



# Herd the News

November/December 2019

*The California Wool Growers Association will deliver lasting value to support and grow all segments of the California sheep industry.*

## California Becomes First U.S. State to Ban Animal Fur Products

California will become the first U.S. state to ban the sale and manufacture of new fur products under a bill signed by the governor, Gavin Newsom.

The law will bar residents from selling or making clothing, shoes or handbags with fur, starting in 2023. Animal rights groups cheered the measure as a stand against inhumane practices. The proposal was vigorously opposed by the billion-dollar U.S. fur industry, while the Fur Information Council of America has already threatened to sue.

It follows Newsom's signing of legislation that makes California the first state to outlaw fur trapping and follows bans on sales of fur in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The fur ban does not apply to used products or those made for religious or tribal purposes. It excludes the sale of leather, dog and cat fur, cowhides, deer, sheep and goat skin, and anything preserved through taxidermy.

It could mark a significant blow to the fur industry that makes products from animals including mink, chinchillas, rabbits and other animals. The U.S. retail fur industry brought in \$1.5 billion in sales in 2014, the most recent data available from the Fur Information Council.

Under the California law, there is a fine of up to \$1,000 for multiple violations. Fashion designers including Versace, Gucci and Giorgio Armani have stopped or say they plan to stop using fur.

Animal rights groups have said animals may be subject to gassing, electrocution and other inhumane actions to take their fur. Advocacy group Direct Action Everywhere said it was working with activists to pass similar bills in cities nationwide, including Minneapolis and Portland, Oregon, and was optimistic California's law would spur action. "Ordinary people want to see animals protected, not abused," said Cassie King, an organizer with the Berkeley-based group.

Opponents of the legislation have said it could create a black market and be a slippery slope to bans on other products. The ban is part of a "radical vegan agenda using fur as the first step to other bans on what we wear and eat", Keith Kaplan of the Fur Information Council said in a prior statement. He claimed fake fur was not a renewable or sustainable option.

*CWGA strongly opposed AB 44. Despite the bill analysis stating AB 44 is "not intended to apply to sheep, wool, and the products derived therefrom" but for fur-bearing animals regulated under the Fish and Game Code, CWGA is concerned AB 44 sets the stage for future bills that may ban leather, wool, or meat products from being produced and sold in the State.*

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## Presidents Message – Dan Macon



Dear CWGA Membership,

As most of you probably know, the University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) decided to significantly downsize the sheep operation at the UC Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) earlier this year. Despite input from a stakeholder group that included campus researchers, county-based extension researchers, and producers, ANR decided to sell all but 125 ewes. And while I find this lack of support disappointing, I'm tremendously excited that new partnerships between researchers and ranchers are addressing some of our industry's most pressing needs! These public-private partnerships represent the future of sheep research in California!

Within UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), there are a number of county-based and campus-based researchers working on sheep-related questions. Julie Finzel, the livestock and natural resources advisor for Kern, Kings, and Tulare Counties, is leading a grant-funded project evaluating the costs and benefits of electronic identification systems and collecting tissue samples to facilitate genetic testing. Rebecca Ozeran (Fresno and Madera), John Harper (Mendocino and Lake), and Morgan Doran (Napa, Solano, Sacramento, and Yolo) are also working on the project, as are Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam, Dr. Tina Saitone, and Dr. Rosie Busch from UC Davis. We're hoping this project opens the door for additional funding for genetic improvement, including the evaluation of NSIP rams in commercial operations.

Speaking of UC Davis, Dr. Rosie Busch started as the new small ruminant extension specialist at the School of Veterinary Medicine in September! She comes to ANR from the Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship program at the California Department of Food and Agriculture. And she has hit the ground running! In addition to the project above, she's collaborating with a number of county- and campus-based researchers on a variety of new projects. She'll be participating in our Animal Health Committee, as well as at the national level with ASI.

While the cost of labor continues to be a concern, researchers in the UC Davis Animal Science Department are studying maternal behavior in sheep with an eye towards improving efficiency (and reducing labor demands at lambing). Kaleiah Schiller, a PhD student in the Animal Behavior and Cognition Lab, is working with Dr. Tina Horback to study stress coping and maternal responsiveness in ewes. As you may recall, Kaleiah received this year's CWGA scholarship. She's using some of our ewes in her study; she needs additional flocks to enroll in the project. Contact her at [kmschiller@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kmschiller@ucdavis.edu) if you're interested in participating!

New research isn't limited to UC, however! Dr. Celina Phillips at CSU Chico is leading a review of current research into antibiotic use in sheep. This project will help identify future research needs (including non-antibiotic therapy options).

Finally, I am working on a project designed to better understand livestock guardian dog (LGD) behavior in a variety of production settings and environments. As you probably know by now, we have an established wolf pack in the northern Sierra, as well as several transient wolves. Over the last year, I

have been pilot testing low-cost geographic positioning system (GPS) collars with dogs and sheep. In the coming year, I'm collaborating with researchers from UC Davis and New Mexico State University to analyze LGD behavior in open-range herded production systems on public land and fenced production systems on private lands. We hope to gain better understanding about whether LGD displace predators or simply disrupt predator behaviors.

As a producer, I encourage you to engage with researchers in a variety of ways. Ask your local UCCE farm advisor about questions and issues that affect your operation! Volunteer to participate in research surveys or on-ranch research projects. And watch for future updates on research efforts in this newsletter!

## Welcome New Members

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CWGA is very pleased to welcome the following new members to CWGA:

*Greg Baysinger, Woonsocket, SD*

*Kelli Dunaj, Spring Coyote Ranch, Marshall, CA*

*Dwayne Galbreath, Enderlin, ND*

*Sandra Guidi, Black Rock Ranch, Stinson Beach, CA*

*Terisue Harvey, Horsefeather Ranch, Arroyo Grande, CA*

*Tammy Winger-Merriman, Faith, SD*

Do you know a producer or industry stakeholder that is not a member of CWGA? If so, please share this issue of *Herd the News* and urge them to support their industry and join CWGA today!

## Member News

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### CWGA Partners with DUCKWORTH for CWGA Logo Clothing

CWGA has partnered with [DUCKWORTH](#) maker of American Merino Wool apparel to offer members a limited selection of CWGA logo clothing items. Available items include:

- Men's Snowcrest Vest
- Men's Powder Hoody
- Men's Vapor Loose Crew
- Men's Vapor Tee
- Women's Powder High Neck
- Women's Vapor Loose Crew
- Women's Vapor Tee
- Knit Rigger Hat

To order visit [www.californiawoolgrowers.org/merchandise](http://www.californiawoolgrowers.org/merchandise) or contact the CWGA office.

### CWGA Scholarship Funds Received

The CWGA Scholarship provides assistance to enrolled college students pursuing an academic program with an interest and/or emphasis in the California sheep industry.

