

# Adventures in Targeted Grazing



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Flying Mule Farm  
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“To be successful with sheep, even when  
you’re not thinking about them, you need to  
think about them a little.”

Ivan Doig, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*



## Overview

- Background on Flying Mule Farm
- Our experience with targeted grazing
- Symptoms versus Disease
- Risks and Rewards
- Public Relations
- A Question of Scale!



## Flying Mule Farm

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current Products<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grass-fed lamb and mutton</li><li>• Blueface Leicester yarn, roving and batting</li><li>• Live lambs</li><li>• Raw wool</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current services<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vegetation management – in partnership with Prescriptive Livestock Services and Emilio Huarte</li><li>• Shepherding Skills Workshops</li><li>• Stockmanship Training</li></ul></li></ul> |
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## 2 Key Questions!

If you're a land owner or manager,  
what are you paying for?



If you're a rancher, why should you  
get paid?



## Symptoms vs. Disease

### Symptoms

- Invasive weeds
- Erosion
- Bare ground
- Fuel-loading

### Disease

- Lack of active management

**Targeted Grazing addresses the “disease” of no management!**



## What is your primary business?

Is grazing a byproduct of your livestock/meat business, or is livestock/meat a byproduct of your vegetation management business?



## Understanding Vegetation and the Environment

- Growth stages and types
  - Grazing vs. trampling carbon
  - Browsing vs. grazing
- Using all 3 impacts **and** rest
- Picking the right species for the job
- Toxicity
- Nature vs. nurture
  - Teaching animals to graze/browse



## behave.net – Utah State Cooperative Extension

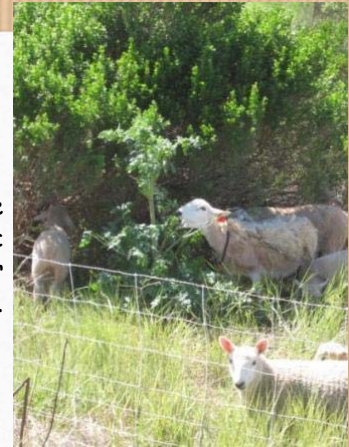
- Mother knows best
- Early experiences matter most
- Animals must learn *how* to forage
- Animals avoid unfamiliar foods
- Variety is the spice of life
- Everybody is an individual
- Palatability depends on feedback from nutrients and toxins
  - Nutrients increase palatability; toxins decrease it
  - Changes in preferences are automatic (animals don't have to think about it)
  - Toxins set a limit on intake



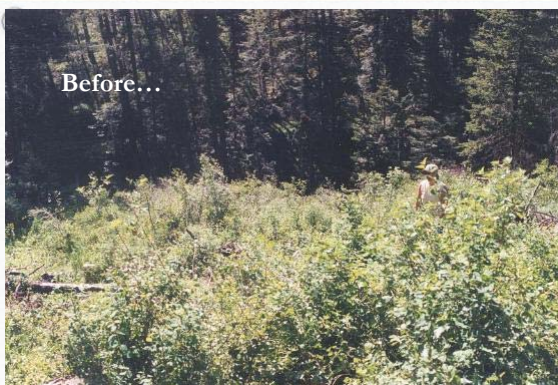


Using herd effect to manage annual grasslands.

Animals can handle small amounts of toxic plants if there is other forage available.



Grazing behavior and preferences can be taught.



Before...



After!

© Prescriptive Livestock Services

## Who are you working for?



- Agencies
- Nonprofits
- Homeowners Associations
  - Manager
  - Board
  - Members
- Private landowners

## Investments



- Infrastructure
  - Fencing
  - Water
  - Transportation
  - Dogs (herding and LGD)
- Skills
  - Stockmanship
  - Range and vegetation management
- Personnel
  - Herders



## Risks



- Vandalism and theft
- Toxicity
- Predators
- Nutritional stress
- Transporting weeds
- Residual negative perceptions regarding grazing
- Emergencies

## Understanding the Setting

- Neighboring landowners
- Urban vs. suburban vs. rural
- Predators





## Public Relations

- Workshops and outreach
- One-on-one
- Social media
- Get to know the authorities!
  - Fire
  - Animal Control
  - Law enforcement



