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### News Briefs

#### Sheep Industry Webinar Series

Since 2012, the American Sheep Industry (ASI) has hosted a series of free webinars. Most recent were presentations on starting a sheep farm on limited acreage, and footrot prevention and control. Check out all the archived videos - more than two dozen uploaded to date - here:

<http://www.optimalag.net/sheepagriculture/webinars/>

#### Webinar Series from NBCEC

Began Wednesday, October 9, 10:00 AM - Click [here](#) to register (free)

The series features internationally recognized speakers discussing topics such as:

- Host resistance of cattle to horn flies: genetics and phenotyping strategies
- Stayability and other tools to select for efficient cows
- Genetic evaluation for feet and legs
- Regulatory status of gene editing
- Genetics of meat quality in Bos indicus cattle

The webinars can only be accessed if you register at the link above. You can participate in as many or as few sessions as you like, and the webinars are recorded so you can watch them at your leisure.

#### Nominate an area for veterinary coverage

Is your area underserved by large animal vets? CDFA is collecting nominations to help USDA NIFA designate funds that incentivize vets to practice in critical areas.

The nomination is accessible here:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/aus/cavetneeds.html>



## Making a Difference in Difficult Situations

By Brooke Latack

*Foodborne pathogen contamination, drought, wildfire, increasing feed prices, regulatory mandates... California agriculture is no stranger to adapting to constant difficulties.*

Though frequent discussion and discord surrounding these issues can cause burnout for farmers, being part of these discussions is critical to solving these issues and maintaining a positive relationship with others in the ag community. Over the last year, countless discussions and meetings focusing on the concern of livestock's impact on food safety have occurred. Here are the three main things I learned about the importance of farmers of all commodities participating in these crucial yet difficult discussions.

### **Your participation removes assumptions made about your operation**

"I didn't realize they were already doing that," was said at least once at each meeting I attended with combined ag groups. It's difficult for people outside of your commodity to know that you are already trying to mitigate impacts your operation may have, though these individuals may get the general idea of how you manage your operation. Being present at meetings provides an opportunity for you to share your practices. Do you already feed an additive that decreases pathogen shedding? Do you keep records of manure used as fertilizer? Do you take regular plant samples to make sure they are pathogen free before harvest? These are all things that may be so obvious to you but could be unknown, though incredibly useful information, for buyers, other commodity producers, government agencies, or even the public. By sharing your story, you make sure that any decisions or reports made are done using the most accurate information.

### **Expressing your needs as a farmer helps set a direction for research, government intervention, and future metrics**

By attending a difficult discussion, you bring attention to the outcomes you would like to see. Would findings from additional research help improve knowledge and guide the conversation? Would regular meetings help reduce some of the misunderstandings within the ag community? What parts of proposed solutions do you think are unclear, unreasonable, or unnecessary? By attending and actively participating, you are ensuring that the resulting outcomes benefit everyone, not just those making the decisions. This may include representing and speaking for your commodity. While the outcomes may not be obvious at the end of the meeting, your feedback will have an impact on decisions down the road.

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## Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

### *Making a Difference cont'd*

#### **These meetings give you an opportunity to grow your knowledge base**

In the past year I have learned more about produce production, pathogen traceback, and the livestock-produce interface than ever before. I thought I had known enough about these issues. I was wrong. Without attending these meetings, I would have never been able to hear the candid thoughts of so many in the ag community. With time being such a precious commodity, we don't always get the opportunity to come together with others in the ag community to listen and learn. Beyond fixing whatever the current issue may be, by broadening our knowledge we can avoid more discord in the future when another issue pops up. If nothing else, you get to know those with whom you may talk to in the future if you ever need to.

**The takeaway:** Meetings discussing sensitive topics are often long, uncomfortable, and may not seem completely helpful at first. Despite all this, your participation allows the correct information to be used to help you and fellow farmers continue to produce high quality products for the world while solving real local problems happening now.

