



Program Highlights

- ◆ 31 workshops reaching over 2,300 ag producers
- ◆ 700 ag producers received the quarterly *Foothill Rancher* newsletter
- ◆ 84,000 hits on livestock related information on our UCCE website (ceplacer.ucdavis.edu)
- ◆ **Multi-Species Grazing Academy held for first time**
- ◆ **Sierra Foothills Meat Buying Club** provides monthly local meat deliveries to four sites and generates over \$13,000 in sales

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.

The implementation of sustainability translate 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 purchase 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.*



Dr. Robin Skillman discusses beef cattle health at the Tahoe Cattlemen's and the University of California Cooperative Extension Beef Quality Assurance Program held at the Lincoln High School Farm in March 2010.



Mobile Poultry Processor

Issue

There is increasing interest among agricultural producers to raise meat birds and market them direct off the farm or at local farmers' markets. Processing is an issue as the nearest processor is located in Sacramento. Producers were interested in building a mobile poultry processor that could travel from farm-to-farm. This would be allowable due to a poultry exemption that allows a farm to process up to 20,000 birds a year providing they raise the birds, process with family labor, and sell off the farm or at farmers' markets.

What Was Done

A collaborative effort between local producers, UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), High Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council, and Sierra College began in 2006. A grant received through Sierra College and sponsorships allowed for the purchase of a trailer, cones, scalding, plucker, and knives in 2008. UCCE provided funding to complete trailer construction in June 2009.



The processor's scalding and plucker is all set up to process turkeys at Natural Trading Company in October 2009.

Impact

- Three different farms pilot tested the trailer and equipment in June—August 2009. Performance of the equipment exceeded expectations, especially the scalding.
- Steering committee is finalizing rental procedures, care and maintenance, scheduling, and developing a job description for a manager.
- A processor project manager was hired and is a poultry producer in Nevada County.
- Over 12 different Placer and Nevada County farms have used the processor for over 2,000 boilers, turkeys, and ducks.
- Producers now have a local alternative available to them for poultry processing. More and more producers will be raising meat birds now that trailer construction has been completed.
- Collaborative efforts between producers, UC Cooperative Extension, and the High Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council provided poultry processing infrastructure in both Placer and Nevada Counties.



PlacerGROWN Farm Conference



*Kathy Laible of Nevada County
Free Range Beef discusses marketing
during the producer panel.*

Issue

The annual PlacerGROWN Farm Conference is co-hosted by UC Cooperative Extension and PlacerGROWN. The conference had been held annually since 1995. The conference's purpose is to provide diverse educational opportunities, keynote speech on a relevant agricultural issue, and networking with other producers and support businesses.

What Was Done

- Keynote speaker Lynn Miller discussed issues and opportunities available to

small farmers. He also talked about the newly formed Small Farm Conservancy which is looking to provide services to small farmers such as insurance.

- 26 workshops were held on the following themes: Beginning Farming, Farming and Ranching as a Business, Marketing, Growing Growers, Crops, and Livestock.
- Trade show featured over 20 ag related businesses and organizations.
- The opening ceremonies and lunch were conducted and prepared by the Lincoln High School Future Farmers of America (FFA).

Impact

- 239 people attended the Farm Conference. Each participant received a 200-page proceedings booklet, which contained workshop speakers' information. This was the largest conference attendance ever.
- 22 of the 28 speakers were from Placer and Nevada Counties.
- Placer County Supervisor Robert Weygandt, District 2, discussed Placer Legacy program, Placer County Conservation Plan, and highlighted several conservation easements including the Natural Trading Company.
- PlacerGROWN President Karen Killebrew presented the Farmer of the Year award to Bryan Kaminsky of Natural Trading Company.
- 20 local businesses and Placer County helped support the conference.
- One evaluation comment sums up why the conference is held: "It was great to see the sense of community just among the people here trying to make it work from the FFA students to the volunteers to the people that put it all together. It is a genuine sense of commitment that is hard to find elsewhere."



Nevada County Grown

Issue

Over 80% of all farms in Nevada County are 50 acres or less in size. In order for most farms to survive economically, they must emphasize direct marketing to the consumer. For every dollar spent in the grocery store, farmers receive less than twenty cents. There is a need for an agricultural marketing organization to expand existing markets, create new ones, and promote buying local food to consumers.

What Was Done

- Nevada County Local Food Coalition, Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner, and UC Cooperative Extension worked with the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to secure \$10,000 in start-up funding for Nevada County Grown.
- Nevada County Agricultural Farm Guide was published in May 2010 and is now in countywide distribution.
- Nevada County Grown website (nevadacountygrown.org) features the farm guide, information on local producers, and where to find local food.
- Second annual Nevada County Grown meeting was held February 2010.



Sarah Patton talks about the connection between agriculture and the Nevada County 4-H program at the 2010 Nevada County Grown Annual meeting held in Nevada City.

Impact

- The Nevada County Grown Annual Meeting attracted over 50 participants. UC Cooperative Extension facilitated a farmer panel. Each farm or ranch gave a brief overview of their place and discussed their marketing needs.
- Presentations were made at the Annual Meeting by representatives of FFA and 4-H along with Paul Muller and Dru Rivers of Full Belly Farm.
- The Ag Guide's May publishing and distribution occurred just prior to peak production of agricultural crops. Volunteer labor supports development and publishing of the guide. Most of the 20,000 copies have been distributed.
- Planning is underway for **Come Home to Eat 2010**. The event will be held at Western Gateway Park to honor local farmers and expand the audience for locally grown food. The event hopes to attract 1,000 people and will feature a walk through the farm guide.



