

Section 1: CWGA Review of the 2015 RMAC White Paper

The CWGA Targeted Grazing Committee's review of the 2015 RMAC white paper took place from October 2024 - March 2025 with eight meetings specifically dedicated to editing the document.

Our edits reflect the consensus of a working group that included six targeted grazers, two veterinarians, and a retired rangeland advisor. Most revisions were made collaboratively during group meetings, with a straightforward guiding question:

Does the content of the white paper reflect our experience as targeted grazing contractors?

The section that underwent the most significant revision was the cost structures section. We agreed it was essential to provide clear, realistic, and flexible examples that reflect how grazing contracts are structured in practice.

Other areas where we added specificity include:

- The behavior and characteristics of grazing animals
- The logistics of deploying and managing grazing operations
- The expected outcomes and considerations for project success

One specific point of discussion was the recommendation in the best management practices section that suggests using weed-free hay. After extended committee conversations, we agreed that this recommendation should be removed because:

- It does not reflect standard practice in the targeted grazing industry
- It would significantly increase costs
- In nearly all practical situations, it is not necessary
- The scientific basis for this recommendation is limited or lacking

Section 2: Comparison of 2015 vs. 2025 White Paper on Prescribed Herbivory

Overview

2015: Focused on CAL FIRE VMP Foresters and introduced herbivory as a fuel reduction tool.

2025: Revised the section on cattle and their role in targeted grazing. Expanded audience to include landowners and local agencies. Frames herbivory as one tool in a broader VTP strategy.

Benefits

2015: Emphasized air quality, slope access, and reduced soil disturbance.

2025: Retains those benefits but adds ecological co-benefits such as improved forage, soil health, riparian function, and wildlife habitat.

Limitations

2015: General concerns about bark stripping, fuel size, and animal shelter needs.

2025: Adds detail on timing, toxic plants, and integration with other treatment methods.

Site Evaluation

2015: Discussed vegetation type, slope, water, and fencing needs.

2025: Expands each factor with specifics on water requirements, trailer access, fencing methods, and animal behavior relative to vegetation structure.

Animal Characteristics

2015: Explained grazer vs. browser roles; suggested mixed-species use.

2025: Adds species-specific logistics (e.g., truck capacity, herder-to-animal ratios), nutrition, and considerations like labor availability and terrain.

Best Management Practices

2015: Covered weed-free feed, buffers, humane care, and signs.

2025: Expands on each with clear public communication strategies, dog management, and effectiveness monitoring. Recommends removal of weed-free hay requirement.

Contracting

2015: Described cost-per-acre and cost-per-head/day approaches.

2025: Adds time-based and total-bid pricing, with detailed examples and discussion of grazing leases as an alternative model.

CEQA Considerations

2015: Mentioned general use of CEQA and NEPA.

2025: Ties directly to the VTP Program EIR, clarifies exemptions and review process, and provides updated guidance.

Resources

2015: Included outdated grazer and agency lists.

2025: Updated with more relevant contacts and examples of agencies currently using grazing as a vegetation management tool.