



# THE NEW FOOTHILL RANCHER

...Practical Information for Foothill Livestock Producers

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**Placer—Nevada—Sutter—Yuba Counties**



**JULY 2018**

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## A Gray Wolf Visits Nevada County

On June 9, 2018, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife detected a signal from OR-54, a female gray wolf that had been collared in Oregon, near Andesite Peak in Nevada County (Andesite is southwest of Castle Peak, near the Sierra Crest and just north of Interstate 80). OR-54 had been traveling through the Sierra-Cascade Range



for several months; her foray into Nevada County marks the first known wolf in our part of the Sierra Nevada in over 100 years. While - she appears to be traveling alone, she has since returned north to Sierra County; however, she'd been covering as much as 18 miles per day. She may well return southward as the summer progresses. OR-54 has been implicated in livestock deaths in Oregon.

While ranchers are legitimately concerned with the potential impacts from gray wolves, other more common predators (like mountain lions, coyotes and black bears) can be more problematic in our region. And predators can have indirect impacts (like decreased weight gain, poor reproductive performance and added labor) in addition to causing direct losses.

In collaboration with my colleague Tracy Schohr (the Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor for Butte, Plumas and Sierra Counties), I have developed a following fact sheet to help ranchers understand and document these impacts. You can access it at:

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/placernevadasmallfarms/files/285577.pdf>.

In the meantime, consider disposing of or burying any bone piles on your ranch or grazing allotment if you graze livestock in the higher elevations of the Sierra. Bone piles seem to attract wolves (and other predators). If you have questions, please contact our offices or your local agricultural commissioner or wildlife services specialist!

Finally, UC is conducting long-term research on direct and indirect impacts from predators. If you are interested in participating or learning more about this project, please contact me at

[dmacon@ucanr.edu](mailto:dmacon@ucanr.edu).

## Is Your Ranch Ready for Fire Season?

In early June, several small wildfires ignited near Auburn. The informal rancher telegraph system was activated - many of us started texting or calling one another to find out where the fires were burning and whether anyone needed help. With record-setting forage production in our part of the Sierra Foothills, many of us are preparing for another challenging fire season.



Wildfire preparations are more complicated for commercial livestock operations. Like residential homeowners, ranchers need to create a fire safe space around their homes; they 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? At a minimum, the following issues come to mind:

- We need to protect our home, barns and other infrastructure at our home place.
- Many of us 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 access 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 noticed an increase in respiratory disease in our sheep.

Because many of us have operations that are spread over multiple locations, getting timely and accurate information about where fires are can be challenging as well.

I find that [www.yubanet.com](http://www.yubanet.com) usually has the most up-to-date information on fire location and size - be sure to check the "Happening Now" tab. CAL FIRE 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 CAL FIRE's suggestions for putting together an emergency supply kit (<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Emergency-Supply-Kit/>).

***Protecting Forage:*** Many of us stock our operations conservatively to ensure that we have fall forage for our livestock. You might consider creating fuel breaks to protect this forage. Disking or grading around the perimeter of pastures, or at least 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 any fuel break depends on the fuel type, topography/slope, and potential flame lengths that a fire might generate.

***Protecting Livestock:*** Try to think ahead to how we might move animals out of harm's way. Given enough warning, could you 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 in many cases. 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.

***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 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.

***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 - and this means 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 also inbound.

***Backup:*** Obviously, 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.

***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](mailto:dmacon@ucanr.edu) if you'd like help setting up a calling tree for your area.

***Situational Awareness:*** If you're like me, your ear can tell the difference between a fire plane and a regular aircraft. 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

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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 - through planning, improving our stockmanship skills, making our homes and ranches fire safe - can help reduce this stress. For more information, check out these resources:

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

[http://www.calfire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact\\_sheets/Animalevacuation.pdf](http://www.calfire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact_sheets/Animalevacuation.pdf)

[http://www.uvm.edu/~ascibios/?Page=Emergency/disaster\\_Planning\\_for\\_Livestock.html&SM=submenuemergency.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~ascibios/?Page=Emergency/disaster_Planning_for_Livestock.html&SM=submenuemergency.html)

## More than Cows or Sheep: Ecosystem Services from Ranchlands

Most ranchers track production – pounds of calves or lambs sold, seasonal gain on stocker cattle or feeder lambs, or pounds of wool shorn are all measures of ranch productivity. These are the benchmarks that we compare year-to-year – or across the fence with our neighbors! However, ranches produce more than just livestock – they provide wildlife and native plant habitats, water filtration, fuel reduction, and cultural landscapes. These “ecosystem services” are increasingly valued as important reasons to conserve working ranches.

