2026 UC ANR Cooperative Extension Position Template (Specialist)

Developed and Proposed By: This proposal was developed by faculty in the Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management (ESPM) at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) in coordination with UC Cooperative Extension Specialists and County Advisors that are grappling with growing carnivore-livestock conflict. It incorporates feedback from the UCANR Human–Wildlife Interactions Program Team (PT), Specialty Livestock and Poultry PT, and newly formed Human–Wildlife Interactions Work Group. The proposal also incorporates ideas from a range of partners engaged in California wildlife management and working lands.

Position Title: UCCE Carnivore Conflict Management Specialist

Headquarter Location and Coverage Area: The proposed headquarters for this Specialist is the department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management (ESPM) within UCB's Rausser College of Natural Resources. The position will support statewide efforts to better understand and mitigate carnivore-livestock conflict on working lands, with an initial focus on Northern California where predator recovery is most advanced.

Position Overview

a) General disciplinary focus: This position will develop a statewide applied research and extension program focused on human–wildlife interactions, with an emphasis on carnivore–livestock conflict in working landscapes. The program will integrate ecology, rangeland science, and applied social science to develop and deliver tools that support decision-making by producers, agencies, and land managers.

b) Educational and professional background requirements: The ideal candidate has expertise in wildlife ecology and rangeland ecology, or a related field, with a track record of integrating natural and social science, particularly with carnivores and livestock. Desired experience includes community-engaged research and successful collaboration with resource managers, policymakers, and/or livestock producers to address human-wildlife conflict.

c) Reporting and collaboration: The Specialist will collaborate closely with faculty and students working on wildlife, rangelands, forests and more; as well as UC Cooperative Extension Specialists, County Directors, and Advisors working on human–wildlife conflict. The program will also foster collaborations with Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) campuses, alongside agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local stakeholders.

Justification

Needs: Human–wildlife conflict is flaring up across California as expanding carnivore populations increasingly overlap with ranching, farming, recreation, and other human land uses. The long-term success of predator recovery in California will depend on maintaining resilient working lands, which provide some of the state's largest connected open spaces, support biodiversity and ecosystem function, sustain rural economies and cultural traditions, and serve as critical habitat for wildlife. The recovery of gray wolves in Northern California and the Sierra Nevada, alongside ongoing conflicts involving mountain lions, black bears, and coyotes, has heightened concerns about livestock depredation and the long-term viability of ranching operations. Livestock producers, Tribes, state and federal agencies, and community organizations have consistently identified the need for practical, science-based tools and coordinated support that reduce conflict while sustaining both wildlife conservation and working landscapes. Recent producer engagement and social science research indicate that livestock producers place high trust in UC Cooperative Extension and university researchers for predator management information, highlighting UC ANR's unique role as a trusted and neutral partner. Despite growing demand, California currently lacks sufficient statewide capacity to coordinate applied research, extension, and implementation focused on large carnivore conflict mitigation in working landscapes. Existing efforts are fragmented, and major gaps remain in understanding

which conflict-reduction strategies are most effective across California's diverse ecological and social conditions, how management practices influence producer adoption and outcomes, and how wildlife recovery can be integrated with resilient agricultural systems. This position will address these gaps by linking field-based research with extension and implementation support, while strengthening coordination across UC ANR, county-based advisors, agencies, and external partners. The position is also aligned with emerging state efforts, including proposed legislation (SB 1135), which would further increase demand for science-based technical assistance, applied research, and decision-support tools. This position was identified as a high priority by multiple UC ANR PTs, ranking as the #1 priority for Human–Wildlife Interactions PT and the #2 priority for Specialty Livestock and Poultry PT, Beef PT, and Rangelands PT. It is ranked as #1 by ESPM at UCB. The position directly advances UC ANR Strategic Vision 2040 goals related to resilient working landscapes, sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and public trust in science-based management.

Outcomes/Impact: This position will establish a statewide program focused on developing and sharing solutions to carnivore-livestock conflict in working landscapes. Over the next 20 years, success will be reflected in stronger collaboration among producers, agencies, Tribes, and researchers; broader adoption of effective coexistence practices; and improved integration of applied science into wildlife and agricultural policy. By helping unify fragmented research, extension, and management efforts, this position also has the potential to position California as a leader in developing scalable models for human–wildlife coexistence in working landscapes. These outcomes directly support UC ANR's public value framework and Strategic Vision 2040 Condition Changes related to ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation, resilient working landscapes, agricultural viability, and community resilience.

