



Livestock & Natural Resources

Program Highlights

- ◆ 26 workshops provided 130 hours of instruction and reached over 2,000 ag producers
- ◆ 711 ag producers received the quarterly *Foothill Rancher* newsletter
- ◆ 68,000 hits on livestock related information on our UCCE website (ceplacer.ucdavis.edu)
- ◆ California Grazing Academy held for the 22nd time, reached over 600 producers and agency personnel who manage over one million acres of pasture and rangeland



The Placer/Nevada Livestock and Natural Resources program provides relevant information, hands-on education opportunities, and research for livestock producers and a new generation committed to working in agriculture.

Livestock production in Placer and Nevada Counties generates gross income of over \$29 million annually to local ranchers. Many types of livestock are raised in the two-county area including: cattle, sheep, goats, horses, llamas, and alpacas. Small-scale poultry production has greatly expanded over the last three years.

Ignoring viability is a major issue in Placer and Nevada Counties to keep ranchers profitable while managing the land resource sustainably. Land development, increasing costs, and an aging agricultural population are major challenges that need education and research to help find solutions.

To meet these challenges, the Livestock and Natural Resources program in Placer and Nevada Counties takes UC research-based information to local producers to help them be economically and environmentally sustainable.

Increasing ranch viability translates into three core concepts:

- Structure your livestock operation to work with nature by matching the herd's production forage demand with nature's cycle of when we have plenty of forage. This results in becoming a low-cost producer.
- Develop a plan for profitability at appropriate scale over and above paying a salary and land rent for the rancher. This includes economic, financial, and capital planning.
- Manage for the ecological landscape you want to create. This means using the ecosystem processes of energy flow, water cycle, and mineral cycles to produce a more productive landscape.



California Grazing Academy



Green Team wins the Troubleshooting Electric Fencing Competition by getting electric charge restored on their line which had 8 faults to fix.

“What went really well was meeting, interacting and exchanging information with a very diverse group of producers, managers, planners and others.” - quote from participant



Teams combined herds on Saturday, April 27th. This is a herd of 45 cows on .25 acre resulting in a stock density of 180 head per acre. High stock density can be a tool on irrigated pasture to improve uniformity of grazing and transfer nutrient back to the soil through the animal's manure. The manure breaks down rapidly to put nutrients back into the soil.

ISSUE

Many producers and agency personnel need increased knowledge of controlled grazing principles and ecology. 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 has now completed its 21st year of existence. There have been 22 academies since 1992. Over 600 ranchers, agency people, and extension advisors have attended. These participants manage or provide information and technical assistance on over one million acres of range and/or irrigated pasture. Participants commented on important things they learned:

- Simple, easy to use, and light labor techniques to measure and calculate carrying capacity. How grazing effects ecological processes, and how those processes effect plant growth diversity and carrying capacity.
- Graze for what you want to grow. Don't focus on eliminating undesirables.
- Cell design stock density and rest period and rotation. Also doing the square with team helped estimate the amount of feed in own pastures. i.e. team grazing exercise.



Multi-Species Academy



Brad Fowler of Fowler Family Farms, discussed with the group his targeted grazing business. Brad provided goats for the Academy.



Academy participants were able to see the impact goats can have on blackberries. 100 goats were put into this paddock by noon on September 14.



Goats were then moved to a new paddock by 6:00 PM on September 14th as they had done an outstanding job removing vegetation from the blackberries.

ISSUE

Ranchers in Placer and Nevada County are interested in the use of small ruminants (sheep and goats) for fuel load reduction, removal of noxious weeds, adding a meat enterprise to their operation, and/or considering starting a contract grazing business. There continues to be increasing demand in the area for targeted grazing services to meet fuel abatement standards, maintenance of habitat requirements, and providing an alternative to mechanical and chemical control methods.

WHAT WAS DONE

The California Multi-Species Academy is now in its tenth year. It was designed, developed, and implemented to enable local producers to gain knowledge and experience in working with sheep and goats prior to using them on their property. The Academy features field work and experience at local ranches in Placer and Nevada County. The Academy runs for 2.5 days and gives participants a total of 25 hours of instruction. Participants work in teams to work with over 100 goats and 150 sheep during the academy.

IMPACT

Participants commented on the important things they learned:

- Understanding the economics and how to take a better look at my own production with respect to what needs to be done to increase productivity
- Appreciate the comparison of goats and sheep and opportunity to observe them both working.
- Using goats for brushing – I now know how to do it and how to make goats feasible – thank you!
- Grazing chart – I had some of this in my head but needed a way to diagram it out.



Shepherding Skills Workshop



Instructor Ron Cole demonstrates techniques for skirting a fleece and preparing wool for marketing.



Lambing Workshop participants learn how to body condition score ewes at Flying Mule Farm.



Farm Advisor Roger Ingram discusses pasture management techniques for small ruminants.

ISSUE

Small landowners in the Sierra Foothills are increasingly interested in raising small ruminants, including sheep. Most, however, have little or no practical experience in sheep husbandry, pasture management or livestock facilities design and construction.

WHAT WAS DONE

Working in partnership with a local farm, UCCE developed a series of Shepherding Skills Workshops that walked new and aspiring sheep producers through a year of managing sheep. Topics included pasture lambing systems, wool handling and marketing, weaning and vaccination programs, pasture and irrigation management, breeding, livestock handling, and foot health.