*Sandara Guidi, Black Rock Ranch, Stinson Beach, CA*

*Jack Massera, Salinas, CA*

*John Vetich, Brentwood, CA*

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*Warm wishes from our family to yours for a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!*  
*- CWGA Board of Directors & Staff!*

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## From the Flock

A look back by California producers on how they became involved in the sheep/goat industry.

### **Bruce Schlegel**

*Santa Clara County*



It started out simply. We wanted a few animals to eat weeds in our acreage.

First it was a few goats and a feeder lamb. Didn't like the goats as they were hard to keep fenced in. The lamb was nice, but when my source of feeder lambs dried up, I was assured it was easier to raise my own lambs.

So bought some bred Suffolk ewes. I have always enjoyed fancy livestock so early on got involved with raising and showing Suffolks. Then we switched to Shropshires. Our daughter started showing lambs in 4-H and FFA so we started keeping some of the nicer ewe lambs and began raising wether sire type sheep. Today, 30+ years later that is the full extent of our business.

We have about 25 ewes and sell show lambs and seedstock in the western region. It has been quite an enjoyable journey for us but would have probably been easier to find another source of feeder lambs!

### **Kelli Dunaj**

*Marin County*



I became involved in the sheep industry after starting a new farm in West Marin County. Sheep are a great fit for the coastal prairie. I chose to raise Navajo-Churro sheep because they are a hardy multi-purpose breed. They forage adventurously, sort of like goats, consuming brush and weeds as they go.

I sell them as livestock for breeding purposes and produce wool products such as yarn and roving. I also sell locker lambs seasonally (spring and fall) along with pelts and skulls.

### **Wes Patton**

*Glenn County*



I was born into the sheep business as both of my parents came from families that were sheep producers. It was natural for me to become involved in sheep production and owned my first sheep when I was 5. By the time I was in high school, I owned a small flock of Corriedales that I exhibited at several county fairs and I was able to earn money that would go toward my college education from sheep sales and shearing income.

During college my interest in the California sheep industry increased as I was exposed to the various areas of sheep production in the state. When I met my wife Jane, we both had Hampshire sheep and we continued with that breed when I returned to Chico State to teach and manage the sheep enterprise at the university farm for 33 years. It became obvious to me that being involved in the sheep industry on a daily basis made me more believable in the classroom.

I became aware that becoming involved in the sheep industry at the local, state and national levels was important to the sustainability of our industry. It has been a pleasure to serve in various roles in the industry in an attempt to give back to an industry that has been so helpful to me over the years.



# Looking for Producers to Participate in Maternal Behavior in Rangeland Ewes Study

In a collaborative effort by the Department of Animal Science of UC Davis and UC Cooperative Extension, we are gathering producer interest to participate in a research study of ewe behavior and production.

This study will evaluate whether individual differences in ‘ease of handling’ among multiple flocks of extensively-managed ewes are related to maternal behavior and production success. Managing sheep on range comes with many challenges that demand a substantial amount of producer effort, time, and money. These challenges, such as predator invasion, incremental weather conditions, and disease management, can be especially harmful during the lambing season when issues such as lamb survival and mis-mothering by the ewe can occur. Our research team will investigate whether we can identify behavior traits among breeding ewes which predict the highest quality maternal care and productivity for pasture lambing flocks.



## **Study Objectives**

- (1) Investigate variation in docility among breeding ewes, across multiple flocks, during and after routine management events (e.g., foot-trimming, breeding preparation, vaccinations, etc.).
- (2) Assess variation in maternal behavior during post-lambing management events (processing and weaning) for the same ewes.
- (3) Evaluate the health and productivity of each ewe (e.g., subclinical mastitis check, wool fiber analysis).
- (4) Describe the relationship among the behavior, health, and production variables.

## **Specific Requirements for Study Participation:**

**WHO:** Producers of small-to-large flocks (> 40 ewes) in Northern California, with meat breeds preferred, and pasture lambing required (late winter to spring lambing preferred).

**WHEN:** Our research team will collaborate with cooperating producers to develop a specific schedule for behavioral observations and collection of biological samples, with minimal change to each producer’s current schedule. This study will begin in January 2020 and conclude in December 2021.

**WHAT:** Portion of flock (at least 40 ewes) will be visually marked (wool-safe marking fluid) for behavioral observation during and after handling events (pre and post lambing). When necessary, a portable corral system will be set-up at each site for behavior data collection.

**WHY:** This study is the first step toward validating ewe behavior as an important (and possibly heritable) trait to enhance selective breeding practices (e.g., Estimated Breeding Values). Cooperators will receive detailed information relevant to their flock regarding the impact of ewe behavioral traits on maternal success and lamb outcome.

## **UC Collaborators:**

- Kristina Horback, Assistant Professor, Department of Animal Science, UC Davis
- Dan Macon, Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor, UCCE – Placer/Nevada/Sutter/Yuba

## **Contact Info:**

If interested in participating, contact Kaleiah Schiller at email: [kmschiller@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kmschiller@ucdavis.edu) or cell: 612-916-4382.

# Notice of Public Hearing to Consider Continuation of the California Sheep Commission ~ December 10

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The California Department of Food and Agriculture (Department) is calling a public hearing to receive comments from California sheep producers and the general public on whether the operation of the California Sheep Commission (Commission) should be continued.

The California Sheep Commission is a State marketing program that conducts advertising and promotion, production research, and educational activities relating to California's lamb and wool industry. These activities are funded by mandatory assessments levied upon all California sheep producers who market over 100 pounds of wool annually.

**Date/Time:** December 10, 2019, beginning at 10:00 am.

**Location:** CA Dept. of Food and Agriculture 2800 Gateway Oaks Drive, Room 101 Sacramento, CA 95833

All affected California sheep producers and other interested persons are invited to participate in this hearing. At the hearing, a panel composed of Department staff will receive testimony and evidence, both oral and documentary, regarding the following:

1. The production, economic, and marketing conditions affecting the sheep industry of this state;
2. Whether the California Sheep Commission tends to effectuate the declared purposes and attain the declared objectives for which it was established;
3. Whether the California Sheep Commission furthers the interests of the residents of California.

Additionally, written comments submitted to the Department prior to the hearing will be accepted and entered into the hearing record. Please send all such correspondence to the attention of Ben Kardokus at the mailing address listed above in this notice or by email to: [ben.kardokus@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:ben.kardokus@cdfa.ca.gov).

The hearing transcript, written comments, and evidence submitted will be considered by the Department in determining if the California Sheep Commission will be authorized to continue. If the hearing record documents that the Commission is fulfilling its declared purposes, the Department may authorize the Commission to operate for another five years without the need for an industry referendum. However, if the Department finds from the hearing record that a substantial question exists as to whether the Commission is fulfilling its declared purposes, the Department will conduct a vote of affected sheep producers to determine if the Commission should be continued.

