



The Grazer's Gazette

A Newsletter about Livestock, Pastures and Rangeland
Edited by John M. Harper, Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor, Mendocino & Lake Counties

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John Harper's Livestock & Natural Resources Blog Updates December 31, 2009—February 16, 2010

From time to time The Grazer's Gazette will reprint articles from John Harper's on-line blogs and postings to Facebook and Twitter. If you are not already on John's email distribution list and would like to get this information when it is posted, please contact the UC Cooperative Extension at 707-463-4495 or cemendocino@ucdavis.edu with your current email address. Also, be sure to notify us of email or address changes so that you continue to receive timely information.

Cattle Grazing and Fire Protection December 31, 2009



A 14-year study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists in Oregon found that rangelands that have been grazed by cattle recover from fires more effectively than rangelands that have been protected from livestock. These surprising findings could impact management strategies for native plant communities where ecological dynamics are shifting because of climate change, invasive weeds and other challenges.

Much of the rangeland in the western United States is threatened by the spread of cheatgrass and medusahead, invasive non-native annual grasses that fuel wildfires and readily infest landscapes, especially after fires. These rangelands historically were burned by wildfires every 50 to 100 years, but over the past century, these fires have been suppressed by humans. This suppression allowed some dead plant litter to accumulate, but when cattle were introduced to the region, their grazing helped keep litter accumulation in check.

Rangeland scientists Kirk Davies and Jon Bates and research leader Tony Svejcar, who work in the ARS Range and Meadow Forage Management Research Unit at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns, Ore., carried out studies comparing how native plants on grazed and ungrazed sagebrush rangelands recovered from fires. All the sites had similar vegetation profiles and were virtually free of cheatgrass.

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In the grazed areas, cattle consumed around 40% of the available forage, which removed much of the potential litter. The ungrazed sites, where livestock had been excluded since 1936, had almost twice as much litter as the grazed sites.

The scientists conducted a controlled burn on all the sites in 1993, and then measured vegetation cover, vegetation density and biomass production in 2005, 2006 and 2007. They found cheatgrass had infested a large portion of the ungrazed sites, leaving these areas even more vulnerable to future fires.

However, cheatgrass did not become problematic on the sites that had been grazed. On these sites, native bunchgrass cover was almost twice as dense as bunchgrass cover on the ungrazed sites. The team concluded that the litter in the ungrazed sites fueled hotter fires that killed off much of the perennial vegetation, which allowed quick-growing invasive annuals to become established.

Reprinted from ARS

National Bison Association working to increase production

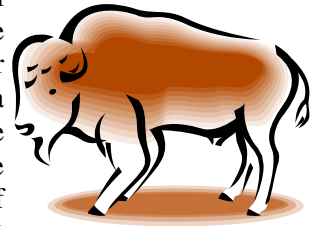
By Anne Bagel Storck on 1/4/2010

The National Bison Association announced a campaign to encourage new producers to get into the business, and to encourage existing ranchers to increase their herds.

Among the association's efforts is the recent release of the all-new Bison Producers' Handbook. The 280-page handbook contains material written by more than 30 experienced bison ranchers, processors and marketers, and is designed as a resource for new producers and veterans alike. For information about obtaining the handbook, visit bisoncentral.com.

This year the National Bison Association also will be conducting a series of workshops, funded through a grant from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, to assist small-scale bison producers in using farmers' markets as a successful sales outlet.

American consumers are playing a key role in restoring the buffalo herds that once roamed across North America because their strong demand for delicious, healthy bison meat is encouraging ranchers to increase their herds," said Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association. "The continuing consumer demand in the midst of a recession affirms that once people taste bison they are likely to make it a part of their diet. They know that the great taste, low fat and high protein characteristics make this all-natural meat a great value."



Prescribed Grazing Research Funded

January 5, 2010

Cooperative Extension Specialist Ken Tate has been awarded a three-year, \$484,488 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for his project entitled, "Prescribed grazing to restore rangeland soil quality, plant diversity, water quality and agricultural productivity." Others working with Tate include Assistant Professor Valerie Eviner, Cooperative Extension Specialist Mel George, graduate student Leslie Roche, Toby O'Geen, assistant soil research specialist in Cooperative Extension from Land, Air and Water Resources and Assistant Professor Mark Lubell from Environmental Science and Policy.

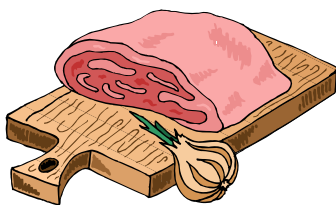
The team will survey 1,500 ranchland managers to help determine social-cultural-economic-institutional factors driving grazing decisions and understand how managers receive, assess and use grazing management information. They will quantify the differential effects of season and intensity of cattle grazing, and associated interactions, on multiple ecosystem services. Finally, they will develop an online network that allows users to access research-and-management-derived information about prescribed grazing and restoration; receive assistance in developing grazing management and effectiveness monitoring options for site specific restoration applications; and participate in interactive prescribed grazing/restoration information exchange.

