Volume 5, Issue 4

4th Quarter, 2011

Modoc Ranch Roundup

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Schedule of Events	2
Beef Bits Cont.	2
Winter alfalfa pests	3
Lamb Lights	4

Horse Hints– Winter Care Tips

Horses usually adapt easily and quickly to winter's challenges. But it's important to provide them with the extra care they need to stay safe and healthy when the cold winds blow.

1. As pasture quality or accessibility decreases, increase hay. The best heat source for your horse is extra hay. During the cold weather, it's best to increase the amount of hay, not concentrated feeds. Hay is digested in the cecum and colon which results in heat production by bacterial fermentation.

2. Get a pre-winter dental checkup. If your horse isn't grinding up her food properly, she may not be getting all the nutrients and energy out of it. Food is energy and energy creates warmth!

3. Even if your horses are stabled over night, make sure they have a windbreak or shelter. This doesn't have to be an elaborate structure. A board fence or a stand of trees may be enough.

4. If blanketing, remove the blanket every day. Brush your horse and check for chafing and irritation from the blanket. Don't neglect grooming during the winter. A dirty, matted coat loses much of its ability to insulate.

5. If you put your horse in a stall during very cold weather, keep in mind she may still need blanketing. Outside horses forage, move continually and huddle together during cold weather to keep body temperatures up. These options are not be available to a stalled horse

Beef Bits– Bull management

There are many components to money made or lost for an operation in any given year. Many are out of a producers' control- such as weather events. However, many can be influenced by or in control of the producer including: distribution of calves born, length of calving season, timing of calving, and disease prevention throughout the entire herd.

Believe it or not- the bulls you use can be an important management tool and contribute significantly to the bottom line. Using an average bull:cow ratio of 1:25, weaning weight of 500 lbs, and calf price of $1.50 per pound; each bull represents approximately $18,750 worth of gross income per year.

A breeding soundness exam is one of the many tools a producer can use to ensure they are getting or putting out a fertile, sound bull. Breeding soundness exams include: a physical exam (checking for physical abnormalities that may affect breeding ability), sperm motility, sperm morphology, and scrotal circumference. The cost of a breeding soundness exam begins at $25, with more for travel, trich testing etc. The return on this investment is huge!

Removing bulls from the cow herd is a simple way to control the length of the calving season. The difference from a calf born 30 days later can equal 80 lbs or about $120. Calving distribution and length of the calving season combine to reduce weaning weight variability and greatly influence individual calf value.

The goal for timing of calving is complex. Management for markets is important but so is maximizing gains by timing forage quality and availability while minimizing input costs. Calving

Schedule of Events

- Oct 7th– General Meeting MCCW, 6 PM Alturas Arrowhead Golf Course
- Oct 12th-16th– Junior Grand National, Cow Palace
- Oct 22nd– Annual Fall Dinner Meeting MCCA (see below)
- Nov 5th– Farm Bureau Annual Fall Dinner Meeting– 6 PM, Sacred Heart Parish Church
- November 10th– office closed in observance of Veteran's Day
- November 16-18th– Annual CCA/CCW Convention, Sparks, NV
- November 24th and 26th– Happy Thanksgiving– Office Closed
- December ????- IRM Redbooks out! Contact FAO to reserve yours

Beef Bits– Cont.

with the grass helps ensure feeding less hay and uses more standing forage.

It is also important to include bulls in the herd health plan. Fevers of just two degrees for a short period of time can increase the amount of abnormal sperm produced to the point of temporary infertility. It is also important that bulls have adequate nutritional levels of protein, energy, and minerals (especially copper, zinc and selenium) for maintenance and to respond to vaccinations and morbidity.

Proper management of bulls will help ensure the greatest number of calves are born in the earliest part of the calving season to help maximize profits for cow-calf producers.

Modoc County Cattlemen's Annual Fall Dinner Meeting

When: October 22nd

Meeting begins at USFS Conference Room with presentations from State Vice President and Executive Vice President at **4 PM.**

Social at **6 PM** at the Brass Rail.
Dinner $25/ adult
Kids 1/2 price
Drinks sponsored by Plumas Bank

Horse hints– Cont.

and body temperatures can decline.

6. Be sure to provide adequate water during the winter. Horses may not drink enough if the water is very cold. Try to keep the water temperatures as far above freezing to increase water consumption and avoid dehydration.

7. Watch for frozen puddles around the water troughs. These can be really dangerous to your horse. Sprinkle alfalfa meal on the icy spots. Alfalfa contains nitrogen to promote melting and has a texture to provide traction. Non-toxic and cheap! Fireplace ashes and plain old dirt can provide traction, too.