## Questions of Scale!



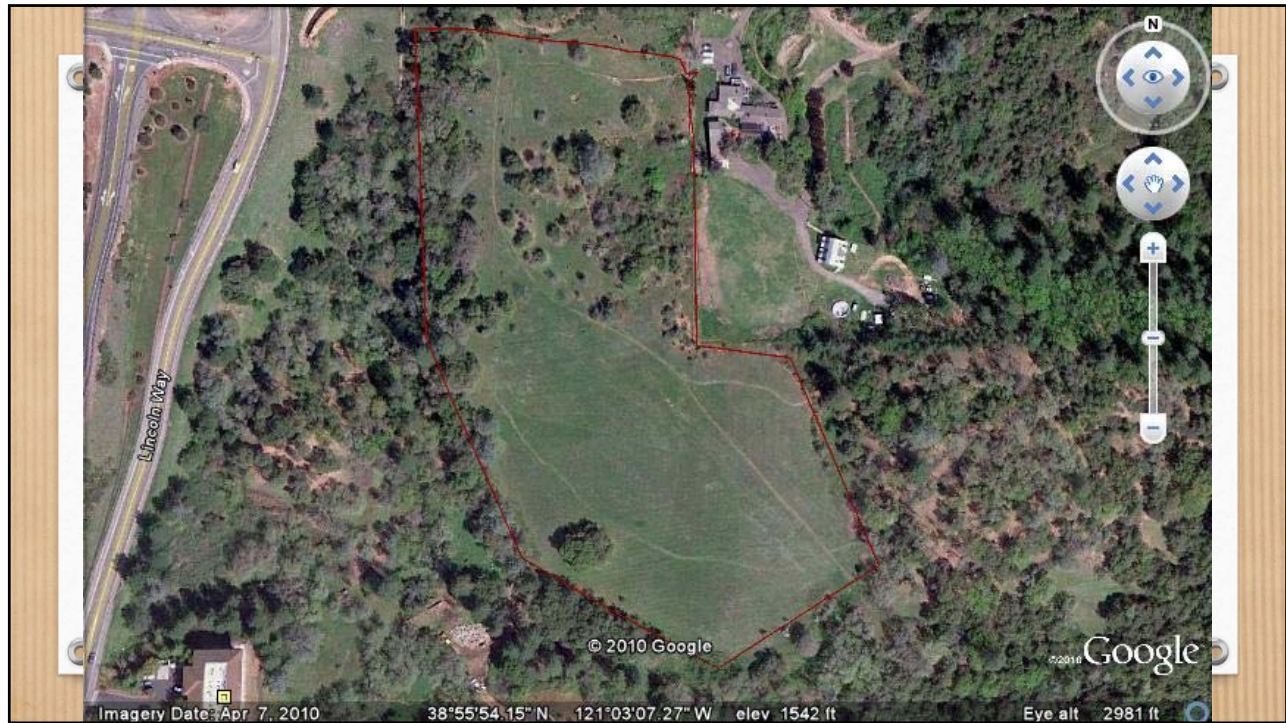
- Why more is better:
  - Efficiency of labor and infrastructure
  - Herd effect is critical component
  - Duration of contract and impacts to neighbors

## Costs (or Expenses)

- Transportation in/out
- Grazing costs (per acre or per head per day)
- Added expenses
  - Hauling water
  - Difficult fencing
  - Herders
- Headache factor
- Must have somewhere else to go when project is completed!







## Working Together

- Project design can support vegetation management activities
  - Water access
  - Loading and unloading access
  - Stock “drive-ways”
- Working with law enforcement other officials
  - Mapping of project locations and contractors
  - Goats versus sheep!
  - Emergencies



## Key Answers

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### For Agencies, you're paying for:

- Treating large landscapes
- Treating the disease rather than the symptoms
- Treating land that is too "something" to mow or spray
- Positive public relations!

### For Producers, you're being paid for:

- Your stockmanship expertise
- Your knowledge of vegetation and land management
- Your time
- Your risk

## Where will targeted grazing be in 5 years?

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- Demand for large-scale projects will be driven by development.
- Increased demand for homeowner-scale projects – but can these be done profitably?
- Public agencies will budget for targeted grazing instead of chemical treatments.
- Competition for grazing leases may put downward pressure on targeted grazing fees.
- Other livestock species will be used for targeted grazing.
- Cost of fuel and labor will impact small and mid-sized contractors.
- Support infrastructure will be critical:
  - Transportation
  - Processing
  - Shearing