



DID YOU KNOW...

Good pasture management is the best option for long term health of the pasture and weed resistance . . . nothing can replace the value of good management for providing a healthy pasture for your livestock.

by
Theresa Becchetti

Livestock &
Natural Resources
Farm Advisor

To simplify information, trade names of products have been used. No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.

2011 Beef Quality Audit Underway, Producer Input Needed at www.cattlesurvey.com

Cattle producers are being asked to provide their input to the 2011 National Beef Quality Audit by taking a short survey at www.cattlesurvey.com. The survey can be completed in approximately 10 minutes.

The checkoff-funded National Beef Quality Audit (NBQA) has provided important benchmarks for the U.S. beef industry since 1991. According to Tom Field, Executive Director of Producer Education, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, contractor to the Beef Checkoff Program, the audit has been conducted approximately every four years with the historic focus centered on quantifying the performance of beef carcasses for a number of value enhancing characteristics. Field said the previous surveys have assisted in identifying challenges and opportunities for cattle producers.

The 2011 NBQA, led by scientists from Colorado State University and Texas A&M University, is designed to collect and analyze information from cooler audits in the packing sector, face-to-face interviews with beef supply chain partners and for the first time cattle producers, including feeders, stockers, cow-calf operators, and seedstock producers will be surveyed. According to Field, producer input is being sought to strengthen the measurement of quality-based practices implemented on farms and ranches that support consumer confidence in beef products and production systems.

“We hope to quantify the current adoption level of quality driven management practices by the industry and develop a benchmark against which to measure future performance. Our goal is to provide a foundation from which to direct future educational initiatives to improve the competitiveness of beef and beef by-products,” says Field. “By collecting input from cattle producers, we will help consumers and decision influencers better understand beef production and the commitment of cattlemen to producing safe and wholesome beef products.”

Cattlemen can find the survey online at www.cattlesurvey.com beginning on June 2, 2011. The survey will also be available to beef producers at a variety of state, regional and national industry meetings and conventions.

As a reminder – your certification is only good for three years. We will be holding a regional QA training next summer so be sure to keep an eye out for information next spring about upcoming trainings to stay current!

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Forage Production

This was again an exceptional year with rainfall above normal and extended into the spring. It was very nice to see some areas of green grass still in late May as we finished up our spring production clipping. Both the Westside and Eastside rangelands were well above the normal forage production reported in the Soil Surveys. The Westside ranged from 120% to 170% of normal with one site almost 300% of normal. This equals roughly 2,000 lbs/acre up to almost 7,000 lbs/acre for the most productive site. The Eastside was equally as productive with most sites ranging from 110% to 250% of normal, ranging from roughly 1,900 lbs/acre upwards of over 5,500 lbs/acre.

Unfortunately we also saw an increase in Medusahead as we drove all of the back roads. I doubt that there is one ranch in the area that is not affected by Medusahead to some extent. So if you are reading this and operate on our annual rangelands, I encourage you to please try to attend the Integrated Weed Management meeting on July 23rd to learn how you can try to take back your rangelands!

Fly Control

FACE FLY

Identification and Life Cycle

Face flies (*Musca autumnalis*) are a problem particularly in rural areas of northern and coastal California where livestock are present. The hotter, drier weather in southern California and the southern San Joaquin Valley is not conducive to their development. Face flies require fresh cattle or horse manure for development. The face fly looks virtually identical to the house fly but is somewhat larger and darker in color and male face flies have a distinctive orange-yellow-colored abdomen. Like the house fly, it also has sponging mouthparts and cannot bite. However, face fly behavior is distinctive because they are specifically attracted to the eyes, nose, and mouth of cattle and horses.

Damage

Face flies feed on the secretions of cattle and horses in the summer months. Their habit of feeding around the eyes makes them capable of transmitting pinkeye to livestock, and they are a much more successful pinkeye vector than the closely related house fly. In fall, swarms of face flies may enter buildings or similar structures to

hibernate through the winter months. On warm days, these hibernating flies can become active resulting in nuisance to homeowners. When active, face flies are attracted to light, so they are frequently found flying inside homes near windows.