IMPACT

- More than 25 new and aspiring producers gained hands-on experience in a variety of skill areas, including giving inoculations, trimming feet, building electric fence, and assisting in the delivery of new-born lambs.
- At least 5 producers started or expanded their sheep flocks as a result of the experiences gained through the workshop series.
- A two-day wool handling school taught producers about wool characteristics, how to assess and grade wool quality, and ways to increase wool value. The second day gave producers hands-on experience on handling wool and determining wool quality during an actual shearing.



California Meat Summit

ISSUE

Lack of USDA inspected slaughter and processing facilities in California is a significant concern to niche meat producers in Placer and Nevada Counties. USDA inspection is needed in order to sell at farmers' markets, retail stores, or restaurants. The lack of facilities means producers must travel long distances to existing USDA sites. In addition, the available facilities are increasing use and it becomes more difficult to book processing time for animals which may result in delays up to nine months.

WHAT WAS DONE

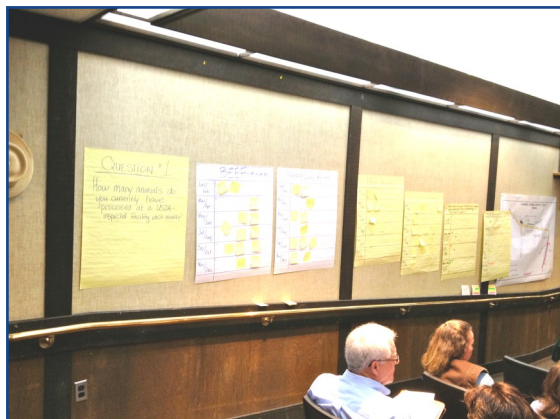
A California Meat Summit was held in 2010 to discuss USDA inspected processing issues with producers, regulators, and agency people. The result of that meeting was funding through a Rural Business Enterprise Grant to look at issues regarding lack of inspected facilities, better communication between producers and processors, and need for regulatory reform to ensure safety while making it easier for the plant to get a grant of inspection. The grant was received by High Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council. UC Cooperative Extension assisted with developing grant priorities and conducted better communication between producers and processors. A follow-up meeting was held in March 2013. The meeting was co-sponsored by El Dorado County RCD and UCCE and was facilitated by UCCE.

IMPACT

Presentation on regulatory reform generated interest with the CDFA official in attendance. Follow-up will be conducted in Fall 2013 for further discussion.

A map of current USDA inspected facilities in California was developed by UC Ag and Resource Economics in Davis. The map can found at <http://info.ucanr.org/smallfarms/index.html>.

A UCCE value-added marketing spreadsheet template was demonstrated that allowed producers to evaluate their marketing and processing costs. Facilitated discussions were held on services producers would like to see in a new USDA inspected facility and potential ownership models. Producers indicated the importance of a facility demonstrating they can provide quality work at a competitive price in order for them to consider switching to a new plant.



Surveys were conducted during the California Meat Summit to determine the number of animals by month, producers were using USDA inspected facilities.



Producers, agencies, and government officials attended the California Meat Summit to discuss processing issues and review the completed project reports since the 2010 Summit.

"The Meat Summit provided me the opportunity to meet new people / ranchers and discuss ideas and what is working for other people."
- quote from a participant



Farm Business Planning

ISSUE

More people today are becoming involved in farming or ranching. Their interest in starting a farming or ranching business includes interest in providing food for their local community, need to replace lost or enhance existing income, and a strong desire to get back to the land. There is a need for developing a business plan, to plan for profit, and to meet and learn from experienced farmers and ranchers.

WHAT WAS DONE

The sixth annual Farm Business Planning Class was again conducted by UC Cooperative Extension over a six week period. Topics covered included: developing mission and vision statements, enterprise analysis and determining key actions for profitability, cash flow, operations plan, risk management plan, and marketing. The final session covers development of an action plan for the next 3-6 months that includes when the action will be completed and who is responsible for getting it done. The course is supported by a USDA Risk Management Grant.

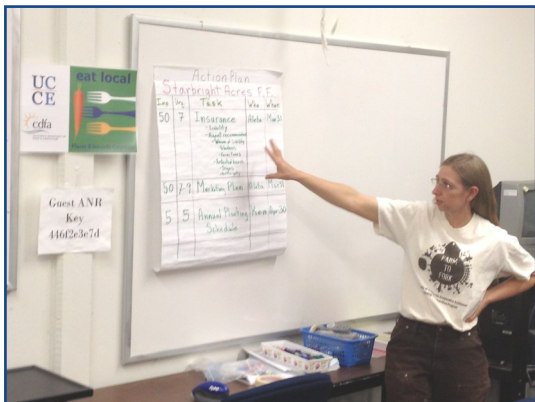
IMPACT

Seven Placer, Nevada, and Amador County farms and ranches representing ten people completed the course.

Presentations by Farm Business Planning graduates provided practical knowledge and insight to participants about the principles and tools being taught in the class.

In June 2013, a follow-up meeting was held at one of the farms. Participants were able to assess progress on action plans, and provide input to each other. Here are a few of the participants accomplishments:

- Established an egg business selling at two farmers' markets.
- Began selling at a farmers' market after their first planting and harvesting of crops.
- Revised grazing and marketing plans for their lambs due to drier than normal conditions and had to implement its risk management plan due to injury.
- Due to the economic planning they learned, one business was close to breaking even by mid-June which meant the rest of the sales year would be profitable.
- Successfully started harvesting potatoes and selling to a local natural foods store.



Each business developed an action plan that included when tasks would be completed and who was responsible.

"I will use the crop flow, capital purchases, enterprise budgeting, cash flow, and operations calendars because they are useful tools in managing my business."
- quote from participant



Participants preparing to present their mission and vision statements to the class.