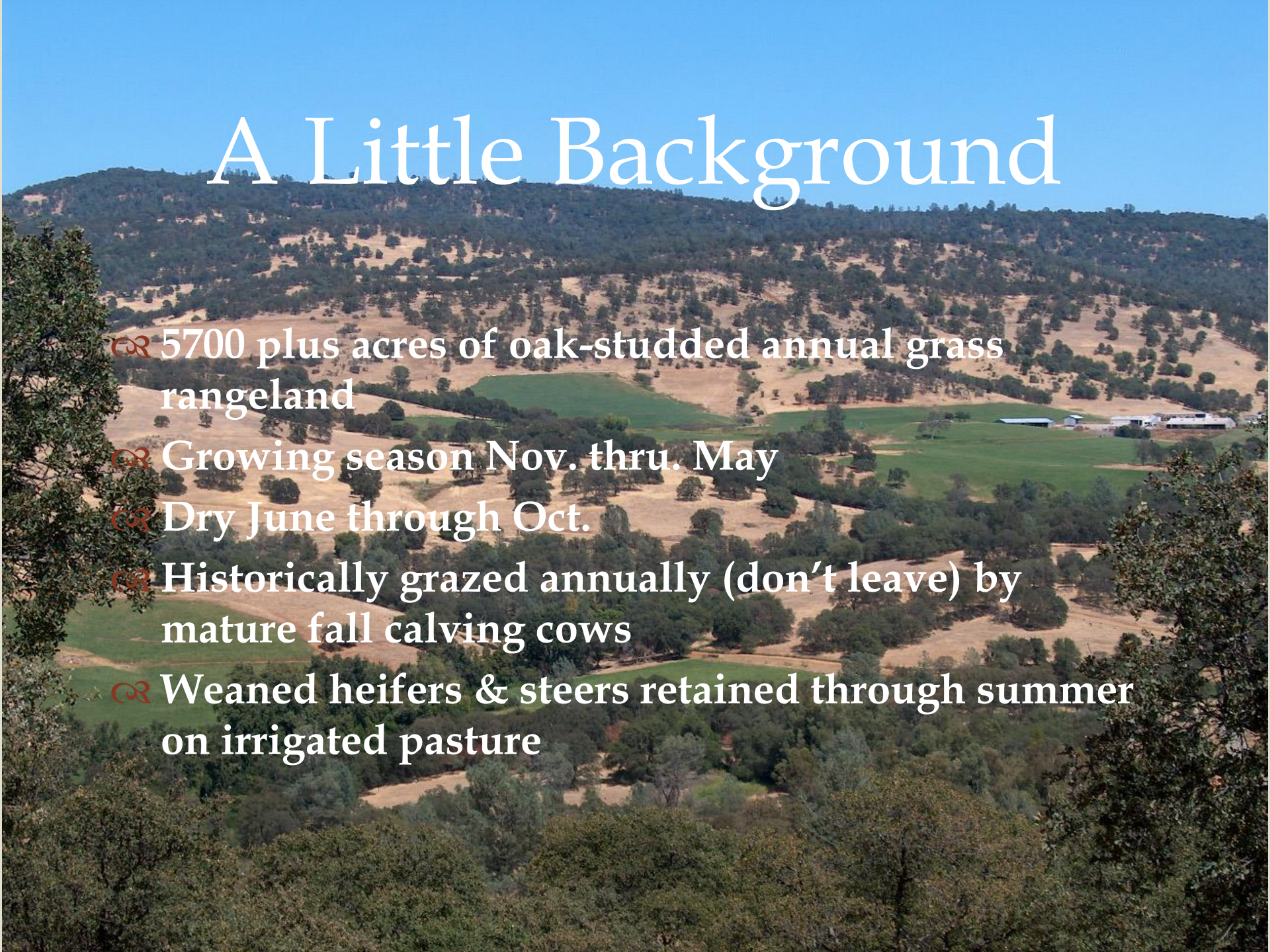
A Hybrid Model Approach to Livestock Use for Research

Dustin Flavell, Superintendent
Sierra Foothill Research & Extension Center

A Little Background



- 5700 plus acres of oak-studded annual grass rangeland
- Growing season Nov. thru. May
- Dry June through Oct.
- Historically grazed annually (don't leave) by mature fall calving cows
- Weaned heifers & steers retained through summer on irrigated pasture

Cattle Use Background

- Since 1960 grazed exclusively by ~350 commercial cows.
- Cattle owned by Campus Dept. and charged rent of 2 AUM (as of 2013)
- Cows available for research with some limitations if production was severely effected
- Calves retained post weaning available for research

Cattle Use Background

- Historically this made sense
  - Cow/calf management
  - Cow health
  - Nutrition
  - Feeding trials

As the Center Progressed

- Changes in Research
  - Natural resources
  - Weed Control
  - Vaccine Development
  - Average Daily Gains

- Demand was for the cow's calves and less on the cows themselves

Limitations with a Resident Herd

- Resource Limitations
- Calves post weaning were in demand
- Higher amount of calves needed for research than we could support
- Demand for same sex calves for studies

Basically The Cows Had Become a Factory for the Research Samples Desired

Effects of this on the ANS herd

- Foothill Abortion (EBA)
  - All heifers calves born kept and bred
  - 60 day calving season shifted to 150 day
  - Research team not happy either

Something had to be Done

- Researchers not getting what they needed
- Herd nowhere near industry
- Negative effects on Natural Resources
- Only a few livestock projects

Pilot that lead to the Hybrid model

- Large Grazing study that started using Cows
  - Not enough critters
  - Not enough impact & treatment effects at key times
  - Animal management activities interfering with study

Contract with Industry

- Researcher input
- Floated these needs to industry to see if anyone could support this project
- First year: SUCCESS!!!

Strategic Planning Process

- Was this the direction we wanted to go
- Stakeholder driven process
- Results
  - **Need More Capacity for Research**
  - Stability for the ANS cow herd

ANS Herd

- Reduced to 150 Cows
- Sustainable number year to year
- Guaranteed support for their animals regardless of research
- Livestock only used for research if it made sense

Hybrid Approach

- Current Researchers
- Grazing, EBA & Pinkeye
- Other Researchers

Hybrid Approach

- Grazing study added numbers
- EBA
  - 150 bred heifers
- Pink eye
  - 170 steers for 4 months
- Rice Straw feeding
  - Fall, 100 heifers for 2 months

Hybrid model

- Never would have been able to carry enough animals to support the research demand
  - Pink eye
  - EBA
- Increased our capacity through efficiency
  - Here when needed
  - Piggy backing animals

Hybrid Approach - Conclusion

- Thus Far it is not perfect, but its better than where we were and where we were headed
- Increased amount of research we could support with out additional capital or resources
- Infused money into the Center/Division
- Stakeholder buy in was, and will be critical to the success
- KEY: Getting what the researchers need for the time they need it


Thank you for having me