



## Irrigated Pasture

### Did You Know...

There are a lot of links in this newsletter. If you would like to simply click on the links, please see the on-line version of this newsletter located at <http://ucanr.edu/newsletter>. Color pictures are also available in the on-line version.

By Theresa  
Bechetti

Livestock and  
Natural Resources  
Farm Advisor

Lately, irrigated pastures in our area have been invaded by smutgrass (*Sporobolus indicus*), a warm season perennial grass that is not palatable to livestock. Look at your irrigated pastures right now, if you see a lot of grass that looks like tall fescue from a distance, even though you have animals on the pasture, chances are you have smutgrass. There are no easy control methods to control one grass in a pasture without harming other grasses or the clovers found in the pasture. Using a rotary wiper to apply herbicide tends to be the best option. The wiper will apply the herbicide to the taller vegetation in the pasture, which should be smutgrass, leaving more desirable grasses and clovers untouched. Below are two pictures that are best seen in color. For those receiving the newsletter in the mail, you can find a color version on our website (<http://ucanr.edu/newsletter>). There is also a full paper with more information, including pictures, concerning smutgrass that can be downloaded for free at <http://ucanr.edu/smutgrass>.



Smutgrass in irrigated pasture.



Pasture with no smutgrass.

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.

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# Upcoming Society for Range Management Annual Meeting

Our local California Pacific Society for Range Management is hosting the Annual Meeting in Sacramento January 30 – February 6, 2015. With California’s diverse rangelands from annual grasslands to Great Basin to Coastal Prairie and everything in between, as well as the diverse group of users, our theme is “Managing Diversity”. You will find diversity in subject areas, everything from using smart phone apps to help manage your cattle and monitor your rangelands, weed control, the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition’s annual Summit, rancher forums, and much more will all be options to choose from. Our opening speaker will highlight how diversity can help in problem solving. Temple Grandin will speak about how people with different approaches can actually help solve problems working together.

There will be a variety of tours offered on Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, including one in our area that our **San Joaquin-Stanislaus Cattlemen are sponsoring**. The tour will make a first stop at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Plant Material Center in Lockeford and then to Bev and Jack Sparrowk’s ranch to discuss the challenges of grazing on annual grasslands in California. We are looking for some “volunteers” who would like to not only learn what the Plant Material Center does, but also help us be able to have better, small group discussions on the how ranchers here in California have survived the drought of 2013-2014, a major interest of other folks in the west, as well as broader discussion on ranching in California. For anyone who may be interested in meeting us at the Plant Material Center on February 4<sup>th</sup>, please contact me directly, 209-525-6800.

Anyone who is interested in attending all or any part of the conference, there are scholarships available for ranchers. Scholarship funds will be used to **reimburse** up to 50% of successful applicants’ cost to attend the conference. [To apply online click here.](#)

Ranchers attending the conference can expect to:

- Gain more ideas about how to improve production
- Learn how to manage their resources in a sustainable manner
- Gain a better appreciation of the importance of collaborative and adaptive management
- Build more established networks with other ranchers and professionals
- Share their knowledge with peers at organized discussion sessions
- Be energized to attend future SRM conferences

I hope many of you take advantage of this great meeting being so very close to home.



## **Taxes from Sale of Livestock During Drought**

With the drought forcing many to sell cattle, especially breeding stock, the question of capital gains comes up. Federal and now State tax laws allow ranchers to defer tax on gains from sale of breeding stock. If the drought were to persist, the IRS can extend the period until the drought is over. Drought related sales from back as far as 2010 may also be affected by this extension. Contact your tax accountant for more information. <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Drought-Stricken-Farmers-and-Ranchers-Have-More-Time-to-Replace-Livestock;-30-States-Affected>

## **Grazing Regulatory Action Plan (GRAP)**

A brief background on our state's water quality for those that may not know, or those who have forgotten. In California we have both a State Water Resources Board as well as Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Boards). There are nine Regional Boards in the state, and our area, as well as most of the Central Valley, falls under Board 5, the Central Valley Regional Board, based in Rancho Cordova. The Regional Boards have oversight on both point and non-point water quality, with rangelands falling in the non-point source category. For years we have had a voluntary compliance program in place where ranchers were able to take a class offered by Cooperative Extension and NRCS to learn how to put together a Ranch Water Quality Plan. The first wave of classes was offered in the late 1990's, and I took one of them myself and put together a ranch plan. The plans stay with the ranch, the only thing that was submitted to the Regional Board was a notice of intent. Well over a million acres of private rangeland went through this course, including some from our area. Courses continue to be offered, and the course right now is undergoing a revision.

The voluntary approach worked for many of our neighbors to the north and west who were under more pressure in smaller watershed where grazing was the dominant land use. Ranchers were able to continue grazing and implement best management practices (bmps) to protect water quality.