At the hearing, supporters of the California Sheep Commission should provide testimony that communicates why they believe the Commission should be continued. Conversely, those who oppose the continuation of the Commission should provide testimony that substantiates their concerns. Witnesses may wish to consider the following questions:

- Has the California sheep industry benefited from the activities funded by the California Sheep Commission? If yes, please explain how. If no, please explain why not.
- What are the most significant accomplishments of the Commission over the last five years?
- What problems, if any, would the industry face in the absence of a mandatory industryfunded program?
- Does the general public benefit from the activities of the California Sheep Commission? If yes, please explain how. If no, please explain why not.
- Have assessment monies been spent wisely, efficiently and according to the authority granted to the Commission?
- Are there ways that the Commission could be improved?

For questions, please call David Goldenberg, President/CEO of the California Sheep Commission, at (916) 933-7667 or Ben Kardokus with the Department's Marketing Branch at (916) 900-5018.

# Legislative Update

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## House Committee Approves AG Labor Bill

The House Judiciary Committee approved legislation on Wednesday, November 20, that attempts to address the severe labor shortage in U.S. agriculture. H.R. 4916, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, would expand the H-2A foreign guest worker program and provide a path to legalization for farm workers. The bill, whose original sponsors are Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) and Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.), is headed to the House floor for further action. The measure creates a new "Certified Agricultural Worker" (CAW) program that grants legal status to workers with at least 180 days of agricultural employment over the last two years, establishes a capped H-2A program for employers seeking to bring in temporary workers to fill year-round needs, and dedicates an additional 40,000 green cards per year for agricultural workers.

## Pelosi: USMCA Vote May Slip to Next Year

While indicating she was eager to complete passage of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) trade agreement, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) tempered expectations on Thursday, November 22, saying a vote may not occur until next year. "I'm not even sure if we came to an agreement today that it would be enough time to finish [this year], but just depends on how much agreement we come to," she said. The U.S. House is in recess for the Thanksgiving holiday and there are a limited number of days that Congress is in session through the end of the year. Pelosi met with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) to discuss the progress of USMCA ratification. No agreement was reached, but a spokesman for Pelosi said the meeting was productive. "Progress was made in narrowing the differences, and work continues. We can reach an agreement on USMCA when the Trade Representative makes the agreement enforceable for American workers." Several issues, including labor enforcement, remain unresolved.

## The Real MEAT Act Set to Battle "Fake Meat"

U.S. House of Representatives members Anthony Brindisi (D-NY) and Roger Marshall (R-KS) introduced the Real Marketing Edible Artificials Truthfully (MEAT) Act of 2019 to combat the rise of misleading labels on alternative protein products. The Real MEAT Act will codify the definition of beef for labeling purposes, reinforce existing mis-branding provisions to eliminate consumer confusion and enhance enforcement measures available to the USDA if the FDA fails to take appropriate action.

Most importantly, the text of the bill states that "any imitation meat food product, beef, or beef product shall be deemed to be mis-branded unless its label bears...the word 'imitation' immediately before or after the name of the food and a statement that clearly indicates the product is not derived from or does not contain meat."

## Bill Introduced to Provide Greater Flexibility to Livestock Haulers

Reps. Angie Craig (D-Minn.) and Lloyd Smucker (R-Pa.) introduced legislation on October 31 that would give farmers and ranchers more flexibility when transporting live animals and perishable goods. Specifically, the Responsible & Efficient Agriculture Destination Act (H.R. 4919) would make it possible for drivers hauling live animals and perishable goods to finish their routes if they are within 150 air miles of their destination. Additionally, the bill allows this exemption to be utilized year-round rather than only during harvesting seasons. Original co-sponsors of the bill include Reps. Bob Gibbs (R-Ohio), John Garamendi (D-Calif.), Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.) and Cindy Axne (D-Iowa). The Hours of Service (HOS) of Drivers proposal revises rules around the amount of time truckers can drive their loads and when they are required to rest between drives.

# Legislative Update

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## **North American Meat Institute Challenges California's Proposition 12 in Court**

In October, the North American Meat Institute (Meat Institute) filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of California's Proposition 12: The Farm Animal Confinement Initiative (Prop 12 or the law). The Meat Institute opposes the law because it will hurt the nation's food value chain by significantly increasing costs for producers and consumers.

The lawsuit, filed in the United States District Court for the Central District of California, asks the court to halt implementation of the law (grant a preliminary injunction) because Prop 12 violates the commerce clause and the federal structure of the United States Constitution. The Constitution prohibits states from discriminating against interstate and foreign commerce, regulating commerce outside of their borders or imposing undue burdens on interstate and foreign commerce. Prop 12 violates each of these limitations.

Enacted in November 2018, Prop 12 imposes space requirements regarding breeding pigs and veal calves within California. Prop 12 creates a barrier to trade by imposing obligations on out-of-state competitors in an effort to assist local producers of pork and veal. Prop 12 reaches beyond the state's borders by prohibiting the sale in California of uncooked pork or veal from animals housed in ways that do not meet California's requirements. As a result, Prop 12 sets confinement standards for how pigs and veal calves are raised anywhere in the United States or in any foreign country.

Lastly, Prop 12 imposes substantial burdens on the interstate markets for pork and veal that are not justified by legitimate local interests. For example, not only does Prop 12 prohibit the sale of uncooked cuts of pork from the breeding pigs, it prohibits the sale of meat from the offspring of those breeding pigs, even though the offspring are not subject to Prop 12's space requirements. This sales ban means Prop 12 effectively regulates how sows and veal calves are housed everywhere in the United States if the meat from those animals or their offspring could be sold in California.

## **Meat Industry Cannot Block California Animal Protection Law: U.S. Judge**

A federal judge in Los Angeles refused to stop California from enforcing a voter-approved measure requiring farmers to provide more space for animals being raised for food.

U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder ruled on Nov. 22 that the North American Meat Institute, whose members include processors such as Tyson Foods and retailers including Walmart, did not deserve a preliminary injunction against enforcing the measure known as Proposition 12.

Approved last November, the measure set minimum space requirements for calves raised for veal, breeding pigs and egg-laying hens, and forbade the sale of veal, pork or eggs from animals enclosed in too little space.

The Meat Institute had argued that enforcement would hurt producers and consumers by increasing food costs, and violated the U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause by requiring out-of-state producers to comply or face the sales ban.

Snyder, however, said the measure "applies evenly no matter where production takes place" and found "no serious argument" that it substantially burdened interstate commerce, even if it denied the trade group a "preferred, more profitable method of operating in a retail market."

Sarah Little, a spokeswoman for the Meat Institute, on Monday said the group was disappointed with the decision and may appeal. The lawsuit was filed on Oct. 4.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, whose office defended the measure, called Snyder's decision "a victory for ensuring that the food we consume comes from animals who are cared for as humanely as possible under the law."