8. Keep hooves in good condition. Well trimmed hooves will chip less, hold less snow, and provide better grip on slippery ground.

FALL AND WINTER RODENT CONTROL IN ALFALFA AND GRASS HAY FIELDS

The three major rodent pests found in Modoc County alfalfa and grass hay fields in the fall and winter are field mice, pocket gophers, and jackrabbits.

Meadow Mice

Meadow mice or field mice of the genus **Microtus** are the most prolific and shortest-lived of all field rodents. They are commonly found in meadows, irrigated pastures, alfalfa, and grass hay fields. They thrive in areas which furnish them food and cover.

Meadow mouse infestations usually originate from more or less permanently established populations in nearby areas with dense weed or grass cover, which provides food, shelter, and protection from predators. Meadow mice are not wide-ranging; their normal home range is only a few square yards. They are territorial animals; females occupy a home range around their burrows where they don't tolerate other mice. After weaning at two to three weeks of age, young mice disperse from their mothers' home ranges, seeking to establish their own territorial domains. Infestations in alfalfa and grass hay fields will start as small, isolated colonies, and can spread with population growth into large infestations.

CONTROL METHODS: Cultural practices affect mouse populations. Clean cultivation and weed control on fence lines, roadsides, and ditch banks are important preventative measures.

Predation by coyotes, badgers, and other carnivores, as well as a sizeable list of raptors and scavenging birds can help with control. However, it is usually not possible to have enough predators in a field to prevent a population explosion once it has started. Maintaining a short stubble height after the last cutting of the season will help the predators find and reduce mouse populations.

The most effective control measure is to use anti-coagulant grain bait which is available from the Modoc County Agricultural Commissioner. Since meadow mice do not feed very far from their runways, spot bating near runways and burrows is most effective. Locating and treating small infestations before winter snow covers your fields is highly recommended.

Pocket Gophers

Pocket gophers are often the most destructive vertebrate pest of alfalfa. Alfalfa is a preferred for of gophers, and it provides ideal conditions for gopher population buildup. They feed primarily on the taproot and often kill plants. Their feeding can lead to significant yield reduction, and their mounds cause damage to harvest equipment.

CONTROL METHODS: A successful pocket gopher control program depends on early detection and control measures appropriate to the location and situation. The three most effective control measures for gophers are; hand-baiting, mechanical baiting, and trapping.

Hand baiting is useful for small isolated populations. Mechanical baiting is effective in widespread infestations, when soil moisture and texture conditions are favorable for artificial burrow formation. Trapping is a very effective winter time measure. Be sure to set traps in pairs, facing opposite directions.

Jackrabbits

When fields and haystacks are surrounded by sagebrush, jackrabbits can cause serious damage. If jackrabbit populations are high, and palatable food becomes scarce in late fall and winter, they can become serious pests.

CONTROL MEASURES: Fencing to exclude jackrabbits from haystacks and croplands is practical and cost effective in some situations. One or two inch mesh galvanized poultry netting can be used. The fence should be at least two feet tall and buried 4-6 inches in the ground. The netting can be stretched between posts, or attached to a barbed wire fence using hog rings. If attached to a barbed wire fence, a bottom wire is often stretched to keep the netting tight in the soil, and a third wire can be placed halfway between the top and bottom to add strength to the netting and reduce maintenance. When large numbers of jackrabbits are present, shooting, trapping, and natural predators are not effective at population control.

We are on the Web
CEMODOC.UCDAVIS.EDU

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Alturas, California
Permit # 22

COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION

Modoc County UCCE
202 West 4th Street
Alturas, CA 96101

Missy Merrill-Davies: County Director and
Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor

Lamb Lights— Management Tips

The American Sheep Industry Association is providing management tips for producers as the look for recommendations to increase flock size and improve efficiency. Through its Let's Grow with two PLUS initiative, ASI is developing a series of universal management practices designed to assist in a number of specific production areas.

Newly posted management practice tips include: Use of Genetics to Increase Lambing Percentage; Benchmarks for Success; Biosecurity; Late Gestation/Early Lactation Ewe Nutrition; and Steps to Effective and Sustainable Internal Parasite Management. These fact sheets have been written by sheep specialists from around the country and contain practical information for producers of all sizes regardless of location.

The tips and fact sheets have been posted at: www.growourflock.org/resources The site also includes a video explaining the twoPLUS program, profiles of Let's Grow partners, and open forum for producers to communicate with one another and a section for media promotion.

The primary objective of this initiative is to encourage current producers of all sizes to expand their sheep numbers by 2014 resulting in 315,000 more lambs and 2 million more pounds of wool for the industry to market.