Extension: The extension program will translate applied research into practical tools and strategies for managing wildlife–livestock interactions. Activities will emphasize collaborative development of solutions with producers, agencies, Tribes, and communities, consistent with UC ANR's commitment to meaningful engagement and Condition Changes related to public trust in science, improved working conditions, and equitable access to technical resources. Key audiences include livestock producers, landowners, conservation organizations, community groups, and local, state, and federal agencies. Extension activities would be conducted in collaboration with local advisors and may include:

- Development of strategic plans, decision-support tools, and outreach materials
- Workshops on conflict mitigation strategies for livestock producers and land managers
- Creation of monitoring and early-warning systems to boost producer response capacity
- Training programs for agencies, conservation groups, and community organizations
- Engagement with communities on wildlife interactions and responsible wildlife practices
- Technical assistance to local, state, and federal agencies developing wildlife management, compensation, and coexistence policies
- Technical assistance for local, state and federal officials designing policy solutions
- Engagement with state-level initiatives to provide leadership in delivery of solutions (e.g., interagency wolf task force, California's Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program stakeholder working group, and CDFW's Human–Wildlife Coexistence program)
- Educational resources for university and high school students and other youth programs

Research: The specialist will lead an applied, interdisciplinary research program on the ecological and social drivers of human–wildlife conflict and the effectiveness of mitigation strategies. Research will emphasize collaborative, applied, field-based studies that generate actionable outcomes for land managers, agencies, and communities. The program will integrate ecological, behavioral, technological, and social science approaches in alignment with UC ANR Strategic Vision 2040 and Condition Changes priorities related to resilience, innovation, and working landscapes. Research topics may include:

- Carnivore ecology and predator-prey dynamics involving native ungulates such as deer and elk across working and natural landscapes
- Carnivore movement, space use, and behavioral adaptation in working landscapes with varying livestock densities and management regimes
- Livestock behavior, herd dynamics, and grazing system design as tools for reducing predation risk, including drivers of livestock depredation risk and the spatial, temporal, and husbandry-related factors influencing vulnerability
- Evaluation and optimization of non-lethal deterrents and integrated livestock protection strategies under California field conditions
- Social, economic, and governance dimensions of predator management, including producer decision-making, trust in institutions, and policy uptake
- Assessment of compensation, incentive, and funding mechanisms designed to support livestock producers in high-conflict landscapes

UC ANR Network: This position will address the gap in applied, integrated expertise at the interface of large carnivore ecology, livestock production, and rangeland management. Existing positions addressing human–wildlife conflict do not focus specifically on large carnivore recovery and coexistence in livestock production systems. While relevant expertise exists across UC ANR, it is currently distributed across programs, regionally based, and lacks a dedicated statewide capacity focused on synthesis, implementation, and coordination.
This position will work closely with UC Cooperative Extension Specialists and Livestock and Natural Resources Advisors, including those already part of the Human-Wildlife Work Group. The specialist will collaborate with UC Berkeley faculty, UC ANR campus partners, and Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) faculty across multiple UC campuses to build an integrated statewide program. There is also strong alignment and interest for collaboration with UC Davis Veterinary Medicine Extension within the Department of Population Health and Reproduction.

Network External to UC ANR: The specialist will work closely with state and federal partners involved in wildlife and land management, including CDFW*, California Natural Resources Agency*, California Department of Food and Agriculture*, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDA Wildlife Services. The program will also collaborate with agricultural and non-profit organizations, including but not limited to California Cattlemen's Association*, California Farm Bureau*, and California Wool Growers Association*. Organizations marked with an asterisk (*) have already indicated support for the proposal.

Support: UC Berkeley ESPM will provide office space, computing resources, administrative support, and access to field equipment and vehicles as available. ESPM also provides access to student and postdoc communities and collaborative opportunities. The Berkeley Wildlife group will provide additional, dedicated administrative support and the Rangeland and Wildlife master's program provides access to additional student engagement opportunities. Research infrastructure includes laboratory facilities, graduate student support networks, and access to field stations and research reserves, such as Sagehen Creek Field Station, the Hopland and Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Centers, and UC research forests and reserves.

Other Support: Additional support can be developed through external grants and collaborative projects. This includes existing interest and funding opportunities through collaborative grants and partnerships with state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and agricultural groups. External partners identified in the "Network External to UC ANR" section have already expressed interest in supporting work developed by this position. The range of opportunities is exemplified by the track record of UC Berkeley's California Wolf Project, which has received funding from state and federal agencies, multiple sportsmens groups, the National Geographic Society, TomKat Ranch, and family foundations operating at the national and state level.