U.S. Food Market Estimator

January 14, 2010

Have you ever wondered how much beef or lamb is consumed in Mendocino or Lake Counties daily, weekly, monthly or annually? Or how much is produced? Would you like to know how much is produced in other counties or in the whole state of California?

Well, thanks to the [Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture](#) at Iowa State University you can now find out. The Center has developed a unique tool known as the [U.S. Food Market Estimator](#). (<http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/marketsize/Default.aspx>) The tool has a series of drop down menus that will give you lots of information about the food market but it's not just about meat. Other foods such as vegetables, fruits and nuts are listed too.



This tool would be useful to our niche meat producers looking at capturing a share of the traditional market or finding out what the potential of

"going local" would really mean. Take a look and play with it for a while. You'll be amazed!

Out of the Past—A Journey Through the Landscapes of Livestock Production

is a 55 minute video that will enlighten you on the role of livestock grazing, ecology and how, through buying local, we can help maintain this important resource management tool. Several of my colleagues from around the state and at UC Davis were involved in its production. You can view it on-line at:

www.uctv.tv/search-details.aspx?showID=17772



Local Meat Harvest & Processing Feasibility Study Released

January 25, 2010

The long awaited study, funded by the Mendocino County Economic Development and Finance Corporation and worked on by me and my colleagues around the state and at UCD, is now available for the public to download and read. The purpose of this study was to revitalize our local North Coast livestock industry. To view the report, go to our website at:

<http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>

Click on the Livestock & Natural Resources link and then the "Meat Industry Capacity and Feasibility Study of the North Coast Region of California."

NOTE: This is a 1 MB file and may take awhile to download. Printed copies are available from the Mendocino County Economic Development and Finance Corporation (MCEDFC) at a cost of \$20. The full plans and technical specifications for the facility are also available from MCEDFC at a cost of \$100.

I am happy to respond to questions concerning this study.

Livestock Transport — The 28 Hour Law

January 27, 2010

The USDA Food Safety Inspection Service recently released a notice on the 28 Hour Law. Basically this law deals with humane treatment of animals that are being transported to a federally inspected harvest facility and provides Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) with instructions on how to enforce it. Here is what the 28 Hour Law says:



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TWENTY-EIGHT HOUR LAW

A. Under the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, transporters are required to stop to provide animals with food, water, and rest. Transporters who have deprived livestock of food, water, or rest for more than 28 hours are in violation of the Twenty-Eight Hour Law (49 USC 80502).



B. If livestock arriving on a transport vehicle appear exhausted or dehydrated, IPP are to ask establishment management whether the truck driver stopped within 28 hours to provide the animals rest, food, and water. If the truck driver or establishment is unwilling to

provide information, or if IPP believe the condition of the animals could be the result of being deprived of rest, food, and water for over 28 hours, IPP are to contact the APHIS, Area Veterinarian-in-Charge, via their FSIS chain of command, so that APHIS can conduct an investigation.

The full copy of the USDA FSIS Notice can be read at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/06-10.pdf>.

Ecology & Management Of Grazing — An Online Course February 4, 2010

The California Rangeland Research and Information Center at UC Davis is now offering all four modules of its online science-based course entitled the “Ecology and Management of Grazing.” This online course is organized in four modules that can be taken separately or in sequential order. The modules are 1) Introduction to Ecology and Grazing, 2) Foraging Behavior and Livestock Distribution, 3) Forage Quality and Grazing Animal Nutrition, and 4) Ranching and Grazing Systems. Each module is introduced by a documentary quality high definition video followed by a series of narrated PowerPoint presentations.

There are reading assignments and practical exercises. Each module is self-paced and will take 10 to 20 hours to complete. Outlines for each module can be accessed via the online course registration page: http://californiarangeland.ucdavis.edu/Grazing%20Management/online_course.htm

Course registration fees are \$200 per module or \$600 for all four modules. Registration fees can be reduced for groups of more than 10 people. Contact Mel George



(mrgeorge@ucdavis.edu, phone 530-752-1720) for group discounts. Each module is approved by the Society for Range Management for 16 CEUs.

