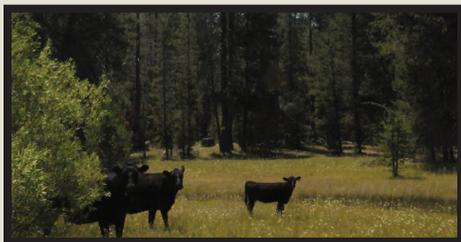


Profiles in Ranching



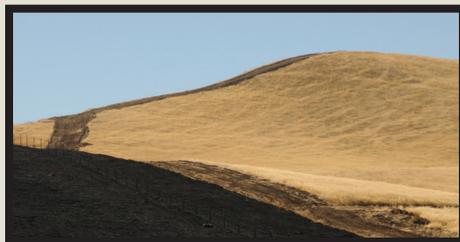
Daley Ranch – Kyle Daley

The Daley Ranch is a family ranch based in the foothills of Butte County that has been ranching for five generations. Each year November-May cattle graze the rolling grasslands, vernal pools, and oak woodlands that are the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A portion of the Daley Family Ranch is a vernal pool mitigation bank, highlighting the ecological value of grazing that is used to promote endemic plant and wildlife species.

In the summer, most of the cattle move to higher elevations on private land and a U.S. Forest Service permit above Lake Oroville. In the forest, the cattle consume grasses and brush, including managing new vegetative growth within fire fuel breaks.

Many people associate goats as browsers, but the Daley cattle are born in the mountains and learn from birth to eat sweet birch (*Ceanothus integerrimus*), a brush that grows up to 13 feet tall.

Being exposed at birth and again as yearlings, to browsing by older females in the herd make the Daley cattle versatile. In addition, some of the Daley cattle will remain in the valley for the summer when the hills are a golden brown. The cattle will continue to eat the dry forage, which reduces fire fuel loads, but are provided a protein supplement to ensure nutritional health.



Foster Family – Holly Foster

The Fosters have experienced a serious fire on their ranch in Butte County once every decade since the 1980s. They take a proactive approach to creating defensible space around buildings, and by putting in fire breaks along all road frontage. Over the years, the family has improved dozer trails that facilitate cattle movement during the winter months and accessibility for fire equipment. They have worked with CAL FIRE on various fuel reduction projects over the years. Fosters also work with neighbors of smaller parcels who recognize the benefits of grazing to reduce fuel loads. They fence around their homesites and graze each year to reduce residual forage.

During both the Camp Fire in 2018 and the Humboldt Fire in 2008, you would find Bob Foster out on a bulldozer assisting CAL FIRE in putting in additional fire breaks. They've had numerous smaller incidents where a fire was either contained or put out with their equipment before fire personnel had time to respond.

The Foster Family also grazes for Butte Community College to reduce fire fuel loads, manage invasive weeds and promote native plants. They credit grazing, in combination with the fire breaks they put in, for mitigating the risk to the college during recent fires.



Donati Ranch – Rocky Donati

The Donati Family ranching operation spans multiple counties in the Northern Sacramento Valley, grazing on public wetlands, foothill oak woodland and the Sutter Buttes.

Donatis also works with neighbors to graze smaller parcels in the foothills of Butte County nearby or adjacent to larger parcels. When grazing these smaller sites, they maintain fences and work with the homeowner, who regularly checks the cattle, and provides a water supply off their home well. These small parcels can be a win-win situation; Donatis get grass for the cows and the landowner gets some rent to help towards paying taxes.

Donatis typically have a few cows at these sites for the winter and spring. They reduce vegetation around the house, and eliminate grass under oak trees by foraging and trampling, which eliminates ladder fuels that often catch trees on fire. Outside of Oroville they have had fires on oak woodland grasslands, and have seen how the grazing has prevented catastrophic losses to the oak trees.

Donati Ranch is taking a proactive approach to fuels management and are working with CAL FIRE to use prescribed fire in the spring to reduce brush cover that will improve livestock grazing forage and create fuel breaks to enhance fire protection for local communities.