Management of Face Flies

To control adult face flies within the home, locate the area where the flies are hibernating and then treat them directly. Begin searching for resting sites on the southern and western sides of the building because in fall and winter these walls receive the most sun and therefore are usually the warmest parts of the building. The flies are attracted to these warm areas when searching for protective wintertime harborage. Face flies seeking shelter will often enter cracks and crevices that lead to structural voids in a building, such as crawl spaces, attics, or false ceilings. These structural voids may need to be inspected if the presence of adult face flies persists throughout the winter.

Flies can be vacuumed off the surfaces on which they are hibernating; in areas inaccessible to vacuuming, a residual insecticide such as a pyrethroid can be applied. For application of residual insecticides, contact a reputable pest control company. To prevent future infestations, cracks on the outside of the building structure that may serve as entry points for flies should be sealed.

For most fly species, the best control is achieved by removing larval developmental sites. Because face flies develop in fresh, undisturbed cattle manure (intact manure pats), removal of larval developmental sites (i.e., removal of intact manure pats) may be very difficult and probably impractical in most circumstances. However, by increasing the density of cattle (generally accomplished by restricting their pasture area), the manure pats will be disturbed, allowing few flies to develop. Also, removal of cattle from nearby fields or pastures may help to reduce the problem.

STABLE FLY

Identification and Life Cycle

The stable fly (*Stomoxys calcitrans*), sometimes called the "biting fly," is a common fly that attacks people living in neighborhoods where livestock animals (e.g., horses, cattle, and sheep) are present or that are close to livestock facilities.

Stable flies typically appear in midspring, become severe in early summer, and decrease in numbers throughout the remaining summer months. These flies are similar in

appearance to house flies, except that stable flies have a bayonetlike mouthpart (proboscis) protruding from the front of the head and they lack the four dark stripes on the thorax indicative of house flies.

Under optimal temperatures, the stable fly can develop from egg to adult in 12 days. Piles of moist, decaying plant material (e.g., grass clippings, hay, silage) should be considered potential sources of stable flies, especially when this material is mixed with animal manure and urine. Backyard compost and piles of grass clippings are ideal breeding sites for stable fly larvae and may serve as the production source for an entire neighborhood.

Damage

Both sexes of stable flies feed about once per day on the blood of animals (and sometimes people) and are known to give a painful bite. Although they are blood feeders and capable of transmitting some viruses, stable flies are not known to be significant carriers of disease agents in the U.S. Stable flies prefer to feed on the legs and lower body of large animals such as cattle and horses. On dogs, stable flies typically feed around the periphery of the ears. Undisturbed, the stable fly can fully engorge with blood in less than 5 minutes. Fully fed stable flies will move to a suitable resting site (e.g., a wall or fence) while the blood meal is digested.

Management of Stable Flies

The most effective and economical method for reducing stable fly numbers is to eliminate their developmental sites. To prevent larval development, moist grass clippings should be removed or incorporated into compost piles. Compost piles must be properly maintained to prevent them from becoming breeding areas for stable flies. Proper maintenance includes periodically turning the pile, which promotes rapid decomposition of heat-producing organic matter.

To protect dogs and horses that are bothered by stable flies, insect repellents containing permethrin or pyrethrins are effective, but neither provides long-term control; repeated applications every other day are necessary. Because the stable fly season is relatively short, this chemical repellent approach may be the most economical method to control stable flies on companion animals.

Reprinted from Alec Gerry,
Cooperative Extension Specialist Veterinarian Entomologist

Irrigated Pasture Weeds

Every year weed management should be a top priority on pastures. Ensuring that you do not have any new weeds slowly coming into your pasture, or small patches that are now starting to explode and take over the pasture. Weeds can be a nuisance by outcompeting more desirable forage species as well as sometimes being poisonous to livestock. One of these weeds that has moved from a low level nuisance to an explosion taking over irrigated pasture is buttercup, primarily bur buttercup or roughseed buttercup. Right now you can see a yellow carpet in irrigated pastures that are infected with buttercup. Buttercups can be poisonous to livestock, horses, goats, and cattle but does tend to be rare, mainly because livestock typically do not choose to graze buttercups.