FAO REPORT CLIMATE CHANGE & GRAZING February 4, 2010

Below is the Executive Summary from the FAO report entitled *Review of evidence on drylands pastoral systems and climate change—Implications and opportunities for mitigation and adaptation*. It is an interesting read for grazing livestock producers. The full report can be downloaded at:

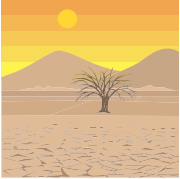
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i1135e00.pdf>

Climate change and variability are long-term environmental issues and pose serious threats to vulnerable and impoverished people worldwide. In this context, governments, the scientific community, development organizations and the private sector increasingly recognize that drylands, grasslands and rangelands deserve greater attention, not only for their large extent, widespread degradation and limited resilience to drought and desertification, but also for their potential capacity to sequester and store carbon in soils while supporting sustainable pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods for millions of people and their adaption capacity. These opportunities can be realized only with targeted capacity building and effective incentives for improved management of these fragile ecosystems, backed up by pro-poor livestock policies, integrated processes that address natural and social dimensions, and funding mechanisms that enable multi-stakeholder engagement.

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Soils represent the earth's largest carbon sink that can be controlled and improved – larger even than forests. In addition, grassland management has been cited as the second most important agricultural technology available for climate change mitigation. This review argues that livestock and pastoral systems have a major role to play in climate change mitigation and, importantly, in supporting adaptation and reducing vulnerability.



Pastoral systems occupy two thirds of global dryland areas, host a large share of the world's poor and have a higher rate of desertification than other land uses. Livestock production is also a growing sector. It is estimated that one billion people depend on livestock, and livestock serves as at least a partial source of income and food security for 70 percent of the world's 880 million rural poor who live on less than USD 1.00 per day.

Degradation of the land base negatively affects the accumulation of carbon in the soils. Thus, reversing land degradation in extensive dryland areas through improved pasture and rangeland management would contribute to restoring the soil carbon sink while also improving livestock-based livelihoods.

The review also highlights the potential for soil carbon sequestration in dryland grazing areas and the multiple benefits of enhancing ecosystem services and processes for improving livelihoods while contributing to adaptation to climate change impacts. Realizing this potential will require increased awareness and coordinated global efforts. Arrangements to bring about climate change mitigation in drylands that simultaneously contribute to climate change adaptation should be a key area of focus in post-Kyoto mechanisms. Such win-win arrangements that successfully achieve both mitigation and adaptation benefits need to be implemented alongside interventions that address associated socio-political and economic barriers, such as land tenure constraints and inadequate services for, and political marginalization of, pastoral and agropastoral communities.

In conclusion, the review finds that there is significant potential for mitigating climate change through improved management of grazing lands in drylands, and emphasizes the concurrent opportunity to enhance the livelihoods of pastoral and agropastoral peoples.

Nontraditional Lamb Markets Study Released February 8, 2010

Erica Rose, Agricultural Economist, with the Livestock Marketing Information Center out of Denver, passed the following information regarding nontraditional lamb marketing. Local sheep producers should read this!

The study on nontraditional lamb markets in the U.S. was sponsored by the American Sheep Industry Association. The study "Nontraditional Lamb Market in the United States: Characteristics and Marketing Strategies" provides an overview and insight into the growing nontraditional market for lamb in the U.S. and what opportunities may exist for the U.S. sheep and lamb industry.

The pdf version of the report can be found at:
<http://ucanr.org/blogs/LivestockRangeTopics/blogfiles/3179.pdf>

If you have difficulty downloading this 58-page document, please call the office at 707-463-4495 for a copy. I think you'll find the study interesting and useful in planning how to tap into these specialty markets.

Mendocino County Sheriff's Livestock Registration February 25, 2010

Good neighbors start with good fences. Even with the best fences livestock will sometimes escape. Often times the local Sheriff's office gets contacted when this happens. While very skilled in the jobs they normally do they often have a very hard time containing stray livestock. The livestock owner, on the other hand, is quite skilled in rounding up stock.

Fortunately, in Mendocino County, you can help the local Sheriff by registering your livestock with them. By doing so, they'll have a better chance of matching the wandering livestock to the owner. It's good for the animal, the owner, the investigating Sheriff deputy, and for public safety. To register your livestock go to:



www.mendocinosheriff.com/animals/livestockReg.pdf. Fill out the form and submit electronically, or you can print it out and mail it to them.

USDA Switches Gears on National Animal ID

February 5, 2010

See the release below from USDA concerning the National Animal ID Program.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5, 2010—Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced today that USDA will develop a new, flexible framework for animal disease traceability in the United States, and undertake several other actions to further strengthen its disease prevention and response capabilities.

"After concluding our listening tour on the National Animal Identification System in 15 cities across the country, receiving thousands of comments from the public and input from States, Tribal Nations, industry groups, and representatives for small and organic farmers, it is apparent that a new strategy for animal disease traceability is needed," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "I've decided to revise the prior policy and offer a new approach to animal disease traceability with changes that respond directly to the feedback we heard."

