



July 16, 2020



Re: 2019/20 Sierra Nevada Foothill Annual Forage Production

The University of California Cooperative Extension monitors annual rangeland forage production throughout the foothills to accurately gauge the total forage production on an annual basis. Data is gathered at eight locations throughout the central Sierra Nevada foothills in El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

For the 2019/20 season, data showed that annual peak forage production (gathered May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020) throughout the four-county area was variable (see table). The only site across the region that showed an increase in forage was the Copperopolis site, which had an increase of 27% over the long-term average. The Mountain Ranch and Sutter Creek locations both had production values close to their long-term averages. The remaining locations were significantly below the long-term average with Keystone and Lone having a 20% and 22% decrease respectively and the El Dorado and Latrobe sites also seeing decreases of 32% and 33% respectively. The Paloma site experienced the largest shortfall with a 67% decrease in forage production over the long-term average. The variability in production across the region is likely due to the amount and timing of precipitation.

Throughout the region we continue to see an increase in the number of noxious weeds on annual rangeland. Medusahead (*Taeniantherum caput-medusae*) is becoming more widespread and in some pastures, it represents up to 80% of the total biomass. Medusahead is a non-desirable forage species and most livestock will selectively graze around it late in the season. In addition to Medusahead another noxious grass that is starting to become more abundant across the region is barb goatgrass (*Aegilops triuncialis*). Barb goatgrass much like medusahead matures much later in the season and will stay green after many of the desirable forages have died. Like medusahead, it is highly unpalatable and most livestock will avoid it. Over the past few years, barb goatgrass has expanded its range at an alarming rate. There are many strategies that can be implemented to help control these weeds. The University recently published a management guide for the control of medusahead and barb goatgrass. They can be downloaded at:

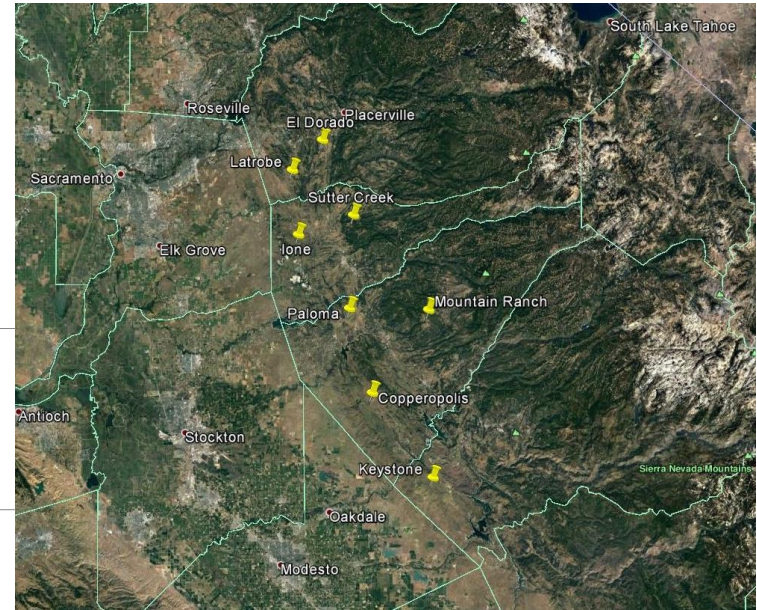
[http://wric.ucdavis.edu/publications/MedusaheadManagementGuide\\_pub\\_2014.pdf](http://wric.ucdavis.edu/publications/MedusaheadManagementGuide_pub_2014.pdf)  
<https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8315.pdf>

We hope this evaluation of the 2019-20 forage season is helpful. If you have any questions, please let us know. We would like to thank our collaborators on this project who continually allow us access so we can collect this important data. **Thank you!!!**

Sincerely,

Scott Oneto, Farm Advisor

Bill Frost, Emeritus Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor



**Sierra Nevada  
Annual Range Forage Production  
2019-20 Season**