# Legislative Update

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## USCIS Issues H-2A Policy Memo

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has published a policy memorandum (PM) that requires requests for temporary foreign workers for range sheep or goat herding or production be subject to the same requirements as other temporary agricultural workers.

USCIS is issuing this PM to ensure that H-2A non-immigrant sheep/goat herders may only fill temporary and/or seasonal herder positions, and that petitioners filing petitions for permanent sheep/goat herders comply with the requirements applicable to permanent positions.

Under the PM, H-2A sheep/goat herder petitions will be subject to the same temporary or seasonal need analysis that applies to all other H-2A petitions, and petitions seeking to hire H-2A sheep/goat herders for 364-day, back-to-back periods (or similarly lengthy, consecutive periods for the same job duties for a sheep/goat herder position) with no material or meaningful break between them will not be approved if the petitioner cannot prove it has a temporary or seasonal need for the workers. This PM will ensure that USCIS consistently applies H-2A regulations on temporariness and seasonality to H-2A sheep/goat herder petitions, and that the wages and working conditions of similarly situated United States workers are not depressed by the employment of H-2A temporary workers.

This PM will assist in safeguarding the integrity of the H-2A program, which was intended for agricultural labor or services that are temporary or seasonal in nature. Adjudicating the temporariness and seasonality of H-2A sheep/goat herder petitions with the same criteria as other H-2A petitions will also support consistency and fairness while protecting the interests of United States workers (for example, their wages and job opportunities). The PM is not intended to alter current policy or practice for the adjudication of non-sheep herding or goat herding H-2A petitions, but to ensure that USCIS adjudicates all H-2A sheep/goat herder petitions on a case-by-case basis, considering the totality of the facts presented, and in the same manner as all other H-2A petitions, consistent with the Immigration and Nationality Act and existing regulations.

Effective June 1, 2020, USCIS will adjudicate any Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, filed by petitioners seeking H-2A sheep/goat herder positions in line with this PM. USCIS believes the future effective date allows H-2A petitioners to amend their practices, as necessary.

This PM is being issued in response to a lawsuit brought by worker advocates challenging USCIS adjudications of H-2A sheep herding and goat herding petitions and the D.C. Circuit's order in that case. *Hispanic Affairs Project v. Acosta*, 901 F.3d 378, 386 (D.C. Cir. 2018). USCIS agrees with the order and interprets the D.C. Circuit Court's opinion as indicating that consecutive, back-to-back 364-day approvals of H-2A sheep/goat herder petitions (or similarly lengthy, consecutive periods for the same job duties for a sheep/goat herder position) with no material or meaningful break between them would violate the INA and Department of Homeland Security regulations, absent a petitioner establishing that its need is in fact seasonal or temporary.

USCIS welcomes comments on the PM, the proposed effective date, potential cost savings or increases, impacts on filing practices, and other topics that are the focus of this PM via the Policy Memoranda for Comment page. USCIS will review and consider all comments received during the 30-day comment period from November 14 to December 14, 2019, and may subsequently publish a revised PM, as needed. The guidance contained in the PM will be controlling and will supersede any prior guidance regarding the determination of temporary or seasonal need for H-2A sheep and goat herder petitions.

Sheep industry representatives are encouraged to file comments on the policy memo before the deadline of December 14.

To submit comments visit [www.uscis.gov/outreach/feedback-opportunities/policy-memoranda-comment](https://www.uscis.gov/outreach/feedback-opportunities/policy-memoranda-comment).

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sheep: Evaluating EID and Genetic Testing in Commercial Flocks

*By Julie Finzel and Rebecca Ozeran, Livestock and Natural Resources Advisors with UC Cooperative Extension*

The American Lamb Board (ALB) Roadmap describes current challenges in the sheep industry today and goals for the future. The challenges identified include a steadily declining sheep population since 1942 (Figure 1); currently American producers supply about 40% of lamb consumed in the U.S. One way to address this issue is for American lamb producers to increase their production efficiency - in other words, to produce more pounds of lamb without increasing ewe numbers. In response to industry challenges ALB crafted four goals for the industry to focus on:

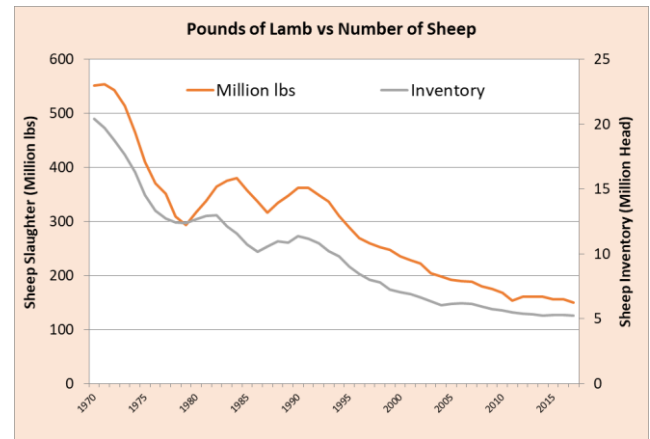
- 1) Reduce fat content and improve consistency in finished lamb products;
- 2) Increase demand for American lamb;
- 3) Increase productivity of American sheep;
- 4) Better match product to consumer preferences.

A team of UC Cooperative Extension Livestock Advisors and Specialists is working to address some of these industry priorities. Our current research project examines the costs and benefits of adopting electronic ID (EID) and genetic testing for commercial sheep flocks. We are working with 5 collaborator ranches throughout the state of California to assess current practices and create a cost-benefit analysis of the costs of genetic testing and EIDs relative to potential genetic improvement. Rams and market lambs will be EID tagged at each ranch; we collected ram DNA prior to the breeding season through a small ear punch, and are in the process of collecting DNA samples from the tagged lambs by collecting their tails at docking. When the lambs are processed at Superior, we will receive carcass quality and yield data, and can then connect lamb characteristics to ram genetics.

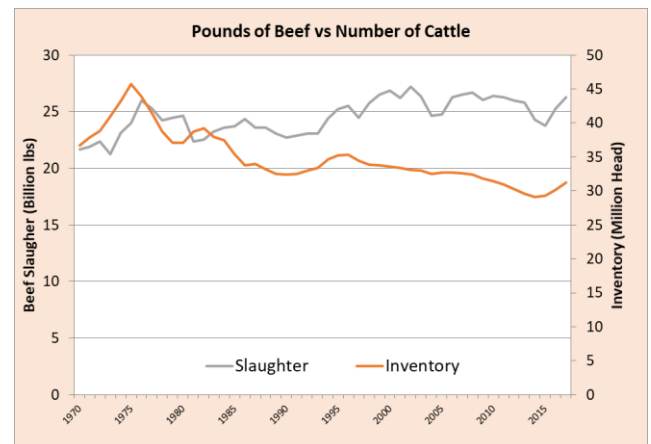
EID tags create individual animal records and facilitate the use of genetics in selecting for the best breeding stock. Genetic selection of breeding stock is proven to improve dollar returns to livestock operations (Figure 2) and allows producers to focus on economically important traits like lamb vigor, twinning rate, ram and ewe longevity, and more. Overall flock health also improves as producers increase marketable product produced per animal. From this research, we will:

- Better understand the operational costs and ability to keep records with EID versus existing tagging and recordkeeping;
- Connect lamb productivity to sire genetics;
- Model positive change scenarios if ranchers selected genetically superior lambs; and
- Share our results with California sheep producers through on-ranch workshops and various publications, to demonstrate the use and potential value of EID technology and genetic selection as a flock improvement tool.