### What are Rangeland Ecosystem Services?

California rangelands are biologically and climatically diverse, and ranchers utilize a variety of public and private lands. Within Placer, Nevada, Sutter and Yuba Counties, working ranches often represent the “wide open spaces” and iconic oak woodlands of our foothill communities. They also provide migration corridors and other habitat values for wildlife. Well-managed grazing land in our 4-county region supports a wide variety of wildlife, including red-legged frogs, burrowing owls, and Swainson's hawks, to name a few. These lands also provide important habitat types, like vernal pools and blue oak woodlands. Yet despite these critical ecosystem services, rangelands have become highly fragmented - and increasing land values make it difficult for the next generation of ranchers to get started.



### Payments for Ecosystem Services

Rangeland ecosystem services provide value beyond the market price of your livestock. How can you take advantage of these values?

- Conservation easements allow landowners to realize some of the capital value of their land without selling; rather, the landowner voluntarily exchanges future development rights for payment or tax reductions. As one example, the [California Rangeland Trust](#) focuses on funding conservation easements for ranchlands.

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- Cost-share programs like the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program fund on-ranch conservation practices. A local example is the Placer County Water Agency and Placer County Resource Conservation District, which offer cost-share funds for irrigation water conservation efforts.
- Certification and eco-labeling programs help consumers support ranchers directly – rewarding ecologically beneficial management. Despite the potential, many labeling and certification efforts are still under development.

### Future Opportunities in our 4-County Region

Suburban growth and a rapidly changing environment in our region makes rangeland ecosystem services even more critical. New programs continue to emerge with a variety of partners. Some may pay ranchers directly for sequestering carbon or coexisting with wildlife, for example. Some programs may require new management practices; others may place restrictions on future land uses. While the decision to participate in these programs is deeply personal, they can provide opportunities for diversifying ranch income or for young families who want to get a start in ranching.

For more reading: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190052814500727>

## Virulent Newcastle Disease Reported in Southern California Chickens

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has reported a case of Virulent Newcastle Disease (VND) in a small flock of backyard exhibition chickens in Los Angeles County. The case was detected at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine's California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) Laboratory. CDFA has quarantined potentially exposed birds.

VND is a highly contagious and deadly virus in birds, according to the UCCE Poultry website. The virus is found in respiratory discharges and feces. Clinical signs include:

Sneezing	Coughing
Nasal discharge	Green watery diarrhea
Depression	Neck twisting
Circling	Muscle tremors
Paralysis	Decreased egg production
Swelling around eyes and neck	Sudden death



For more information about VND and tips about biosecurity in small-scale poultry flocks, go to: <http://ucanr.edu/sites/poultry/>

[Virulent Newcastle Disease Outbreak Information and Resources/](#).



Information is available in English and Spanish.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service recommends that small and backyard flock owners follow three basic biosecurity steps:

- ◇ Wash hands and scrub boots before and after entering an area with birds.
- ◇ Clean and disinfect tires and equipment before moving them off property.
- ◇ Isolate any birds returning from shows for 30 days before placing them with the rest of the flock.

