

UCCE Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor, Lassen County

Developed and proposed by: The County Directors (David Lile and Laura Snell) and the Rangeland and Grazing Systems Program Team Leaders (Leslie Roche and Josh Davy) co-developed this proposal.

Position title: UCCE Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor serving Lassen County

Headquarter location and coverage area: The position will be headquartered in Susanville in the UCCE Lassen County office and will serve Lassen County. Upon David Lile's retirement (7/1/2026), only one UCCE Advisor (Weeds and Cropping Systems) will remain based in the Lassen office. Given the rangeland-dominated landscape of Lassen County, the Livestock/NR position comprises a core and essential programmatic need. The two advisor positions and programs are complimentary. Neither livestock nor natural resources programs will be covered in Lassen County without this position.

Position overview: This position will focus on livestock production systems, with a primary emphasis on beef cattle production and a secondary emphasis on small ruminants and specialty livestock. Reflecting the landscape and ecosystems of Lassen County, the position will strongly emphasize rangeland management and natural resources stewardship, with programmatic themes in ecosystem health and conservation of working landscapes, adaptive grazing systems, wildfire resilience, watershed function, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

Candidates must possess a master's degree in Range Management, Animal Science, or a closely related field. The position will report to the UCCE County Director/Area Director for Lassen County and will work collaboratively with CE Specialists, county-based UCCE academics, statewide programs (e.g., ANR Policy Institute), and relevant academic and research partners to develop applied research and extension programming that addresses regional livestock, rangeland, and natural resource management needs.

Justification:

Lassen County's geography and natural resources are highly distinctive within California. The landscape spans high-elevation peaks in the Cascade and Warner ranges, which give rise to the upper headwaters of both the Sacramento River (via the Pit River) and Feather River systems. These mountain watersheds are flanked by vast semi-arid sagebrush-steppe rangelands. This unique landscape provides habitat for the state's largest populations of pronghorn and sage grouse, as well as native inland fisheries such as the Eagle Lake trout and Pit roach, which have been petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. Lassen County is also home to the state's longest surviving wolf pack and to four of the 11 wolf packs in California. This diverse and resource rich landscape also serves an essential function as a productive working landscape that supports Lassen County's leading agricultural commodities.

Livestock production and grazing lands are integral to Lassen County's economy, culture, and ecosystems, with ~2.5 million acres of grazing land, covering 80% of the county's land area, consisting predominantly of rangeland along with improved pastures, meadows, and grazed forestland. Livestock production and associated forage crops are the county's primary agricultural commodities by both scope and net value. Lassen County ranks among the top 10 California counties in beef cattle production and has a rich history of sheep ranching.

This position was ranked #1 by the Rangeland and Grazing Systems Program Team and County Director/Area Director Region 1 because of its critical role in serving one of California's largest livestock-producing counties and supporting stewardship of one of the state's most distinctive resource rich working landscapes. Local clientele also strongly underscored the urgent and continued need to refill the Lassen Livestock/NR advisor position during a listening session hosted by Vice President Humiston in April 2026. This position fills a critical need in developing, extending, and applying science-based information to promote a long-term working-land balance aligning livestock operations and conservation values in a county where 67% of the land area is managed by the federal government. Through trust generated via applied research, extension, and community relationships, the advisor will help Lassen County navigate landscape scale challenges exacerbated by a changing climate, unpredictable markets, and evolving societal expectations.

Key program themes include: 1) Enhance ecosystem health and services across diverse landscapes supporting livestock production along with fire resilience, watershed function, and wildlife conservation/conflict mitigation. 2) Develop tools and help managers apply new knowledge and technologies to improve grazing management to better align grazing distribution timing and meet livestock production and rangeland health objectives. 3) Work to develop effective and practical solutions to mitigate large predator conflicts related to both livestock operations and native prey populations. Related to these core issues are additional programmatic needs and opportunities in post-fire rangeland restoration, private-land pasture improvement, and livestock health strategies to increase production efficiencies. Long-term sustainability will require a broad-based, multi-faceted approach to better achieve production and conservation objectives.

If this position is NOT filled it, will create a significant gap in technical expertise and applied research and extension in a county that relies heavily on UCCE. This programmatic void will result in a lack of place-based support, reduced access to science-based information, and reduced problem-solving ability in a rural community with limited fiscal resources and little applied science capacity.