*Figure 1. US sheep production has declined almost parallel to the decline in national sheep inventory.*



*Figure 2. US beef production has increased despite a decline in national cattle inventory.*



## NZ Sheep Farmers Now Able to Breed “Low Methane” Sheep

Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) Genetics has launched a “methane research breeding value”. Breeding value (BV) is a term used to help select important traits that ram breeders want to bolster within their flock.

The launching of this significant breeding tool is thanks to a 10-year multi-million dollar collaboration between the Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium (PGGRC), New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre (NZAGRC) and AgResearch, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Ministry for Primary Industries.

Ram breeders wanting to pursue the methane breeding value will need to measure a portion of their flock using Portable Accumulation Chambers. These chambers are onboard an AgResearch-operated trailer, which travels to individual farms. Sheep spend 50 minutes in the chambers, where their gas emissions are measured. This happens twice, at a 14-day interval. The resulting information is then used alongside other genetic information to calculate the methane breeding value.

King Country stud breeder Russell Proffit’s family has been producing rams for 40 years. Twenty years ago, Raupuha Stud began breeding lower-input sheep – that is sheep that were naturally able to stave off common health ailments and required less interventions.

“I’ve undertaken the Methane BV measurements because I believe an animal that is healthy and doing well should produce less methane and I wanted to test that. I don’t know if that’s the case yet, but either way breeding for less methane complements what we are working to achieve on our stud. That is, more robust rams that require less inputs and make less demand on the environment.”

Mr. Proffit says his commercial farmer clients have already expressed interest in the Methane breeding value. “Farmers are more interested than I anticipated. They are thinking about this issue and looking for ways to make progress.”

B+LNZ chief executive Sam McIvor says this interest was reinforced in recent B+LNZ research of 1000 farmers, where tools and information to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were among farmers’ top five on-farm priorities.

Interested farmers will have access to rams within two years – the time it will take to breed and grow rams on a commercial scale.

PGGRC general manager Mark Aspin says the new breeding value takes advantage of the fact individual sheep vary in their levels of methane emission and these differences are passed on to the next generation.

“This is a global first for any species of livestock. Launching the methane breeding value gives New Zealand’s sheep sector a practical tool to help lower our agricultural greenhouse gases. This is significant. Up until now, the only option available to farmers wanting to lower their greenhouse gas emissions has been to constantly improve their overall farming efficiency.

Although progress via breeding can be slow – around 1 per cent per year, assuming a breeder was selecting only for methane – it is cumulative and has no negative impact on productivity.

Mr. Aspin says it is important to note that the biggest influence on methane emissions is the amount of feed an animal eats. “To that end, the consortium is working on another three technologies, with a focus on reducing the amount of methane generated by feed. So, by breeding sheep that produce less methane per mouthful eaten – as other methane-reducing technologies come on stream – the influence of these sheep on the national flock’s methane production becomes compounding.” [Source: Beef + Lamb New Zealand](#)



*NZ ram breeders can now measure animals’ methane emissions, via Portable Accumulation Chambers.*

# Lamb & Wool Market Updates

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## U.S. Lamb Exports Trend Higher in September

Exports of U.S. lamb increased 22% year-over-year in September to 1,435 mt, while value improved 9% to \$1.77 million. Through the first three quarters of the year, exports were 31% above last year's pace at 12,061 mt, while value increased 13% to \$19.3 million. Lamb muscle cut exports were 9% lower than a year ago in volume (1,652 mt) but increased 2% in value (\$10.2 million). Markets showing promising muscle cut growth included the Dominican Republic, Panama and Guatemala.

Source: [U.S. Meat Export Federation](#)

## Records Reached in Australian October Export Numbers

October sheepmeat exports were the largest for any single month on record (dating back to 1994). 46,500 tons cwt of sheepmeat was shipped, comprising of 26,400 tons cwt of lamb and 20,100 tons cwt of mutton. This exceeded the previous sheepmeat export record set in October last year by 3,200 tons cwt. Sheepmeat exports are expected to remain elevated through the remainder of 2019, particularly with Chinese demand booming, new season lambs coming to market, on-going dry weather and strong mutton prices supporting sheep turnoff. Lamb exports to the U.S. have continued to perform strongly, up 7% on last year, as U.S. consumers are increasing their appetite for lamb and [U.S. domestic lamb supply tightens](#).

Source: [Meat & Livestock Australia](#)

## Wool Marketing Assistance Loan and Loan Deficiency Payment Program

The Farm Bill provides for Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) for crop years. Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments are intended to:

- minimize potential loan forfeitures;
- subsequent government accumulation of stocks;
- minimize the cost incurred by the Federal Government in storing the commodity; and
- allow a commodity produced in the United States to be marketed freely and competitively both domestically and internationally.

Producers of commodities who are eligible for loans can request marketing assistance loans or LDP's on their harvested commodities.

Marketing assistance loans are 9-month loans. Producers may repay the loan at a rate that is less than the original loan rate plus interest when market prices are below the commodity loan rates, which are established by law. Marketing assistance loans accomplish two objectives. First, they provide producers with interim financing by providing money for continued farming operations while not requiring the crop to be marketed during a period which commonly coincides with a producer's peak labor demands. Second, they facilitate the orderly marketing and distribution of loan eligible commodities throughout the year, since it gives the producer another option beyond sale of the crop whenever funds may be needed.