Farm and Ranch Business Planning

Issue

The local food movement is active in both Placer and Nevada Counties. In many instances there is more supply than demand. There is a need for more commercial farmers and ranchers in both counties to create more supply. People interested in getting started in agriculture need to identify what to market, existing resources, and potential enterprises. From there, they need the ability to do an economic analysis, cash flow plan, and an operations calendar to see if their ideas will successfully reach business profit goals.



J D and Jenny Gardemeyer of Colfax Hill Farm discuss their operations plan at the 2010 six-week business-planning course held at the UCCE office in Auburn, CA.

What Was Done

This was the third year in a row that UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) conducted a six-week business-planning course for farmers and ranchers. Three graduates of the first business-planning course from 2008 came into to share their experiences in implementing things learned from the course. Each session was three hours long along with homework. 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.

Impact

- Eleven Placer and Nevada County farms and ranches completed the 2010 course.
- Presentation by producer graduates from previous business planning courses provided the practical knowledge needed to implement principles and tools learned in the class.
- One Nevada County farmer made the decision to quit their off-farm job to facilitate getting going with their operation.
- Each participant was able to set profit and salary targets for their business.
- One business that completed the 2010 business planning class was able to use the economic analysis tool to determine that a pastured broiler operation did not generate enough returns over feed and processing costs to meet labor expenses. They are dropping this enterprise and adding a vegetable and flower starts nursery enterprise which projects to much higher returns.



Sierra Foothills Meat Buyers Club

Issue

Local meat producers primarily market through farmer's markets, restaurants, and retail stores. There is a need for additional marketing venues. Identifying venues that increase sales with minimal marketing is critical. Most producers have to produce, process, market, sell, and manage their business with minimal labor. Less time spent marketing and selling is a big help.

What Was Done

Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms was the keynote speaker at the 2006 PlacerGROWN Farm Conference. He had discussed the meat buyers club concept whereby product is pre-sold and delivered to a central distribution point for customer pick-up.

PlacerGROWN agreed to serve as the fiscal agent. They deposit money and pay producers. Customers could order individual cuts in as large or small a quantity as desired. Each individual order has a delivery charge but membership is not required.

The first Meat Buyers Club deliveries occurred in August 2008. Deliveries have continued. There were three producers who would initially participate and provide beef, lamb, and pork. In 2009, goat, chicken, and eggs were added. Delivery points are in Auburn, Penryn, Lincoln, and Truckee. A website, order form, brochure, and customer newsletter have been created.

Impact

- Over \$13,000 in sales was generated between July 2009 and June 2010.
- 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.
- More delivery points in Granite Bay, Rocklin, and Roseville will be added in 2010.



Dan Macon of Flying Mule Farm and Jenny Brown of High Sierra Beef discuss promotion of the Meat Buyers Club at Sinclair Concrete in Penryn, CA.



Multi-Species Academy

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 interested in goat or sheep production seek opportunities



Allen Edwards of Highland Farm shows the impact of reducing fuel loads on his tree farm with goats at the 2010 Multi-Species Academy held in Auburn and Colfax.

to add value to production through niche marketing or contract grazing. Few have any practical experience raising goats or sheep. 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 September 18-20, 2009, at Thompson Ranch in Auburn. The Academy featured 25 hours of instruction taught over 2.5 days. Participants worked in teams that each received a flock of fifty yearling ewes

and /or twenty goats to graze during the school. Teams were given electric netting or polywire to fence their ranch along with a portable water trough. They constructed paddocks based on an estimate of how much area their flock would need for twenty-four hours of grazing. The following day, they evaluated how close they came with their estimate and adjusted paddock size accordingly.

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.
- One participant in the 2008 Browsing Academy worked for the City of Rocklin, which has almost 3,000 acres in open space. Rocklin is interested in using grazing/browsing for fuel load reduction and eradication of invasive plants. The city now has grazing guidelines developed and has goats and sheep grazing in the city limits. This opens up more opportunities for local grazing contractors.



California Meat Summit

Issue

Lack of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected harvest and processing invariably comes up as an issue for anyone involved in some sort of direct or niche meat marketing at farmer's markets, on-farm sales, retail stores, and restaurants. USDA inspection on both harvest and processing is necessary to sell into market channels.

What Was Done

A Meat Summit was held to create an understanding of the issues affecting niche meat marketers, regulators, and processors in accessing or providing USDA inspected harvest and processing. The summit was organized and facilitated by UC Cooperative Extension and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Participants included representatives from: USDA Food Safety Inspection Service, CDFA Meat and Poultry Inspection, three USDA inspected facilities, one state inspected facility, twenty niche meat marketing ranches, and USDA Rural Development.



Dr. Yudhbir Sharma, District Manager of Food Safety Inspection Service, discusses his agencies regulatory role and support available for new or existing small-scale USDA inspected processors.

Impact

- Ranchers cited need for more USDA inspected facilities to reduce transportation and labor costs.
- Processors identified lack of supply on a year round basis as their biggest challenge.
- Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) discussed regulations and ways they can be of assistance to proposed or existing small-scale USDA inspected harvest and processing facilities.
- The Advocacy sub-group recommended starting an advocacy group or food policy council for small-scale producers and processors.
- The existing processor sub-group identified setting up a producer network to assist processors in maintaining animal throughput on a yearly basis. They wanted to develop frequently asked question (FAQ) template to assist producers in working with their existing or a new processor.
- The new facilities sub-group wanted to see a FAQ on the requirements for starting a plant, where to go for more information, and contacts.
- UC Cooperative Extension developed a support website and listserv to facilitate continued networking with Meat Summit participants.