Outcomes/Impact. This position will build upon existing knowledge while developing and extending new science-based information to promote sustainable rangeland and livestock production systems in Lassen County and the broader intermountain region. Programming will cross multiple UC ANR Program Areas—including Natural Ecosystems and Working Landscapes, Animal Production Systems, and Community and Economic Development—and will contribute to improved land stewardship and animal management as well as enhanced sustainability and profitability of working landscapes. In doing so, it directly supports the UC ANR Strategic Vision 2040 by advancing sustainable agriculture, resilient ecosystems, and thriving communities through science-based, collaborative approaches. Over the long term, this work will strengthen the resilience and viability of ranching operations, improve stewardship of the county's extensive public and private grazing lands, and sustain the rich array of ecosystem services and economic benefits provided by one of California's most unique landscapes. Through applied research and extension, this position will help managers meet multiple-use objectives on the vast acreages of rangelands that define Lassen County.

Extension: The advisor will develop and deliver applied research information related to livestock production, natural resources conservation, and applied management strategies that intersect these disciplines. There are diverse target audiences for this position including livestock producers, land managers, resource agencies, conservation organizations and policy makers. The advisor will develop collaborative partnerships with these stakeholders at local, regional, and multi-state scales. The advisor

will employ a range of outreach methods to successfully connect with clientele groups including multi-stakeholder partnerships. Fitting the diverse clientele groups, professional relationships and strong networks and science-based trust will be the foundation for the extension program.

Research: The advisor will conduct applied research at the intersection of livestock production and rangeland conservation. Key research areas include grazing technologies and precision livestock management, grazing efficiency, and enhancement of natural ecosystem services including rangeland health and restoration, water conservation, wildlife habitat, wildfire resilience. Emerging issues expected to drive research over the next 20 years include ecological and social dimensions of human-wildlife interactions, extreme climate events (drought, wildfire), and the need to balance agricultural production with conservation and regulatory objectives on public and private lands. Addressing these challenges will require multidisciplinary collaborations spanning livestock production and grazing management, ecological conservation and restoration, and human dimensions, economics, and policy. Research findings will be disseminated through relevant peer-reviewed scientific journals such as Rangeland Ecology and Management, UC ANR publications such as California Agriculture, and other educational and outreach materials.

UC ANR network: This position will provide unique programmatic focus and expertise related to livestock production systems, working lands, and conservation practices for Great Basin/Intermountain rangelands, high-elevation irrigated pastures and meadows and mixed private/public landscapes. The Lassen position fits into multiple ANR and Program Team priorities, including working landscapes, upper watershed systems, water quality/quantity, fire resilience, and human wildlife conflicts. The advisor will work closely with UC AES faculty, CE Specialists, UCCE colleagues and ANR statewide programs on research and extension projects addressing cross-cutting livestock and natural resource issues. There will be opportunities for the new advisor to engage in research applying new grazing technology, rangeland restoration, and human wildlife conflict. A potential gap in the existing ANR network is with human wildlife conflict particularly related to large predators (wolf, mountain lion, bear).

Network external to UC ANR: Given its location and regional geography, this position is well-situated to maintain and strengthen long-standing collaborations with USDA-ARS in Reno, NV and Burns, OR, as well as University of Nevada Extension and the Nevada Dept of Wildlife. Locally, the position can engage with a broad network of partners, including state and federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Dept of Water Resources), agricultural organization (Farm Bureau, Cattlemen), Tribes, Resource Conservation Districts, conservation organizations (Point Blue, Lassen Land Trust), and educational institutions (Lassen Community College). There are also unique opportunities to work with multi-state projects related to public lands grazing, rangeland restoration, and invasive species.

Support: This position has been and will continue to be well-supported in Lassen County. The advisor will have private office space, shared access to a work/copy room, and two conference rooms. The advisor is allocated the exclusive use of a county-owned 4x4 ½ ton pick-up. A Honda side-by-side (with trailer), drying oven, field equipment/supplies, and covered parking garage are also provided to support the advisor's field work and sample processing. In the office, there is WIFI, phone, ample office supplies, and a full-time county office manager that are provided by the County. UCCE Lassen County enjoys unlimited use of the Lassen County Fairgrounds at no cost for UCCE programming.

Other support: Research funding opportunities include the Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment, WSARE, USDA NIFA, and UC Vet Med CFAH.