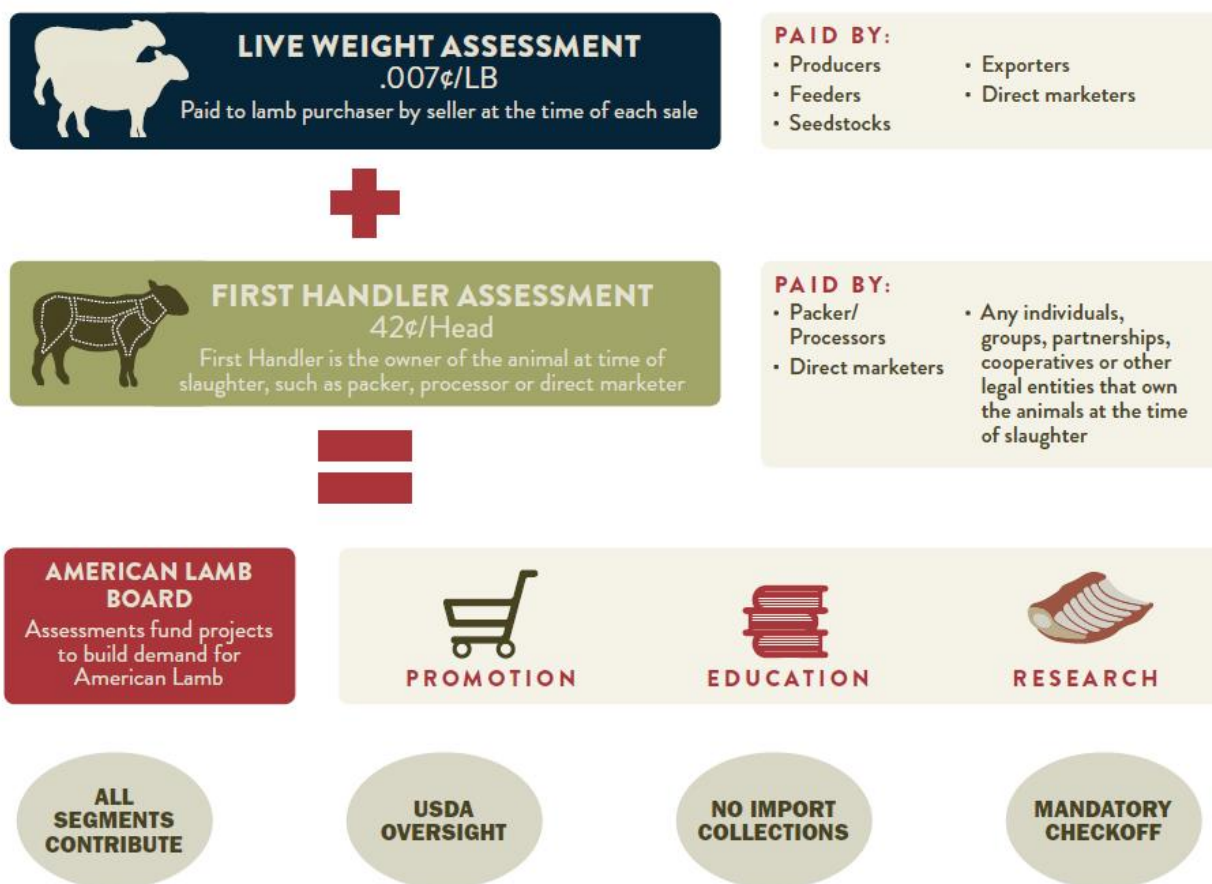
As an alternative to a marketing assistance loan, a producer may obtain an LDP on his/her crop. An LDP is available to a producer who, although eligible to obtain a marketing assistance loan, agrees to forgo a marketing assistance loan for the commodity in return for an LDP. The payment is the established loan rate for the applicable loan commodity less the repayment rate multiplied by the eligible quantity of the commodity.

The USDA Farm Service Agency carries detailed information about the Wool and Mohair Marketing Assistance Loan and Loan Deficiency Program at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/psd/mohair.htm>.



# How Your American Lamb Checkoff Works

*The national lamb checkoff, directed by the American Lamb Board (ALB), is funded by mandatory assessments paid by all segments of the sheep industry. By federal law, all sheep or lambs of any age, including ewes, rams, feeder and market lambs, breeding stock and cull animals, are subject to the national lamb checkoff assessment at the time of every sale.*



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# CDFA Antimicrobial Use & Stewardship Program Releases First Annual Report

In response to growing concern surrounding antibiotic resistance, the California Legislature passed a first-in-the-nation law requiring veterinary oversight for all uses of medically important antibiotics in livestock. California Senate Bill 27 (SB 27, Hill), signed by Governor Brown in 2015, resulted in additions to the California Food and Agricultural Code that address the sales and use of medically important antibiotics for livestock, development of voluntary antibiotic stewardship guidelines and best management practices, and monitoring of antibiotic use, as well as patterns of antibiotic resistance in bacteria.

The California Department Food and Agriculture (CDFA) established the Antimicrobial Use & Stewardship Program (AUS) program, which consists of a team of veterinarians, epidemiologists, and specialists working to preserve the efficacy of antibiotic drugs by establishing a comprehensive antibiotic stewardship and monitoring program.

The CDFA AUS program reports annually on the program's priorities and accomplishments. This AUS 2019 Annual Report focuses on the 2018 - 2019 fiscal year (FY 18 - 19), spanning July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019.

To read the report visit: [www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/AUS/docs/AUS\\_AnnualReport-2019.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/AUS/docs/AUS_AnnualReport-2019.pdf).

## AUS 2018 Commercial Sheep Survey

**Question:** Prior to state legal changes regarding antibiotic use in livestock, how and why were antimicrobials and veterinarians being utilized by commercial sheep producers in California?

**Significance to CA:** California has the second-largest number of sheep in the nation and ranks #5 for the number of sheep operations nationally (USDA-NASS 2017 Census). Better understanding of antimicrobial use and animal health management practices on sheep operations will inform development of best management guidelines and judicious use principles for sheep producers and their veterinarians.

**Summary:** AUS researchers conducted an anonymous mail-out survey to provide information on antimicrobial use and animal health management practices associated with commercial sheep in California. Information was captured regarding antimicrobial use practices, purchasing habits, record keeping, and decision making for calendar year 2017. Other information was also gathered, including operation demographics, vaccination practices, veterinarian usage, and best ways to communicate information to the industry in the future.

### Study Progress:

- The survey was mailed out to 658 commercial sheep producers across California; 108 surveys were completed and returned (response rate 16%).
- These responses provided information on antimicrobial use and health management practices for operations responsible for 110,715 total sheep, representing 23% of all sheep in California (per USDA-NASS 2017 Census).
- 91% of respondents indicated they were the owner of the operation.
- Average herd size was 1,044 sheep and median herd size was 102 (range: 1 - 33,282).
- The majority of respondents indicated they routinely recorded which antibiotics they used, the start date of treatment, and the ID or group number of the animal(s) being treated. Most information was kept in paper form.
- The majority (59%) of respondents reported using the services of a veterinarian in 2017, prior to the implementation of state antibiotic use laws. Of those sheep producers who indicated use of a veterinarian: 64% used them for emergency calls, 63% consulted them over the phone or by e-mail, and 36% used them

