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# Opinion

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## Our View

# Research increases value of grazing

The use of targeted grazing as a tool for raising livestock and managing public and private land continues to evolve.

Thanks to researchers, ranchers and land managers at the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are finding new ways to put livestock to work reducing the fuels that feed voracious wildfires and eradicating weed populations.

For example, virtual fences that use the global positioning system can keep livestock away from streams and other sensitive areas. Each cow wears a collar that indicates where it can graze. When the cattle need to be moved to prevent overgrazing it can be done by “moving” the virtual fence on a computer or cell phone screen.

At the same time, the cattle continue to grow and will ultimately provide high-quality protein from land



University of Nevada-Reno  
**Cattle graze on cheatgrass during a University of Nevada-Reno experiment.**

that cannot support other crops.

New uses for cattle to help manage land are also on the way.

In one experiment, researchers at the University of Nevada-Reno are training cattle to eat cheatgrass during its dormant season. Cheatgrass is a weed that has overtaken about 11,000 square miles of the West. Using supplemental protein feeding stations to attract the cattle to the areas where the cheatgrass is established, they found that cattle will also eat the weeds. This makes

room for native grasses to grow and reduces the amount of wildfire fuel.

Anyway you look at it, that's a win for ranchers, land managers — and even for environmentalists.

The value livestock brings to land managers doesn't end with cattle. Goats are commonly used to eat weeds and underbrush in pastures and other areas where herbicides would be difficult to use or cost-prohibitive. Once they are on site, the goats go to work, munching weeds as though they are delicacies.

Whether goats, sheep or cattle are used, the value of grazing is self-evident.

The introduction of new technologies also creates new possibilities for managing livestock — and beyond. Using GPS-equipped virtual fencing and collars, cattle can be moved to new areas as needed to prevent overgrazing. Our hope is that, as technol-

ogy continues to evolve, ranchers and land managers will be able to manage not just livestock but predators — such as wolves, cougars and coyotes — that could be monitored real time and kept away from livestock.

The nay-sayers will always exist. Entire groups have grown up around the unfounded concept that livestock is universally bad for the landscape, but ranchers and land managers know well-managed grazing is a benefit to the land and livestock.

These are exciting times for ranchers and land managers. They have known the good that livestock can bring to the countryside by reducing wildfire fuels and weeds.

Now researchers are adding to those realities with new possibilities that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of livestock grazing to improve the landscape even more.

## Our View



USDA

**Citing the high cost of operating in California, Smithfield Foods plans to close its Vernon, Calif., pork plant.**

# California's high cost of doing business

The Biden administration has decided to “solve” the complex problem of low cattle prices and high meat prices by spending \$1 billion to subsidize the construction or expansion of small and medium-sized meat processing plants.

Building capacity is one thing, making it viable is another — particularly in states with overly burdensome tax and regulatory regimes. In that regard, California provides a prime example.

Last week, Smithfield Foods announced it would close its only California processing plant, a pork slaughter facility producing Farmer John products with 1,800 employees in Vernon. It is also looking at options to end its farming operations in the state.

The plant will close early next year.

Jim Monroe, vice president of corporate affairs, told The Associated Press that company operating costs in California are much higher than in other areas of the country, including taxes and the price of water, electricity and natural gas. “Our utility costs in California are 3 1/2 times higher per head than our other locations where they do the same type of work,” he said.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the company also cited the state's regulatory climate, particularly Proposition 12.

Officially the Farm Animal Confinement Act, Prop 12 bans the sale of eggs, pork and veal products in California unless production facilities

meet animal-confinement standards dictated by the state. The law applies to products produced outside the state of California.

The law was passed overwhelmingly by California voters in 2018. It has been challenged in federal court by processors and producer organizations, and that case is awaiting review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The administration's push to increase capacity favors small- and medium-sized processors over the four major companies that dominate the meat processing industry. The idea is to create more competition for livestock and drive up producer prices while staving off potential bottlenecks in the supply chain.

On its face that makes sense. But, it isn't as simple as it sounds.

Smithfield is one of the big players, with 40,000 employees and 46 facilities across the United States. The Vernon facility only processes hogs from company-owned farms, but still couldn't realize the efficiencies it needs to operate in California.

If a big, vertically integrated operator can't make a go of it in California, how will a smaller company buying hogs on the market be viable?

The feds can throw as much money at smaller companies as taxpayers will borrow, but that's not going to help those processors become viable in the face of high cost and regulatory burdens imposed by some state governments.

# How to help Ukraine's farmers

I am proud and happy to serve as an ambassador for the World to Rebuild Rural Ukraine project ([www.WRRU.org](http://www.WRRU.org)).

What is the World to Rebuild Rural Ukraine?

This is a program that avoids corruption and brings aid in rebuilding small rural farms, homes, sheds, and farming capabilities to the small rural farms within Ukraine. This does not provide assistance above and beyond what the small rural farmers already had prior to the war, which has brought complete destruction and genocidal actions of the Russian military to the Ukrainian people.

We must do something. It is not an option to allow the Russian military to take over Ukraine. As farmers, we have seen what it has done for the prices and availability of products throughout the world. Wheat prices will remain high for at least the next five years, shortages of wheat and other crops are occurring throughout the world with massive starvation throughout Africa due to the war.

We need to keep in mind what would we do if we were in a similar situation as Ukrainian producers.

This is not about charity. These small rural farmers have lost not only the ability to raise crops for the people of Ukraine but the loss of their homes, their farming equipment, ability to continue farming and family members.

As farmers, grower groups, the agriculture industry and American producers, we can make a difference for the small farmers within Ukraine that have no way of getting assistance.

What can we do as Americans and farmers within this global economy to help? I am one of several ambassadors from around the United States who are asking for your assistance to rebuild small farms of rural Ukraine.

The ambassadors will decide on the projects and how the money is spent to aid small farms within Ukraine. You can become an ambassador, too.

GUEST VIEW

Stephen Van Vleet



The value of your commodity, primarily due to the unfortunate war in Ukraine, is as follows:

- A typical yield of 80 bushels per acre at \$6 a bushel equals \$480 per acre prior to the war.

- The same yield of 80 bushels per acre at \$10 or more a bushel equals at least \$800 per acre because of the war.

Most likely in eastern Washington this year yields will be above average.

How to help/aid the World to Rebuild Rural Ukraine:

- Pledge a number of bushels to go toward rebuilding rural Ukrainian farms.

- Alternatively, donate 1 penny per bushel of this year's crop toward rebuilding rural Ukrainian farms. For 1,000 bushels this is only \$10. That is a smaller percentage than the amount of grain typically lost on the ground during harvest.

We can always make excuses for why we can't afford to support these farmers. However, there is no excuse.

You can make a difference in the lives of rural Ukrainian farmers.

Anyone that wants to know more about this well-developed program can contact me anytime.

To find out what is happening in Ukraine, join my friends and colleagues from Ukraine on a live bi-weekly online meeting every other Friday at <https://www.wrru.org/live/>.

We will discuss the current situation in Ukraine — agriculture production, exports. Hear World to Rebuild Rural Ukraine project achievements and stories directly from farmers we help and are suffering through the war in Ukraine.

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