The framework, announced today at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Mid-Year meeting, provides the basic tenets of an improved animal disease traceability capability in the United States. USDA's efforts will:

- Only apply to animals moved in interstate commerce;
- Be administered by the States and Tribal Nations to provide more flexibility;
- Encourage the use of lower-cost technology; and
- Be implemented transparently through federal regulations and the full rulemaking process.

"One of my main goals for this new approach is to build a collaborative process for shaping and implementing our framework for animal disease traceability," said Vilsack. "We are committed to working in partnership with States, Tribal Nations and industry in the coming months to address many of the details of this framework, and giving ample opportunity for farmers and ranchers and the public to provide us with continued input through this process."

One of USDA's first steps will be to convene a forum with animal health leaders for the States and Tribal Nations to initiate a dialogue about the possible ways of achieving the flexible, coordinated approach to animal disease traceability we envision. Additionally, USDA will be revamping the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health to address specific issues, such as confidentiality and liability.

Although USDA has a robust system in place to protect U.S. agriculture, with today's announcement, the Department will also be taking several additional actions to further strengthen protections against the entry and spread of disease. These steps will include accelerating actions to lessen the risk from diseases — such as tuberculosis — posed by imported animals, initiating and updating analyses on how animal diseases travel into the country, improving response capabilities, and focusing on greater collaboration and analyses with States and industry on potential disease risk overall.

More information on USDA's new direction on animal traceability and the steps to improve disease prevention and control is available at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability>.



USDA Organic Pasture Rules Released

February 16, 2010

The following press release from USDA concerns access to pasture for organic livestock operations.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 2010 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced details of the final regulation regarding access to pasture for organic livestock operations. This rule amends the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations to clarify the use of pasture in raising organic ruminants.

Clear and enforceable standards are essential to the health and success of the market for organic agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The final rule published today will give consumers confidence that organic milk or cheese comes from cows raised on pasture, and organic family farmers the assurance that there is one, consistent pasture standard " that applies to dairy products."

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The final rule provides certainty to consumers that organic livestock production is a pasture based system in which animals are actively grazing pasture during the grazing season. The majority of organic dairy and ruminant livestock producers are already grazing animals and maintaining pastures that meet the requirements of this rule. These standards contain clear requirements that will provide greater assurance that all producers are being held to the same standards.

USDA received a substantial number of comments on provisions of the rule affecting finish feeding practices of slaughter livestock, and has extended the comment period for this provision for 60 days. Finish feeding is commonly used by organic farmers and ranchers to improve the grade of beef and involves feeding livestock grain

It is difficult to decouple standards for milking cows from standards for finish feeding," said Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "Since finish feeding gets swept up into this dairy rulemaking, we are taking an extra step and inviting public comment on the finish feeding requirements. We want to be certain that our actions pertaining to finish feeding are aligned with "organic principles."

This final rule is the culmination of a process that was initiated in 2005 when the National Organic Standards Board recommended that ruminants obtain a minimum 30 percent dry matter intake for at least 120 days. The proposed rule, published on Oct. 28, 2008, received over 26,000 comments from producers, retailers, handlers, certifying agents, consumers, trade associations, organic associations, animal welfare organizations, consumer groups, state and local government entities and various industry groups.

The main components of the rule include:

- Animals must graze pasture during the grazing season, which must be at least 120 days per year;
- Animals must obtain a minimum of 30 percent dry matter intake from grazing pasture during the grazing season;



- Producers must have a pasture management plan and manage pasture as a crop to meet the feed requirements for the grazing animals and to protect soil and water quality; and
- Livestock are exempt from the 30 percent dry matter intake requirements during the finish feeding period, not to exceed 120 days. Livestock must have access to pasture during the finishing phase.

The final rule becomes effective 120 days after publication, June 17, 2010. Operations which are already certified organic will have one year to implement the provisions. Operations which obtain organic certification after the effective date will be expected to demonstrate full compliance.

Although this is a final rule, comments on the exceptions for finish feeding of the ruminant slaughter stock may be submitted before April 19, 2010. This 60-day comment period pertains to the finish feeding provisions only. The specific questions to consider and instructions for submitting comments are available on the NOP website at <http://www.arms.usda.gov/NOP>.

Copies of the final rule and additional information are on display on line at <http://www.arms.usda.gov/NOP>.

Livestock Producers

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors will be presented information on the Livestock Harvest and Processing Study on

**Tuesday, May 18th
1:30 pm
Board Chambers
501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah**

Show your support for a new regional livestock harvest and processing plant by attending the meeting. If you are unable to attend, you can still show your support by writing a letter or an email to your Supervisor.

Cooperative Extension—Mendocino County
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Also check out John's Blog on our office
website: <http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>

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Mendocino County**

890 N. Bush Street, Ukiah, CA 95482

Phone (707) 453-4495

FAX (707) 463-4477

<http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>

John M. Harper
County Director,
Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor
jmharper@ucdavis.edu

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