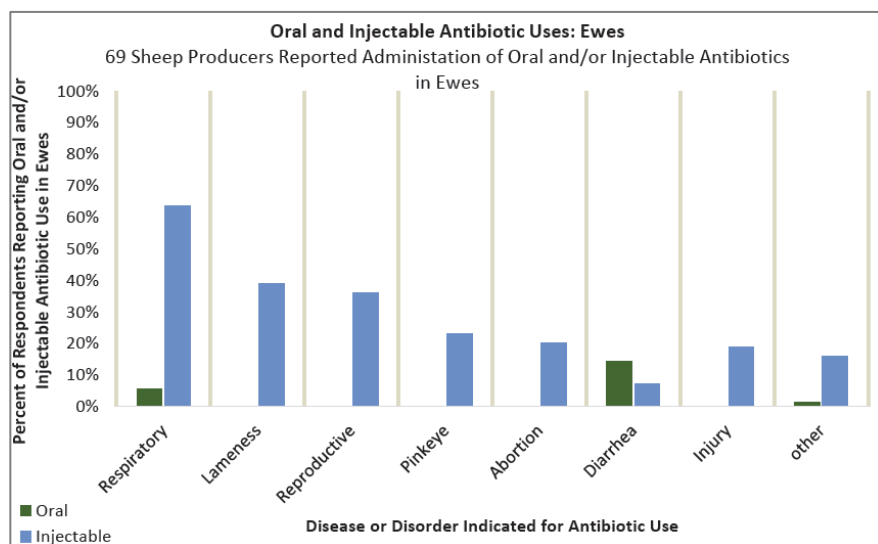
in a regular or routine fashion. Thirty-five percent of all commercial sheep producers reported veterinary involvement in decision-making surrounding antibiotic use prior to state legal changes. These findings identify an opportunity for the program to support and foster these essential veterinarian-client-patient relationships moving forward, as antibiotic use now requires veterinary oversight in California.

- For 2017, 7% of all survey respondents reported administering antibiotics in feed and 7% reported administering them in water.
- Most (71%) reported administering antibiotics to individual animals via oral (i.e., bolus or drench) or injectable routes.
- 58% of respondents reported administering oral and/or injectable antibiotics to their lambs and 64% reported oral and/or injectable use in their ewes.
- Survey participants were asked how antibiotics were most commonly used on their operations: 89% to treat individual affected sheep and 4% to prevent disease.
- Without considering any other factors, such as herd size or geographic location, the overall top diseases or disorders for which oral or injectable antibiotics were reported to have been individually administered in lambs were: respiratory disease, diarrhea, and injury.
- The overall top diseases or disorders for which oral or injectable antibiotics were reported to have been individually administered in ewes were: respiratory disease, lameness, and reproduction issues. (*See figure below*).
- Greater than 75% of sheep survey respondents agreed they would be willing to treat their animals with alternatives to antibiotics if they were equally effective.
- 80% of sheep operations across the state reported using vaccines, mostly for bacterial diseases.

**How This Helps AUS:** AUS integrates information gathered from this survey when creating evidence-based educational materials and guidelines, as well as using it to inform program activities and reporting. Findings from the AUS 2018 Commercial Sheep Survey have directly informed the priorities for literature review and educational material development of AUS' Sheep Steering Committee, comprised of a panel of subject matter experts.

In addition to informing materials developed, survey results also guide how AUS communicates and disseminates information. For instance, 69% of respondents indicated they would be interested in obtaining information on relevant bacterial antibiotic resistance patterns, antibiotic usage guidelines, and best management practices developed by AUS. And over 35% of sheep producers surveyed across California indicated interest in staff training materials. The top ways respondents would be interested in receiving such information are: website, paper newsletters, printed handbooks, and workshops/presentations/talks.

**Next Steps:** Analysis of survey responses is ongoing and will continue to feed directly into AUS stewardship activities. Findings are not final and more information regarding survey responses, as well as resulting materials and guidelines, will be provided in future publications.





# American Wool Offers Holiday Gift Guide

Looking for the perfect gift for that special someone in your life? There's no doubt they'd appreciate many of the items in the [AmericanWool.org Gift Guide](https://www.americanwool.org/gift-guide). From hats and scarves to socks and pillows, there's something for everyone. Whether you're looking to spend a few dollars or a few hundred dollars, the quality of items made with American wool is unrivaled.

Each of these items are from companies that use American wool and also manufacture in the United States, meaning with each purchase you are supporting American jobs. An all-natural and long-lasting fiber, wool items make an excellent gift for your loved-ones to enjoy.



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## **Wool Beanie – NOLIN**

This 100% American beanie is well-built with a LIFETIME GUARANTEE! Even better – with every beanie NOLIN sells, they donate an organic cotton newborn beanie to NICU families in need, distributed through Baby2Baby. To purchase visit [www.nolin.co](https://www.nolin.co).

## **5<sup>TH</sup> Avenue Acadia Park Merino Throw – Pendleton Woolen Mills**

This superfine merino wool throw will keep you comfortable for naps and look great with your décor! This is another gift that gives back, as The National Park Foundation receives a royalty from the purchase of each national park blanket. To purchase visit [www.pendleton-usa.com](https://www.pendleton-usa.com).

## **Baby Hat & Mittens Set – Faribault Woolen Mill Co.**

Too cute! This adorable (made in Minnesota) set comes in two sizes, 0-6 and 6-12 months. It will keep your bundle of joy warm and stylish during those brisk winter walks. To purchase visit [www.faribaultmill.com](https://www.faribaultmill.com).

## **Wind River Columbia Hat – Bailey Hats**

This low-profile pinch front hat features Bailey's LiteFelt material, a treated wool material that is durable, shape retentive, and water repellent. It also features a wrapped leather hatband that goes through the brim and turns into a chinstrap with a wooden bead adjuster. To purchase visit [www.baileyhats.com](https://www.baileyhats.com).

## **Wilson Ultralight Ski Sock – Farm to Feet**

These ultralight ski socks make a great gift for the winter sport lover in your life. Wool fibers next to your skin naturally regulate temperature while built-in comfort compression helps reduce foot fatigue during a long day of floating through powder or carving up hardpack. To purchase visit [www.farmtofeet.com](https://www.farmtofeet.com).

## **Auna Colorblock Shawl Pattern & Vale Yarn – Brooklyn Tweed**

Looking for a gift for a beginner knitter? We love the Auna shawl. The geometric motif and dusky palette of the Auna shawl evoke a sunset hitting a high desert cliff. Knit with Vale, a laceweight yarn spun from 100% USA-grown Rambouillet wool. To purchase visit [www.brooklyntweed.com](https://www.brooklyntweed.com).



### **Wool-Filled Bed Pillows – Holy Lamb Organics**

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### **Wool Woven Tie – Ramblers Way**

Classic herringbone design is paired with the softest American wool for a polished Wool Woven Tie that packs a style punch. When worn with a simple button-down shirt, this slim-cut wool tie exudes contemporary luxury. To purchase visit [www.ramblersway.com](http://www.ramblersway.com).

### **Women's Access or Solstice Skirt – Voormi**

It's an after run, hike, bike, climb favorite among the ladies who already love Voormi's line of skirts. Featuring the lightest and most breathable SURFACE HARDENED Thermal Wool in the VOORMI line, the Access Skirt requires little laundering, allowing consecutive-day wear as you cruise through the outdoors this spring and summer. To purchase visit [www.voormi.com](http://www.voormi.com).

