



LIVESTOCK AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Placer/Nevada Livestock and Natural Resources program is the leading information, education, and demonstration source for livestock producers, consumers of local food, and a new generation committed to working in agriculture.

Livestock production in Placer and Nevada Counties generates gross income of over \$14 million annually to local ranchers. Many types of livestock are raised in the two-county area including cattle, sheep, goats, horses, llamas, and alpacas.

Agricultural viability is a major issue in both Placer and Nevada Counties. Land development, increasing expenses, lack of economic and financial planning, and an aging agricultural population have contributed to a challenging agricultural situation.

To meet this challenge, the Livestock and Natural Resources program in Placer and Nevada Counties takes local and statewide UC research to producers to help them be economically and environmentally sustainable.

Ag viability translates to three core concepts:

- Structure your livestock operation to work with nature. This means matching your herd's production cycles with nature's cycles.*
- Sell as much product locally. This will put a greater share of the food dollar in the rancher's pocket.*
- The people who eat food need to meet and understand the people who grow or raise their food. Building a true community is the final step towards sustainability.*



Educational emphasis for the livestock program is a hands-on experience and working with others to observe impacts and solve problems. This photo from the 2010 Multi-Species Academy is an example of that experience.

Program Highlights

- ◆ **33 workshops** provided 193 hours of instruction and reached over 2,300 ag producers
- ◆ **700 ag producers** received the quarterly **Foothill Rancher** newsletter
- ◆ **70,000 hits** on livestock related information on our UCCE website (ceplacer.ucdavis.edu)
- ◆ **California Grazing Academy** held for the 20th time, reached over 550 producers and agency personnel who manage over one million acres of pasture and rangeland



California Grazing Academy



Green team troubleshoots electric fence problems as part of a training exercise.

“The most meaningful thing I experienced was watching how the cows use the pasture. In addition, using the square to estimate the stock days was very useful!!”



Red team sets up a paddock large enough to graze 45 heifers for 4 hours and leave adequate residual.

Issue

Many producers need increased knowledge or awareness of controlled grazing. Livestock producers need hands-on experience to help them implement controlled grazing on their operations.

What Was Done

The academy is a three day, live-in course emphasizing the practical application of research based, controlled grazing principles. The target audience is ranchers who manage on private or public pasture and rangeland. The unique aspect of the Grazing Academy is the emphasis on experiential learning. Participants learn by actually applying the principles taught in real pastures with live cattle.

Impact

The academy is now in its 20th year. Over 550 ranchers, agency people, and extension advisors have attended who collectively manage over 1 million acres of range or pasture. Participants commented on the important things they learned:

- To follow the principles, and about feed banking and how to supplement correctly while getting away from buying hay.
- Adequate acreage is required to match animal numbers and that the health of the animals, the land, and the plants depends on the grazing system, rest period, stocking density and environmental factors.
- The practical application of the high density grazing was awesome (setting fence, moving animals, etc.).



PlacerGROWN Food & Farm Conference



Keynote speaker Holly George discusses digital storytelling in Sierra County to build agriculture awareness.

“This is my first time at this conference. It was well-organized. FFA members were a great resource for the day. Great job!”



UCCE Intern Vanessa Reed discusses the use of web pages and social networking to market your farm or ranch.

Issue

The 15th annual conference’s purpose was to provide diverse educational opportunities, a keynote speech on a relevant agricultural issue, and networking with other producers and support businesses.

What Was Done

- Keynote speaker Holly George discussed digital storytelling as a way to inform and educate the public and policy makers about agriculture.
- 26 workshops were held on the following themes: Beginning Farming, School Gardens, Marketing, Using Social Media, Land Resources, Digital Storytelling, and Livestock.

Impact

- 230 people attended the Farm Conference. Each participant received a 200-page proceedings booklet, which contained workshop speakers’ information.
- PlacerGROWN President Karen Killebrew presented the Farmer of the Year award to the Snow family of Snow’s Citrus Court.
- 32 workshops were held along with a networking reception in the afternoon.



Farm and Ranch Business Planning



Nevada County farmer Drew Horwath discusses his 2011 farm plan.

“I learned to calculate margins and analyze enterprises, to present homework and get feedback from the class and instructors.



Placer County farmer Rich Ferriera discusses his operation plan.

Issue

The local food movement is active in both Placer and Nevada Counties. In many instances there is more demand than supply. There is a need for more commercial farmers and ranchers in both counties to create more supply.

What Was Done

This was the fourth year in a row that UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) conducted a six-week business-planning course for farmers and ranchers. Topics covered included: determining mission and vision, three secrets to profitability, conducting an economic analysis, cash flow and operations planning, marketing, and developing an action plan of implementation. The course was supported by a USDA Risk Management Agency grant.

Impact

- Nine Placer and Nevada County farms and ranches completed the 2011 course.
- Presentations by producer graduates from previous business planning courses provided the practical knowledge needed to implement principles and tools learned in the class.
- Each participant was able to set profit and salary targets for their business, create mission and vision statements, develop an operations plan, and map out an action plan of next steps.



Sierra Foothills Meat Buyers Club



Sampling of lamb for potential meat buyers club customers in Penryn.

***“Looking forward to more delicious meat.”
- A Truckee meat-buyers club customer.***



Another satisfied customer meets Meat Buyers Club producers.

Issue

Local meat producers primarily market through farmer’s markets, restaurants, and retail stores. There is a need for additional marketing venues.

What Was Done

The first Meat Buyers Club deliveries occurred in August 2008. Deliveries have continued. There were three producers who initially participated and provided beef, lamb, and pork. Delivery points are in Auburn, Granite Bay, and Truckee. A website, order form, brochure, and customer newsletter have been created.

Impact

- Over \$16,000 in sales was generated between July 2010 and June 2011.
- Participating producers included: Coffeepot Ranch – pork; High Sierra Beef – grassfed beef; Flying Mule Farm – grassfed lamb and goat; Sinclair Family Farm – grassfed lamb and pasture raised eggs; and Fowler Family Farm – pastured poultry.
- Marketing time was drastically reduced as the products are pre-sold with central delivery points.
- This may be a way to improve cash flow during the winter and early spring when fewer farmers’ markets are open.
- Increased sales at existing delivery points is needed to cover distribution costs.



Multi-Species Academy



Learning to assess body condition in sheep.

“I saved a bunch of dollars just by hearing a quick story about an ‘a-ha moment’ concerning creep feeding; surprised I didn’t shout -Eureka!”



Participants build an electric fence to contain goats in the area to be browsed.

Issue

Ranchers and farmers in Placer and Nevada Counties are currently interested in or using goats or sheep on their property for fuel load reduction and removal of noxious weeds. Many that are interested in goat or sheep production see opportunities to add value to production through niche marketing or contract grazing. The California Multi-Species Academy was designed, developed, and implemented to enable local producers to gain experience and knowledge in working with goats or sheep prior to using them on their farms and ranches.

What Was Done

The California Multi-Species Academy was held at two Nevada County ranches. It featured 25 hours of instruction taught over 2.5 days.

Participants worked in teams that each received a flock of one hundred finishing lambs and sixty goats to graze during the school.

Impact

Training evaluations revealed knowledge increases in the following areas:

- Body condition scoring to assess nutritional condition, planning, grazing behavior, grazing principles, and niche meat marketing, and contract grazing.
- Participants found networking with other producers, where to find more information, and the class binder as very helpful.