# Summer/Autumn

## Workshops & Events Calendar

July	
Jul 17	<p><b><u>Foothill/Sac Valley Sheep Producers Cooperative Exploratory Meeting</u></b></p> <p>Join small-scale sheep producers from throughout the foothill and Sacramento Valley to discuss forming an informal purchasing cooperative. UCCE-Placer, 11477 E Ave, Auburn, CA 6-8 p.m.</p>
Jul 22	<p><b><u>Sierra Foothills Wool Pool (see page 7)</u></b></p> 
August	
Aug 30	<p><b><u>Shepherd Skills Workshop – Preparing Ewes for Breeding</u></b></p> <p>At this hands-on morning workshop, you'll learn about pre-breeding nutrition, flushing ewes on pasture to achieve higher twinning rates, body condition scoring, and sheep handling. <b>Cost: \$5/person.</b> Register at <a href="http://ucanr.edu/2018preparingewesforbreeding">http://ucanr.edu/2018preparingewesforbreeding</a></p>
September	
Sep 14-15	<p><b><u>California Sheep and Goat Grazing School (see page 8)</u></b></p> 
Sep 20	<p><b><u>Establishing Irrigated Pasture</u></b></p> <p>Learn about forage varieties, soil preparation, irrigation systems and nutrient management at this on-ranch workshop near Lincoln, CA. <b>Cost: \$5/person.</b> Register at <a href="http://ucanr.edu/2018establishirrigatedpasture">http://ucanr.edu/2018establishirrigatedpasture</a>.</p>
October	
TBA	<p><b><u>Grazing Tech Field Day</u></b></p> <p>Stay tuned for more information about this half-day workshop focusing on grazing technology. Learn about and use the latest electric fencing, electronic livestock identification systems, livestock handling systems, pasture mapping, and phone apps for graziers.</p>

*Second Annual*  
**SIERRA FOOTHILL WOOL POOL**

Sunday, July 22, 2018 – 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Echo Valley Ranch, Inc.

205 Nevada Street

Auburn, CA 95603

(drop off will be in yard behind the feed store)

Looking to market your wool? The Sierra Foothill Wool Pool provides an opportunity to weigh and ship small lots of wool and mohair to Roswell Wool. During the drop-off time, we will work with Roswell Wool's field representative to prepare wool for shipping. Bring your wool in burlap wool sacks or garbage bags. If possible, please separate white face fleeces from black face fleeces. Also, please sort off any hair sheep or hair sheep-cross fleeces – any hair in our wool will result in substantially lower prices for everyone. Sort off bellies, top knots and tags, as well. No baling twine – fleeces will be rejected if they are contaminated with plastic or poly twine. Payment will be made directly to individual producers once Roswell Wool has marketed the wool. Please complete this survey to help us estimate the type and quantity of wool you are bringing:

<http://ucanr.edu/2018sierrafoothillswoolpool>



*For more information, contact:*

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(530) 889-7385 ♦ [dmacon@ucanr.edu](mailto:dmacon@ucanr.edu)



September 14-15, 2018

UCCE-Placer County

11477 E Avenue, Auburn, CA

*This two-day, hands-on grazing school will provide participants with practical, field-based experience in applying the principles of managed grazing using sheep and goats on rangeland and irrigated pasture. Working in teams, participants will learn about grazing planning, electric fencing, sheep and goat husbandry, predator protection tools, and range ecology.*

Day 1 (Friday, September 14) 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Day 2 (Saturday, September 15) 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Principles of Managed Grazing Sheep Husbandry Basics Estimating Carrying Capacity Goat Husbandry Basics Matching Production Calendars with Forage Paddock Design, Fencing and Water Systems	Sheep and Goat Nutrition Pasture and Range Ecology Grazing Planning and Monitoring Targeted Grazing Livestock Protection Tools

**COST:** \$200 (includes meals and course materials). No refunds – your payment guarantees your space.

**Registration deadline:** September 1, 2018

**LODGING:** Hotels are available in the Auburn area.



**Register online:**

<http://ucanr.edu/2018sheepgoatgrazingschool>

**\$200/person**

For more information:

Dan Macon  
(530) 889-7385

[dmacon@ucanr.edu](mailto:dmacon@ucanr.edu)

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/Livestock/>



**How do you prefer to get information from your local  
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**Please take this short survey to help me better meet  
your information needs!**

**<http://ucanr.edu/livestockinfosurvey>**

**For a hard copy of the survey,  
please call (530) 889-7385  
or email me at  
[dmacon@ucanr.edu](mailto:dmacon@ucanr.edu).**

**Thank you!**

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