

2026 UCANR Cooperative Extension Position Template

Developed and proposed by: Karmjot Randhawa, Area Director – Fresno/Madera/Merced/Mariposa Counties and the Specialty Livestock and Poultry Program Team. Drafted by the program team and edited and approved by the AD. External stakeholders who expressed support include the Fresno County Farm Bureau, the Fresno/Kings County Cattlemen, the Madera County Cattlemen and individual clientele in the service area.

Position title: Livestock and Natural Resources Area Advisor

Headquarter location and coverage area: The position will be headquartered in the Fresno County UCCE office and also provide service to Madera County.

Current positions in the UCCE Fresno office:

Daniela Bruno – Dairy Advisor
Mae Culumber – Nut Crops Advisor
Tom Turini – Vegetable Crops Advisor
George Zhuang – Viticulture Advisor

Also serving Fresno County (HQ elsewhere):

Nicholas Clark – Agronomy
Haramrit Gill – Horticulture
Sandipa Guatam – Citrus IPM
Jorge Angeles – Weed Science
Alison Deak – Fire Science
Raymond Mireles – Fruit and Almond
Irene Padasas – Community Nutrition and Health

The previous Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor was headquartered in Fresno County and served Fresno and Madera counties. The location proved to be convenient for access to the remote areas in western Fresno county and eastern Madera county, work-related travel, and finding suitable housing. The Fresno office has office space available and administrative support for Advisors.

Position overview:

- a) *General disciplinary focus:* This position will focus on livestock production, ranch profitability, food safety, herd health, sustainable grazing practices, soil health, integrated crop livestock systems (ICLS), the impacts of climate change and livestock conflict with large predators.
- b) *Educational and professional background requirements:* A minimum of a Master’s degree in animal science, range management or related field. A Certified Range Manager (CRM; administered by the CA Board of Forestry and Fire Protection) license will be required within five years of hiring
- c) *Reporting and interacting with supporting units:* The Advisor would report to the Area Director for Fresno and Madera counties. With headquarters in Fresno, the Advisor would focus on supporting the UCCE Fresno team and contribute to the UCCE Madera team as appropriate for cross-county Advisors. The Advisor would serve livestock producers, land managers, tribes, government agencies and conservation organizations across Fresno and Madera counties.

Justification:

The top 3 issues/research topics for the area are:

- 1) Urban expansion/conversion of rangelands leading to economic pressure for ranchers to sell compounded by the highly variable climate and related unpredictable forage production.

- 2) Integration of livestock, especially small ruminants, into crop systems (Integrated Crop and Livestock Systems; ICLS).
- 3) Livestock conflict with large predators is increasing across California including in Fresno and Madera counties. With wolves nearby in Tulare County, livestock producers in Fresno and Madera counties will likely see this trend continue to increase.

This position ranked #1 for the Specialty Livestock and Poultry Program Team and #2 for the Beef Production Program Team. The Fresno County Farm Bureau reached out to the AD *prior* to this position call in support of this position. Personal communication with local producers and land managers indicates significant clientele support. A clientele survey indicates interest in research and outreach on a broad suite of topics including grazing management, prescribed fire and wildfire, weed management, and animal health.

In 2023, Fresno was ranked #2 for agricultural production in California, #2 for cattle production and #2 for sheep production. Cattle and calves rank number 4 and number 6 in Fresno and Madera Counties respectively with a total combined value of more than \$878 million. About one-third of Fresno County and just under half of Madera County are managed by the US Forest Service. Fresno County is home to a large feedlot and rangelands cover more than half of both counties; more than two million acres. These rangelands provide critical ecosystem services for all Californians by catching and filtering water and providing wildlife habitat, beautiful views and recreation opportunities. At the heart of it all are the livestock producers and land managers who manage and care for rangelands.

This position will contribute to 12 condition changes: improved animal management; improved food safety; improved land stewardship; increased sustainability of natural ecosystems; improved soil health and productivity; improved water quality; improved biodiversity; increased ecosystem resilience; increased stability, efficiency, and profitability of working landscapes; enhanced regional-based food supply chains; increased community disaster preparedness and resilience to extreme weather and change in climate; and improved mental and physical well-being across an individual's lifespan. This position contributes to three of the priorities identified by UCANR in the 2040 vision: Agriculture and Food Systems; Natural Ecosystems and Working Landscapes; and Thriving People and Communities.

Success for this Advisor position in 20 years will be a strong research and outreach program built on effective relationships with livestock producers, tribes, and other land managers. The Advisor will be a trusted resource and have documented impacts that include enhanced financial stability of ranching operations, resilient rangelands with healthy soils, expanded use of ICLS to address pest and weed management needs and improved soil health on crop lands, and reduced livestock conflict with large predators.

Extension:

Key clientele groups are livestock producers (emphasis on cattle, sheep and poultry), tribal members, and land managers, including owners of small parcels, conservation organizations and federal lands. Extension activities will include one-on-one personal communication, outreach through newsletters, blogs and social media, pre-recorded informational videos, presentations given to clientele and commodity groups, workshops and field days, and published material (popular press and peer-reviewed).

Research:

Key research areas for this position will include ranching economics and financial sustainability, key drivers of land-use conversion, sustainable grazing management in a variable climate, effective solutions to reduce livestock conflict with large predators, large-scale soil health practices, and livestock integration into crop settings.

UCANR network:

Currently there is no Advisor serving livestock producers in Fresno and Madera Counties. The nearest Advisor is based in Bakersfield. Other nearby Advisors are based in San Benito and Stanislaus counties. Due to distance, there is no capacity to address the needs of livestock producers in Fresno and Madera Counties. The lack of cooperators impacts the neighboring Advisors by reducing research capacity and corresponding impact as cross-county work becomes impossible.

This position is #1 for the Specialty Livestock and Poultry program team. This position will compliment current positions by creating continuity of coverage across the San Joaquin Valley. Livestock Advisors have a strong network across California addressing statewide issues with good support from specialists in animal health, range management, disaster preparedness, wildfire, and wildlife. The gap in this network *is* the Fresno/Madera Advisor position as it provides a critical link in connecting livestock and range research across the valley and the state thereby increasing outreach and impact.

Network external to UCANR:

This Advisor could expect to collaborate with local cattlemen's associations, California Woolgrowers Association, Sierra Foothill Conservancy, National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) based in Madera County, Harris Ranch Feedlot, CalState Fresno, San Joaquin Experimental Range, local tribes, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the US Forest Service. All of these collaborators could be important partners in research and outreach.

Support: The position will be headquartered in Fresno County. The County Director has confirmed office space for the advisor, including access to meeting space and standard office amenities. The advisor will have access to a county funded UC leased vehicle for local travel within the service area, with additional UCANR fleet vehicles available as needed. Standard office supplies, computer equipment, and administrative support will be provided through the county office. Research and extension program costs will be supported through a combination of UCANR resources, competitive grant funding, and local partnerships as opportunities arise.

Other support: Industry support from Cattlemen's Associations can provide extension support including funding, publication and advertisement. Livestock pharmaceutical companies, herbicide and pest control companies, and state cattle organizations can provide funding support for research and extension. Numerous federal grants support work related to the priorities for this position.