Management options should be geared to reducing the seed base of the plant. Buttercups are an annual plant, so if you are able to control and reduce seed production this year, you should see less next year in your pasture. Three options to consider are: mowing, chemical herbicide treatment, and changing grazing management. Mowing early before seeds are developed is one easy management option. Using whatever mower you have available, tractor pulled mower, lawn mower (riding or push), or a weed eater can all be successful at helping control weeds. Herbicides typically are what people want to go to first. But they may not be the best tool to use, they may be a part of the strategy. Most chemicals that will work well on buttercups will also damage your clovers as well, so careful consideration should be taken when deciding to move forward with chemical control. If you are interested in discussing chemical control, feel free to call me to discuss options.

The last option for controlling buttercups, and any other weed, is good pasture management. Weeds normally do not compete well in an established pasture. Having the flexibility to change grazing management where forages can be not grazed as heavily early in the season can allow grasses to outcompete and shade out buttercups that are just starting to grow. Healthy pastures are resistant to weeds of all kinds. Have only a few acres and think there is nothing you can do? Try using portable electric fencing to easily and cheaply create pastures for a rotation system. Good pasture management is the best option for long term health of the pasture and weed resistance. The other tools can be used to help you get there faster, but nothing can replace the value of good management for providing a healthy pasture for your livestock.

Weed Management on Rangelands

Rangelands are being invaded up and down the state by invasive weeds that are typically not palatable to livestock. In addition to reducing grazing ability, the weeds increase fire hazard and decrease habitat for wildlife. Two of these invasive weeds are grasses, making control more challenging for the land owner. University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) has been conducting research on Yellow Starthistle, Medusahead, and Barb Goatgrass for many years and there are management strategies we have discovered that are feasible on rangelands. Working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), we have developed a decision making support matrix to help land owners:

- Learn more about the three weeds.
- Identify them on the ranch.
- Prioritize the patches to decide where limited funds should be spent first.
- Determine what management practice or practices best fit the patch and the ranch to control and eliminate the weeds.

NRCS has a cost sharing program similar to EQIP to implement management practices determined by the Decision Support Matrix specifically for targeting the three weeds for land owners who are interested.

July 23rd will be a field meeting in the Farmington area for interested ranchers and land owners to learn more about Integrated Weed Management, the Decision Support Matrix, and the possibility of cost sharing with NRCS. Part of this meeting will be in the field learning how to identify weed patches and we will finish with demonstration of the Decision Support Matrix. Lunch will be provided.

August 13th the field meeting will be repeated in the Santa Rosa area.

Goal: To share information with ranchers on how to target and take efforts to reduce or eliminate three weeds on rangelands (Yellow Starthistle, Medusahead, and Barb Goatgrass) and use available money to accomplish the goal.

Weed Management on Rangelands

Agenda:

- 8:00 am Coffee and Registration
- 8:30 am Introduction
- 9:00 am Field. Discuss Weeds
- 10:00 am Identifying Patches and Mapping
- 10:30 am Back to the Barn. Computer Presentations
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Payment Options for Improved Rangelands

4 Continuing
Education Units for
Certified Rangeland
Managers!

Weed Management on Rangelands

Money Available to Control Weeds!

Cook Ranch

Copperopolis and Waverly Roads

Farmington, CA

Saturday, July 23, 2011

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: (____) _____ Number Attending _____

Refreshments and lunch will be provided to all participants.

Please return this form with payment of \$5.00 for each participant. Enclose a check or money order payable to U.C. Regents. Payments & Registration are due by July 13, 2011 (or pay \$10.00 at the door).

Mail registration to:

**Theresa Becchetti, Livestock Advisor
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LIVESTOCK LINES

July 2011 ♦ Volume 17 No. 3

Dates to remember:

- ♦ **July 11th** – 5pm Westside RCD office – Westside Ranching – Highlighting the past, Ensuring the future project
- ♦ **July 23rd** – 8am Farmington – Weed Management on Rangelands (Money available to control weeds!)

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