from infected sheep feet this spring. Information on how to collect the samples and materials be presented and distributed at the next CWGA Board Meeting on March 11, 2016. Once the isolates are deemed suitable for a vaccine CWGA can move forward with production. A target date for availability is fall of 2016.

Only CWGA members will be able to purchase these two vaccines. Priority will be given those members that have requested to be contacted when the vaccines become available. If you would like to be notified once the vaccines are available, please send contact information and dosage request to info@woolgrowers.org. If you would like to confirm you are on the list or update your information please contact the CWGA office at (916) 444-8122 or info@woolgrowers.org.

Protect Your Flocks Health With Vaccines From CWGA

Campylobacter Fetus-Jejuni Bacterin (Vibrio)

A two strain vaccine that is recommended for use to prevent abortion losses associated with either C.fetus or C.Jejuni. Pricing: \$27.50/50 dose bottle and \$47.50/125 dose bottle.

Covexin 8

For the vaccination of healthy cattle and sheep against diseases caused by Clostridium chauvoei, Cl septi-cum, Cl novyi Type B, Cl. Haemolyticum, Cl. Tetani, and Cl perfringens Types C and D. Refer to label for complete information. Pricing: \$32.50/50 dose bottle or \$30.00/50 dose bottle with an order of more than 12 bottles.

Vision® CD-T with Spur®

Clostridium perfringens Types C and D Tetani Bacterin Toxoid Adjuvant – U.S. Patent Nos. 3,790,665 and 3,919,411. For use in healthy cattle, sheep, and goats as an aid in preventing disease caused by Clostridium perfringens Types C and D (Enterotoxemia) and Clostridium Tetani (Tetanus). Pricing: \$27.00/50 dose bottle or \$25.00/50 dose bottle with an order of more than 12 bottles.

Blue Tongue– Temporarily Unavailable

If you would like to be notified once the vaccine is available, please send contact information and dosage request to info@woolgrowers.org.

Obituaries

Harold Harper, 1938 – 2015

Harold A. Harper, 77, of Eaton passed away Dec. 8, 2015 at his home in Eaton.

He was born August 12, 1938 in East St. Louis, IL to Howard and Betty (Carter) Harper. Harold grew up in Indiana, working on the family farm and raising livestock. He was a member of his local 4H Chapter where his interest in sheep and cattle became more focused. Harold was a champion sheep shearer and that skill paid his way through Purdue University, where he was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity and a member of the University marching band.

Harold served the livestock industry in Iowa and Nebraska, finding his home in Colorado. His love for livestock and Colorado led him to Eaton where he fulfilled his lifelong dream of a lamb feedlot. Together with his wife and three children, Harold built a reputation as one of the largest lamb feeders in the nation. Harold has received numerous awards and is held in the highest regards as a reputable industry leader.

Throughout the years Harold has been an active member and generous supporter of numerous industry organizations and a fifty year Noble member of the Shriners.

He was preceded in death by his father, Howard; and mother, Helen (Betty) Harper.

He is survived by his wife; Judy, children; Jeff and Jackie (Harper) Matz and their children Andrew and Caroline of Denver, Mike and MaryAnn Harper and their children Catherine, Emily and Madeline of Eaton, and Diane (Harper) Grossenbacher and her children Eli and Peter of Eaton.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made in Harold's name to Meals on Wheels in care of Allnutt Mortuary at 702 13th Street, Greeley, CO 80631.

CWGA Scholarship & Memorial Funds Received

The following memorials were received by the CWGA Scholarship Fund –

In Memory of John Glenn

CWGA awards an annual scholarship to college students pursuing an academic career in agriculture, related to the California sheep industry. Member contributions to the CWGA Scholarship Fund help to support our future sheep industry leaders.

The following memorials were received by the CWGA Memorial Fund –

In Memory of Ramon Echeveste

In Memory of Donna Hamilton

In Memory of JoAnne Narbaitz

The CWGA Memorial Fund helps to support CWGA in its mission to ensure the long-term prosperity of the California sheep industry and promote economically viable and environmentally sound production practices.



Certified California Lamb Program

Currently the CCL program is being presented to grocery retailers whose customers prefer a fresh, local, high quality product. Presenting a new product, such as CCL, involves many steps and can average three to six months or longer before a product is available to consumers.

Producers who market directly to consumers and meet all the CCL requirements can begin using the CCL label. Producers will need to enroll in the CCL program.

CERTIFIED CALIFORNIA LAMB REQUIREMENTS:

- *Lambs must be verifiably documented to be born, raised, and harvested exclusively in California.*
- *Lambs must be less than 1 year of age – as determined by physiological maturity using the USDA grading standards.*
- *Carcasses must be no greater than 85 lbs. dressed weight, grade USDA choice or higher, and must have a USDA yield grade of 1-3.*
- *Producer must be a member of California Wool Growers Association.*

Further details available at – http://cawoolgrowers.org/certified_lamb/certified_lamb.html

Producers interested in participating in the program should contact Erica Sanko with CWGA at (916) 444-8122 or erica@woolgrowers.org for further details.

FOR SALE: 3/8 Finn 3/8 Targhee 1/4 Rambouillet Teaser Rams

About 25 years ago, Hamilton Bros. did a breeding project for Dr. Steven Berry of UCD looking at the ram effect in getting ewes to breed earlier and getting the ewes to increase their ovulation rate to promote better twinning. Dr. Berry wanted to see if there was a way to get better twinning and more ewes bred for fall lambing than was normally happening in California at the time.

As a result of that trial and with the help of Dr. Nancy East, we developed a process to make teaser rams out of very young ram lambs and to use the teaser rams for a month before ram introduction. In theory, using teaser rams with a very high libido will get the ewes to start cycling earlier and by having the teaser rams with the ewes for a month, the teaser rams at best would get the ewes to cycle twice and the fertile rams will breed the ewes in their third cycle which means a higher probability for twinning. The teaser ram to ewe ratio we use is 1 teaser to 200 ewes.

Over the years, we have been using teaser rams with a great deal of success and have sold teaser rams to other producers who have had very similar results.

We will have teaser rams for sale for this upcoming late spring breeding season. The teaser rams will be semen evaluated at UCD to be sterile. Yearling teasers will be available in the fall and winter. Ram lamb teasers will be available in late March and April. The teaser rams will be sold on a first come first serve basis but a deposit can guarantee availability.

If interested, please call Richard Hamilton (707) 249-8650 or send an email to hamiltonbrosfarm@frontier.com

Utah Wool Marketing Association



Marketing Wool to the World

Contact: Will Hart Griggs – Manager
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Looking forward to speaking with you, Bill & Susan Shaul



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www.woolgrowers.org

Mark Your Calendars

January 27 – 30, 2016
ASI Annual Convention
Scottsdale, AZ

February 3, 2016
Ranching with Wolves & Other
Large Predators Workshop
McArthur, CA

February 15, 2016
Draft Wolf Management Plan
Comments Deadline

March 11, 2016
Board of Directors Meeting
Location TBD

March 14 – 16, 2016
ASI Spring Legislative Trip
Washington D.C.

April 9, 2016
96th California Ram Sale
Porterville, CA

August 26 – 27, 2016
CWGA Annual Meeting
Carson Valley Inn, Minden, NV



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