*Editor's note: Brooke is the UCCE Livestock Advisor for Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties and can be contacted at [bclatack@ucanr.edu](mailto:bclatack@ucanr.edu).*

## Good Ag Neighbors Workshops

Livestock ranches and fresh produce farms in California are among the most highly regulated commodities in the country, but confusion often exists about what each community does to assure food safety. To better understand and leverage those efforts, in 2019 the UC Davis Western Institute for Food Safety and Security (WIFSS) and the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss the safety of fresh produce grown in the vicinity of wildlife and livestock. Workshops designed for produce growers and livestock facility operators to promote food safety were held in the Imperial Valley (Holtville) on June 11 and the Central Valley (Stockton) on June 13.

To view materials from the workshops, including video recordings of the presentations, visit:  
<https://www.wifss.ucdavis.edu/good-ag-neighbors/>

## Managing Weeds on Public Lands

Many factors make weed management on federal public lands an interesting challenge.

In September I was invited to join one of the Sierra National Forest Rangeland Management Specialists to explore a medusahead infestation in one of the grazing allotments she manages. The infested meadow used to be a homestead, though the only obvious reminder is the cluster of still-productive apple trees in the middle of an otherwise grass-dominated site. Pines and other conifers border the meadow, and a forest road divides the meadow into two parts. The portion uphill of the road is steeper and has more trees interspersed with the herbaceous vegetation, while the downhill portion is a more expansive, gentler sloping meadow. Due to the elevation, a variety of forb species were still green, but the medusahead and other annual grasses were long since brown. Springs throughout the area supported green forbs, rushes and sedges.



*Apple trees populate a small area of the meadow.*

During the site visit, the specialist wanted to brainstorm ideas for how to reduce the medusahead population. The primary management tools being considered are targeted grazing and prescribed burning. Since the meadow is already grazed, one of the big hurdles to targeted grazing – finding animals to do the job – is reduced.

However, concentrating the animals in the area to graze the medusahead harder than a typical forest meadow is grazed will require additional infrastructure. We discussed the potential for temporary or permanent cross-fencing, to keep an appropriate number of cows in the target area for a specified time frame. For reference, on the various forest allotments in Sierra National Forest, during the 2017 grazing season each cow in the forest averaged about 66 acres to itself of forest, meadows, and everything in between. This meadow is less than 50 acres, and the goal would be to have enough cattle limited to the meadow for a given grazing period so that the cows actually eat the medusahead before it produces seed.

We also discussed the variability of the vegetation in the meadow – from the apple “orchard”, to miniature wetlands, to annual grassland types. Without any additional incentives, the cattle are likely to stay close to the areas with the most resources: the existing water trough, the shade of the apple trees, and the lushest patches of grass. Strategic mineral or protein supplementation, or a secondary water development could effectively attract the cattle to the densest patches of medusahead and away from the springs where no medusahead is growing.

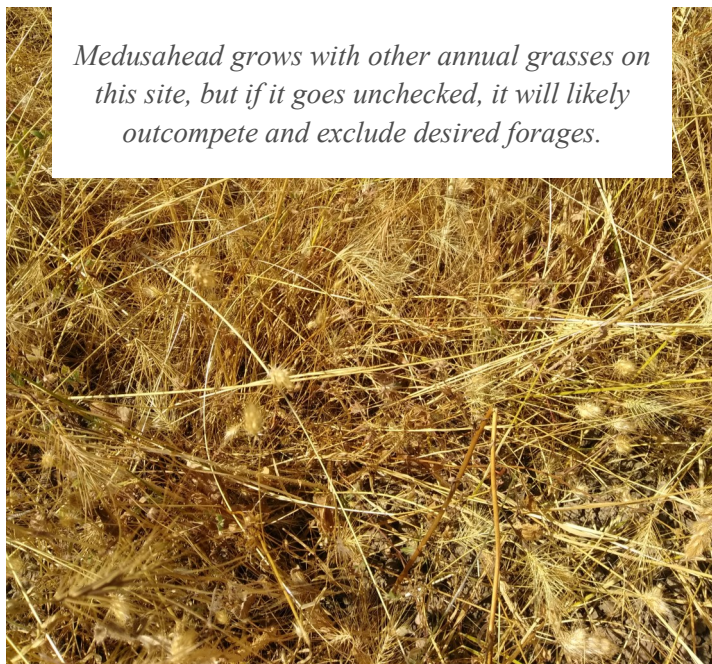
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## Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