Fast forward almost thirty years, and now there is a new program, the Grazing Regulatory Action Plan (GRAP), that is being discussed by Regional Board staff. Cooperative Extension, NRCS, and our local Ag Commissioners have all attending meetings regarding GRAP and have expressed that the current model is not broken and should be continued. There is research showing how people attending the class have implemented bmps to protect water quality on their ranches. Nothing is settled at this point. A lot can happen between now and when policy is set in place for GRAP. Everyone should be aware that there may be more changes and possibly new regulations in the future. Once the Ranch Water Quality Short Course is updated, I will probably be offering one in our area. If you have never attended, please consider attending and staying on top of what is happening. Being prepared and informed can only benefit you in the long run.

## UC Vet Med Livestock Symposium

UC Davis Vet Med students are presenting their Annual Livestock Symposium on Saturday, January 10, 2015 on the UC Davis Campus. Learn the latest techniques to help veterinarians care for livestock and hear Dr. Tom Noffsinger, the keynote lecturer, discuss Animal Behavior.

Speakers and topics include:

- Drs. John Angelos & Kristin Clothier: Pink Eye Update
- Dr. Hernan Montilla: Advanced Reproductive Techniques
- Dr. Cassandra Tucker: Beef Cattle Welfare Audits
- Dr. Meera Heller: Care of the Neonate
- Dr. Frank Mitloehner: Air Quality and Health Impacts

Please see their website to register and for more information: [http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ce/livestock/livestock\\_symposium.cfm](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ce/livestock/livestock_symposium.cfm)

## Drought Monitor

On November 7, 2014, the U.S. Drought Monitor authors and the California State Climatologist were at UC Davis to talk about 1) how the U.S. Drought monitor is updated weekly; and 2) how local expert knowledge, real time ranch impacts, and other relevant data can be used to inform the U.S. Drought Monitor. Also shared was new information on California Ranchers' perceptions and experiences with drought, new livestock feeding strategies during drought, and seasonal weather forecasts for California. All of the presentations were recorded and are available on-line. They are in separate files, no more than an hour roughly each in length. [http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/DroughtWorkshop\\_November\\_7\\_2014.html](http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/DroughtWorkshop_November_7_2014.html)

Some of the information that was shared was how each of us can help shape the Drought Monitor. Dan Macon, Community Education Specialist with Placer/Nevada County Cooperative Extension has an article that summarizes how to provide information into the Drought Monitor. Below is part of the article. To read the entire article, please see <http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=16065>.

### ***How can I report drought impacts and conditions to the Drought Monitor?***

There are several formal avenues for reporting impacts and conditions to the Drought Monitor. First, the National Drought Mitigation Center maintains a drought impacts reporting website (go to <http://droughtreporter.unl.edu/>). By clicking on the "Submit a Report" button at the top of the page, you can follow the simple, on-screen directions to submit your observation. The site is moderated, which means someone at the Center reviews each report and determines whether it can be considered a drought "impact" which can be used to inform the drought monitor map. Again, historical context is

important - when you make a report, compare current conditions to previous years. For instance, you might report that a particular creek has never gone dry in the 50 years you've observed it. I've also created an account on the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (<http://www.cocorahs.org/>). This website allows me to report daily precipitation observations. To ensure uniformity, the network asks members to use a specific rain gauge (and a link to an affordable source of these gauges is provided). The Drought Monitor authors do review precipitation reports on the network website as they make their weekly updates. As an admitted weather nerd, I've also found the daily precipitation maps generated on this website to be very interesting – it's just one more way of “looking over the fence” to see what's happening at the neighbors!

## Voices from the Drought

There is an on-going effort to capture people’s stories from the 2013-2014 drought. The project started when a few folks started talking about capturing ranchers’ stories in some manner similar to efforts that were done for stories from the Dust Bowl. The goal is to capture whatever story ranchers want to share about how the drought has affected your operation: economics, downsizing, feeding, restocking, anything that you are concerned about. To many people who are able to turn on the tap and have water, the drought is not as real, the impact not felt as strongly. Sharing your stories can help put the drought in perspective.

If you would like to add your own story of how you have managed to survive, how it affected your operation, how you have become stronger for surviving, please let me know. It is very simple to record and can be done over the phone. Most people are doing fairly short, four minutes or less, stories. Or if you have a big story to share, some have divided into different parts. Please check out the stories that have been posted so far: <https://soundcloud.com/groups/farmer-and-rancher-voices-from-the-drought> and Voice from the Drought Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/voicesfromthedrought?fref=nf>



<http://rangelands.org/>



**University of California**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

# Livestock Lines

Stanislaus & San Joaquin Counties  
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