### **Wool Filled Dog Bed – MollyMutt**

Pamper your favorite pooch with this wool-filled dog bed! This bed is made of all natural materials – 100% American wool filling and a 100% cotton canvas cover, meaning your pet will stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. To purchase visit [www.mollymutt.com](http://www.mollymutt.com).

### **Bonus: Stocking Stuffer Guide**

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#### **Wool Garden Pellets – Wild Valley Farms**

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#### **Wool Dryer Balls – LooHoo**

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# Wolves' Presence Changes Ranchers' Lives in North State

*By Ching Lee, Ag Alert*

As more gray wolves become established in California, ranchers who operate in known wolf territory say their way of life has changed as they grapple with the presence of the predator and how to protect their livestock.

Gray wolves remain protected under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts, although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed ending federal protections for the predator throughout the lower 48 states. Even if that happens, it would still be illegal to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, kill or attempt any of those actions in California.

Since 2011, when a lone wolf known as OR-7 wandered into eastern Siskiyou County—marking the first detection of a wolf in California in nearly 100 years—the state has confirmed two wolf packs: the Shasta Pack and Lassen Pack, the latter being the only currently known pack in the state.

During the past three years, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed 12 instances of cattle lost to depredation—four in Plumas County and eight in Lassen County—the majority of which occurred on private land. In total, CDFW reported 43 investigations since 2015.

Ranchers say those numbers are misleading, as they believe actual depredations far outpace those that are confirmed.

"There are circumstances where they aren't able to rule it out, but there's not enough evidence to make the confirmation," said Kirk Wilbur, director of government affairs for the California Cattlemen's Association. "Additionally, in some of that dense forested area in Lassen County, you may not ever find the animal. Your cow may go missing and you're never able to even find it to have an investigation."

Billie Roney, who runs cattle on Lassen County forest allotments, has lost cattle to wolves in each of the past three years. She said she and her husband, Wally, no longer use half of their normal grazing ground where wolves are known to be, and now run almost all their cattle on their private land, locating them in a meadow "every single night to keep them from being killed" and watching them constantly. Not only have they lost cattle from depredation, but wolf presence has stressed their herd, leading to lower conception rates and body weights.

"It's just not fair to the cattle to have them put up with this kind of craziness," she said. "We keep them alive, but their quality of life isn't all that hot and our quality of life is shot."

The state currently does not have a program to compensate ranchers for confirmed wolf kills, though ranchers could seek federal compensation through the Livestock Indemnity Program, which Roney said she has not done because she thinks receiving payment for a livestock kill would make it easier for wolf advocates to dismiss livestock losses and would not address the actual losses ranchers experience.

Lassen County rancher Taylor Hagata, who so far has not experienced any wolf conflicts, said not only should there be state compensation for wolf livestock kills, but the state should also pay ranchers for wolf presence, noting that ranchers are being asked to purchase and try different nonlethal wolf deterrent tools such as installing flags along fence lines, using noisemakers and employing range riders, all of which could become expensive and may not work long term as wolves become used to them.

Todd Swickard, who runs cattle in Lassen and Plumas counties and has lost cattle to wolves in the last two years, said the deterrent tools are simply not practical for those who graze animals on forest ground where cattle are often spread out over thousands of acres.



"We had one cowboy run (the wolves) off and they'd just go a couple hundred yards away, sit under a tree and watch him until he went away," he said. "I'm certain those tools are useful, but in an open-range situation, they're not very effective."

What has been more helpful, Swickard said, is having open communication with CDFW and receiving notifications when wolves are detected nearby, "because then we can be more vigilant, be more effective with our labor."

Hagata said he would like more transparency from the department, including knowing the GPS coordinates of collared wolves, though he acknowledged potential problems with making that information public.

Wilbur said communication between the department and the ranching community has improved, in large part because of Kent Laudon, the state wolf specialist, who "has done a really good job on the ground, communicating with ranchers when there are conflicts."

Where frustration remains for ranchers, Wilbur said, is with "the higher levels" of CDFW, as ranchers try to seek clarity on wolf policy. For example, ranchers remain confused about whether they're allowed to chase a wolf away when it is caught in the act of attempting to kill livestock, because it is unclear what constitutes illegal "pursuit" under state law or impermissible "harassment" under federal law. There's also ambiguity in state law as to what constitutes a gray wolf versus a domestic dog or a wolf hybrid, the latter two of which are not protected.

Laudon said answers to those questions are "clearly out of my hands." He acknowledged some deterrent tools such as fladry are not intended to work everywhere, as "they have specific applications for specific scenarios," and that those who operate in larger allotments have it tough.

Range riders may not necessarily be a solution for everyone, he said, but they could be for some operations that manage their herds and allotments with more high-intensity, short-duration grazing, though he acknowledged that in many allotments currently, ranchers are looking to do the opposite: more-dispersed, longer-duration grazing.

Like ranchers, Laudon said he wants more communication and relationship building, so that "all of us are working together to come up with creative solutions. I look at this as a community approach—less about me or CDFW dictating to people throughout rural California," he said.

Lassen County rancher Jack Hanson said he appreciates the improved communication from CDFW and understands that Laudon and other department staff are often "hamstrung" by law and department policy in what they can do for ranchers. He said he also recognizes that until the wolf's protected status is removed, ranchers' hands are tied, as they have no lethal option to deal with wolves that kill livestock.

"We are the epicenter," he said of living in wolf country. "It's certainly changed the way we look at the future. It's the anticipation of what may be down the road that scares all of us."

## **If Your Suspect A Wolf Kill**

Wolves are currently protected under both the state and federal endangered species acts; under the California law, lethal control of wolves is not permitted under any circumstance. According to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), "non-injurious harassment [of wolves] is allowed when wolves are within 0.25 miles of livestock, or within 100 yards of a dwelling, agricultural structure, campsite, or commercial facility."

If you suspect that wolves may have killed livestock, contact both the Wildlife Services State Office (916-979-2675) and the CDFW Wolf Coordinator (Kent Laudon: 530-225-2186). Investigators will search the kill site for predator sign and will examine the livestock carcass to document and cause of death.

For further information on ranching with predators visit [www.californiawoolgrowers.org/resources/predators](http://www.californiawoolgrowers.org/resources/predators).

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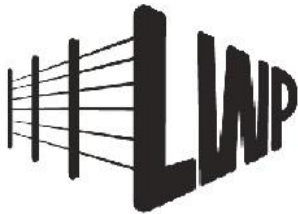
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### **Mark Your Calendars**

December 6, 2019

CWGA Board of Directors Meeting  
Modesto, CA

December 10, 2019

CA Sheep Commission Meeting  
Sacramento, CA

January 22 - 25, 2020

American Sheep Industry Association  
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