### *Managing cont'd*

Grazing makes the most sense as a control method on the downhill, larger meadow area. However, the specialist noted that the uphill, smaller meadow area could be a good candidate for a prescribed burn. On the uphill patch, there are more trees and less forage; it would be harder to fence due to the topography (and thus harder to keep the cows on the medusahead); there isn't a developed livestock watering source uphill of the road; and the Forest Service already has plans to burn the neighboring areas this fall and winter. In essence, grazing would be hard to implement, but the protective nature of the neighboring burns would mean a prescribed fire could be feasible under the right conditions.

Before any of our brainstormed ideas can be implemented the specialist must do several things. First, she needs to consult with the cattle owner who grazes the area, to see if they think the fencing is doable. Forest Service grazing allotment permittees are expected to maintain the grazing infrastructure on the allotments they graze, so the rancher is on the hook for installing a new fence if they decide to move forward with the targeted grazing plan. This is a huge benefit to the Forest Service – the maintenance and infrastructure that permitted ranchers provide on grazing allotments would otherwise cost the Forest Service thousands of dollars and many employee hours per allotment per year.



*Medusahead grows with other annual grasses on this site, but if it goes unchecked, it will likely outcompete and exclude desired forages.*



*Medusahead seed head.*

Even if the rancher is on board with the project, additional Forest Service requirements make projects slow to implement. National Forests are multi-use landscapes, which means that there are many potential uses which all must be considered when implementing a project. Uses of Sierra National Forest include recreation, grazing, and wildlife habitat. As such, all proposed projects must undergo environmental evaluation to ensure any environmental concerns are identified and mitigated or resolved. Even for a project like the potential targeted grazing – which uses a land management tool that has previously been approved on the meadow, just at a different intensity – the site will have to be evaluated. If all goes smoothly, the range management specialist hopes to begin with the grazing plan once the allotments open for grazing next year.

As you can imagine, weed control on federal public lands can be quite a challenge – even if a project is approved, it may be months after the original proposal, and some management tools may not even be options to begin with. I hope to be able to share a success story about this plan being implemented by this time next year, and will follow with observations of the results as available.



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## Prescribed Fire on Private Lands Workshop

November 5th and 6th, 2019

Central Sierra Historical Museum, 42642 Tollhouse Road  
Shaver Lake, CA 93664

This two-day workshop is being held in conjunction with the Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Council annual meeting on November 6-7. The workshop is designed for landowners and managers looking to gain skills in prescribed fire planning and implementation.

The first day will consist of classroom lecture, instruction, and exercises. The second day will include a field trip to Southern California Edison's timberlands at Shaver Lake to tour lands actively managed with prescribed fire and take part in a prescribed fire, permit and weather allowing.

### Workshop Topics:

- Permitting and legal considerations
- Cal Fire's Vegetation Management Program
- Fire weather forecasting and online tools
- Air quality and smoke management
- Prescribed burn associations
- Local fire history
- Fire terms and fire behavior
- Burn plan development
- Burn unit preparation
- Tools and equipment

**Register at** <http://ucanr.edu/2019rxworkshops> by October 31. The registration fee is \$30. Space is limited. For questions, contact Susie Kocher, [sdkocher@ucanr.edu](mailto:sdkocher@ucanr.edu) (530) 542-2571.



Workshops are funded in part by California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.



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