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News Briefs

Check out these two new video series -

“Sheep Stuff Ewe Should Know” Conversations with UCCE livestock advisor, Dan Macon

This weekly series covers a variety of sheep-related topics. To date, videos have covered COVID-19, economics, flock health, and guardian dogs.

Videos are posted weekly, available on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChmJnrOY-7XboaNe5fVXSQw/videos>

“Working Rangelands Wednesdays” Hosted by UC Rangelands team based at UC Davis

This series covers a variety of range management topics. Most recently, the webinar series discussed rangeland water management. Sessions occur every other Wednesday.

You can register to watch the series live, here:

<https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=30292>



2020 Prescribed Fire on Private Lands Workshops - recordings now available

By Susie Kocher, UCCE Advisor in Forestry and Natural Resources

June 2020

Recordings from a webinar series hosted by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) designed to help landowners and land managers to gain skills in prescribed fire planning and implementation are now available online at the UCCE Mariposa website ([click here to visit](#)).

The workshops were to be held in person in March 2020 throughout the Sierra Nevada but were cancelled due to shelter in place requirements. The workshop planning team instead reorganized the content and held the workshops as an online webinar series in May and June.

Five sessions, each an hour and a half long, were held on the use of prescribed fire to manage private lands. Sessions included content on fire ecology, fuels and fire behavior, using fire to control invasive plants and promote cultural understory plants, permitting and planning, technical assistance and cost-share programs, and local prescribed burn associations forming across California to help landowners work together to carry out burns.

Speakers were from UCCE, CalFire, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District and Planning Department, the Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association, the North Fork Mono Tribe, and the newly forming Sierra-Sequoia Burn Cooperative. Over 300 people from across the state and several foreign countries signed up for the webinar, and over 200 regularly attended each session.

The webinar series was held to help maintain the momentum for expanding the use of prescribed fire on private lands in California. *“There is real progress being made across the state in the use of prescribed fire by private landowners”,* said Susie Kocher, Forestry Advisor for UCCE in the Central Sierra. *“Most exciting is the grassroots formation of prescribed burn associations (PBAs) which are really community based, mutual aid networks that help private landowners put “good fire” on their land. Being a part of a local PBA is similar in concept to a barn-raising or a calf-branding: neighbors help neighbors implement burns by providing labor, equipment and skills. The PBA can help with burn planning and organization, and provide additional prescribed fire equipment and specialized expertise.”*

Information on local PBAs forming in California can be found at <https://www.calpba.org/>. Landowners and others interested in joining the Sierra-Sequoia PBA in Madera and Fresno counties should contact Jared Aldern at: jared@jareddahlaldern.net

Preparing for Wildfire Season

By Dan Macon, UCCE Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor, Placer, Nevada, Yuba and Sutter Counties

This is an abbreviated version of a blog posted on June 8, 2018. [Read the original post by clicking here.](#)

Wildfire preparations are more complicated for commercial livestock operations. Like our neighbors, we need to create a fire safe space around our homes; we also need to think about protecting ranch infrastructure and livestock. If you haven't prepared a ranch fire safety plan, or even if you have one in place, the beginning of fire season is a reminder that we all need to be prepared! Here are a few ideas for putting together a plan for your operation.

Assessing the Threat

What is at risk in your operation? Do you have livestock in multiple locations? What is access like to your home place as well as to rented properties? As I think about our sheep operation, the following issues come to mind:

- We need to protect our home, barns and other infrastructure at our home place.
- We have livestock in several locations. Where we have irrigated pasture, we aren't quite as worried about fire. Where we're grazing on dry grass, we are more concerned. While fire is an immediate threat to the health and well-being of our animals, it can also reduce the amount of fall forage we'll have.
- Access can be a challenge during a fire. Single-lane roads, law enforcement road blocks and other obstacles may make it difficult to get our livestock during a fire.
- Smoke can create health problems for people and livestock alike. About ten years ago, during a particular smoky stretch of the summer, we had an increase in respiratory disease in our sheep.

Getting timely and accurate information about where fires are can be challenging as well. I find that www.yubanet.com usually has the most up-to-date information on fire location and size - be sure to check the "Happening Now" tab. CalFire also has a phone app that purports to send alerts when fires start near your location, although I've found that the app doesn't provide the real-time information I need about small local fires. Many of us have informal phone trees with the other ranchers in our area - this can be the best way to get in-the-moment information! Be sure you know the neighbors where your livestock are grazing!

Developing and Implementing a Plan

A ranch wildfire plan should have several main components:

Protecting Buildings, Infrastructure and Information: All of us should make our home places fire safe! Remove flammable vegetation within 100 feet of our homes and other buildings. Don't forget other critical infrastructure like propane tanks, wells, equipment sheds and barns. Also be sure you have protected critical legal documents and insurance information. You should also check CalFire's suggestions for putting together an emergency supply kit (<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Emergency-Supply-Kit/>).

