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# Livestock

# McDonald's switches chicken

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## Using livestock to shape your landscape

By **DOUG WARNOCK**  
For The Capital Press

Targeted grazing is becoming widely used as a way to manage vegetation on various landscapes. It has been described as an art and a science and both terms are appropriate.

"While the principles of targeted grazing are scientifically based, the successful practice of targeted grazing requires site-specific knowledge of plant growth, animal nutrition and grazing behavior, ecosystem function and public relations," says Dan Macon of Flying Mule Farm near Auburn, California. Macon manages a sheep operation in the Sierra Nevada foothills and provides targeted grazing services for other landowners. Macon's article on targeted grazing appeared in the October, 2014, issue of Rangelands, published by the Society for Range Management.

Targeted grazing is a natural approach to vegetation removal and a way to cover land that is too dangerous for machinery and too sensitive for chemical removal.

Success in achieving the desired results from targeted grazing is a result of using the appropriate species of livestock on the land in the right season and at the right stocking rate for the right duration of time. The person managing the livestock must monitor both the targeted plant species and the animals to determine if the program is going according to plan.

In addition to getting the desired results with the plant population, the animals' health and welfare must be maintained. For example, lactating females must be able to maintain a reasonable milk flow in order to nurse their young during the grazing experience.

Craig Madsen, owner-manager of Healing Hooves, a vegetation management operation using goats and sheep, is headquartered near Edwall, Washington. Madsen has been in the targeted grazing business since 2002. He says, "To be successful in changing a landscape, we must consider timing of the treatment and livestock preferences. Timing is important in that target plants must be grazed when they are palatable and when it will deter plant reproduction. Understanding livestock preferences helps in determining when to browse, so that desirable plants are protected and unwanted plants targeted, while ensuring the animals have a diet with adequate nutrition."

Livestock managers involved in vegetation management make good use of portable electric fencing and portable water systems. Quite often targeted grazing is done in areas with inadequate fencing and limited water. Most people in this business make good use of stock dogs to help with animal control and movement and guard dogs to protect the livestock from predators.

There are risks in targeted grazing. When the projects are in urban or suburban areas, there can be vandalism, theft and poisoning of the livestock. Madsen has experienced loss of animals from well-meaning people, who mistakenly fed his goats toxic ornamental plants.

Macon and Madsen are two examples of a growing number of livestock producers who are providing a natural way to reduce undesirable plants from a landscape.

*Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he consults and writes on grazing management. He can be contacted at [dwarnockgreenerpastures@gmail.com](mailto:dwarnockgreenerpastures@gmail.com).*

## Fast-food giant gets picky about antibiotic use

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

The broiler chicken industry is phasing out all but the most critical uses of antibiotics in its flocks as McDonald's restaurants have become the latest major buyer to set policies against their use, an industry group says.

McDonald's announced last week that it will only source chicken that is raised without antibiotics that are important to human medicine and that the policy will be fully implemented in two years. Ionophores, a class of antibiotics not used for humans, could still be fed to birds to keep them healthy.

The fast-food chain is "a big player," representing about 4 percent of the market for broiler



Courtesy of USDA-ARS

Biologist Mark Jenkins, left, and zoologist Ray Fetterer observe 1-day-old broiler chicks ingesting gelatin beads containing the vaccine for coccidiosis. The broiler chicken industry is phasing out the use of antibiotics for growth promotion.

chickens, said Tom Super, a National Chicken Council spokesman. Since its policy will allow the use of ionophores, it won't have as large an impact on costs to growers, he said in an email.

"Most of the industry has been moving away from medically important antibiotics for

growth promotion for several years since the (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) guidance came out," Super said. "The majority of the antibiotics used by chicken producers are 'animal-only.'"

"Antibiotics are only one tool that chicken producers can

use to ensure optimal health," he said. "They're not a silver bullet."

After December 2016, antibiotics will only be used to treat or prevent a specific, targeted disease, Super said. A veterinarian will prescribe a preventive use if there is evidence of a threat from a disease or bacterium, he said.

Chicken producers are concerned about animal welfare and have "proactively and voluntarily taken steps toward finding alternative ways to control disease while reducing antibiotic use," asserts Ashley Peterson, the NCC's vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs.

Chicken producers are among many farmers and ranchers who have been changing the way they care for their livestock as increasing regulation and consumer awareness bring more scrutiny to the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.

New FDA guidelines issued

in December 2013 have effectively eliminated use of the drugs for growth promotion or feed efficiency. The FDA is now revising its Veterinary Feed Directive to expand veterinarians' role in administering antibiotics for illness or prevention.

McDonald's and other fast-food chains have been trying to shed their "junk-food" image by offering items with simpler ingredient labels and fewer chemicals. McDonald's announced it will also switch to milk from cows that are not treated with the artificial growth hormone rBST later this year.

The world's biggest hamburger chain has been working aggressively to stop a slide in global sales amid a shift in consumers' tastes and intensifying competition. The company replaced its chief executive officer this month and held a "Turnaround Summit" for U.S. franchisees in an effort to reinvigorate restaurant operators, The Associated Press reported.

# Hay production needs protection in sensitive markets

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press

BURLEY, Idaho — Growing adoption of genetically engineered alfalfa by U.S. growers, especially in western states, requires both GE growers and non-GE growers cooperate to successfully coexist.

"Let's be realistic, GMOs are here to stay," Dan Putnam, extension forage specialist with the University of California-Davis, told hay growers at the annual Idaho Hay and Forage Association convention in Burley on Feb. 27.

More than 95 percent of feedstuffs in the United States are sourced from GE crops, with GE crops accounting for 93 percent, 94 percent and 96 percent of corn, soybean and

cotton acreage, respectively, in 2014, he said.

Roundup Ready alfalfa has already been widely adopted, and a second GE trait to reduce lignin in alfalfa was approved in November, he said.

While most conventional markets for alfalfa and forage are not GE sensitive, the presence of commercially available GE traits raises concerns for those who grow alfalfa for GE-sensitive markets — primarily export and organic markets, but also some horse markets, he said.

Coexistence that allows everyone to thrive is possible with caveats that include both technical and human factors, Putnam said.

Small amounts of unwanted genes can be important or

not important, depending on the grower's market. GE is not permitted in organic markets, and export markets have differing sensitivity levels for GE presence, he said.

China, for instance, has not approved the Roundup Ready trait, and detection of the gene in U.S. hay to China caused angst for U.S. exporters in 2014. Other countries, such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan, have approved the trait but buyers there might be reluctant, he said.

It is important to understand both market and regulatory tolerances, define thresholds and use production methods to enable coexistence, he said.

The most important step for producing hay for sensitive markets is to plant non-GE

seed as seed is the most likely source of contamination. Seed companies have non-detect seed available but report that less than 5 percent of growers are requesting that seed, he said.

"In general, hay growers for export are probably not paying enough attention to non-GE seed at this time," he said.

Producers also need to minimize the possibility of gene flow in the field, although it's considered a low risk in hay production fields. Steps to prevent gene flow include distances between GE-sensitive fields and Roundup Ready

fields; controlling feral alfalfa; harvesting before excessive flowering and seed production; and crop removal.

Movement of small amounts of GE seed or hay through machinery should also be prevented, which in Putnam's view presents a higher risk of contamination than gene flow, he said.

The coexistence of biotech and non-biotech alfalfa also requires higher awareness of crop identity and record keeping so hay lots aren't mixed. Testing lots is the final step to confirm whether hay lots contain biotech traits, he said.

For growers who are not growing for sensitive markets, it comes down to being aware of their neighbors' needs, he said.



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