This article continues ►

Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

Wildfire preparation cont'd

1. **Protecting Forage:** You might consider creating fuel breaks to protect forage by disking or grading around the perimeter of pastures, or adjacent to potential ignition sources. Another alternative would be to use targeted grazing adjacent to roads or pasture boundaries - this can reduce the fuel load and slow a fire down. The width of a fuel break depends on the fuel type, topography/slope, and potential flame lengths that a fire might generate.
2. **Protecting Livestock:** Given enough warning, we would either haul livestock away from a fire or herd them to a safe location. Many of us, however, have too many animals to evacuate on short notice. Leaving animals in pasture (or "sheltering in place") might be the best option. If you need to leave animals in place, be sure they have enough feed and water for several days. Will the animals have water if the power goes out? Be sure to take down temporary fences or other hazards that may injure animals as the fire moves through your property.
3. **Water Supply:** Water is critical for protecting our properties and for keeping livestock healthy. Do you have adequate water supplies for wetting down your buildings and facilities, or for directly fighting fire? If you have to pump water, do you have a backup system in case you lose power? Can you provide stock water if the power goes out? You may wish to consider investing in a backup generator and/or additional water storage.
4. **Escape Routes:** Ideally, we should all have at least two routes in and out of our ranch properties. We try to think about at least two alternatives for moving our livestock to safety in the event of a fire - loading and unloading facilities, a plan for gathering livestock, and a clear understanding of the road system near our pastures. Narrow roads can be problematic for navigating with stock trailers, especially when fire equipment is inbound.
5. **Backup:** We can't all be on hand 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond to a fast-moving fire. Consider working with friends, neighbors or colleagues to have a backup plan to evacuate or otherwise protect your livestock. Consider meeting with your neighbors to go over key livestock facilities, evacuation plans and access routes. Be sure to check in with these backup resources in the event of fire.
6. **Communication Plans:** Do you have phone numbers for the other ranchers in your area? Do you know who runs the cows or sheep next door? Most of us probably do! During fire season, many of us text or call our neighbors when we see smoke. Perhaps it's time to formalize these calling trees. Contact me at dmacon@ucanr.edu if you'd like help setting up a calling tree for your area.
7. **Situational Awareness:** Whenever I'm outside this time of year, I scan the horizon for smoke - especially when I hear fire planes overhead. I carry fire tools and a 5-gallon backpack pump in my truck during fire season, as well, and I'm constantly aware of my surroundings when I'm working in dry grass or brushland.

Wildfire, obviously, is a significant threat in our region - and one that can be incredibly stressful to livestock and people alike. Preparation - though planning, improving our stockmanship skills, making our homes and ranches fire safe - can help reduce this stress. For more information, check out these sources:

<http://cesutter.ucanr.edu/LivingWithFire/>

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/5408/rmac-3-animal-evacuation.pdf>



Webinars, Workshops, and other Web-based Resources

UCCE is working to ensure you can access a variety of resources remotely. Below are several upcoming learning opportunities you may be interested in.

All of these webinars, workshops, and websites are free to access. If you have any trouble accessing our online resources, please email rkozeran@ucanr.edu.

Upcoming Virtual Webinars and Workshops

COVID-19's Impact on Global Agricultural Supply Chains and the Challenges Ahead, June 16, 9-10am: [Join the webinar here.](#)

Lamb Markets and Managing in These Uncertain Times, June 16, 5pm: [Read more and register here.](#)

Today's Volatile Cattle Market and How to Navigate It, June 17, 5pm: [Read more and register here.](#) Past Cattlemen's videos are posted [to this playlist.](#)

COVID-19 Information

June 12th press release: [UC Conducts survey of COVID-19 prevention on farms](#)

FAQs and other resources for agricultural employers, growers, and workers: [COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture](#)

UC ANR information about COVID-19 and things you can still do: [Coronavirus and COVID-19](#)

Pre-existing and Ongoing Resources

Check out the [UCANR YouTube channel](#) for How-To videos, nutrition education, horticulture and vegetable growing, 4-H, and much more.. The [UCANR Twitter feed](#) also has links to recent articles, blogs, and research.

Presentation slides and videos from recent in-person or virtual workshops, and information from UCCE personnel across the state can be found in various places. Check your local county UCCE website (e.g, [cefresno.ucanr.edu](#) or [cemadera.ucanr.edu](#)) for past event information, as well as:

- [Prescribed Fire on Private Lands Workshop materials](#)
- [Ranching in the Sierra Foothills Blog](#) (based in Placer & Nevada Counties)
- [Livestock & Range Blog](#) (based in San Benito, Monterey, & Santa Cruz Counties)

For more regular updates about events, new research, and interesting resources, follow this program on Facebook: [@UCCEFresnoMaderaLivestock](#)

Publication Corner

UC has dozens of publications on everything from agritourism to weed management. Starting this spring, this newsletter will highlight two to three publications that you may find interesting.

To view all UC publications, visit: <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/>

Profiles of California Brush: Targeted Grazing to Reduce Fire Fuel Loads in California Chaparral, Part 1^{*}, 2018**

Excerpt: This publication aids in identifying selected brush species found in the California chaparral community and also presents nutritional content and toxin presence for these plants to help livestock producers develop timing and supplementation protocols for targeted grazing.

[Download here](#)

Beef Care Practices^{*}, 2007**

Excerpt: As recognized in the first edition of Beef Care Practices (Jensen and Oltjen, 1992), the pursuit of an ethically acceptable level of cattle well-being does not limit a producer to one set of husbandry practices. Rather, a variety of practices and conditions may be acceptable, based on individual situations and the specific goals of the beef production system.

[Download here](#)

Crop Biotechnology: Feeds for Livestock^{*}, 2004**

Excerpt: An unforeseen benefit resulting from feeding of biotech crops has been noted in the case of insect-resistant corn. Molds that often grow at the site of insect damage can produce several fungal toxins, including the deadly fumonisin. Because insect-resistant corn sustains less insect damage, it is less susceptible to contamination by these toxins. The resulting corn is safer for both livestock and human consumption.

[Download here](#)

***** Free PDF:** These publications can be downloaded at any time. Visit the link to download the document.

\$\$\$ Handbook for Sale: You can order this publication online and have it mailed directly to you, or you can call your local UC Cooperative Extension office to request one and purchase in person (once offices reopen). Visit the link to order the publication or view the book summary.



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