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Oh BEHAVE!

Behavioral Education for
Human, Animal, Vegetation
& Ecosystem Management

BEHAVE Outreach Program • 435-797-3576

The Newsletter for the
BEHAVE Research and
Outreach Program



Final BEHAVE Facilitators Network Workshop in Nevada

Tiffany Lyman
successfully defended
her Masters Thesis in
mid-April.
Congratulations!!!!

We held the final BEHAVE Facilitators Network workshop on March 4 -5 in Winnemucca, NV. We had 15 participants from various agencies and backgrounds several livestock producers, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, NRCS, USFS, BLM, Northern Nevada Stewardship, Great Basin College, and Conservation Districts. We had great discussions about behavioral principles and their application in Nevada as well as future plans for presenting behavioral information to various groups.

guidelines for controlling weeds in the West. Chuck Petersen's talked about his on-going research on increasing sagebrush use in fall by cattle. Jay also brought some interesting foods for us to try during our novel food break.

Thanks to workshop presenters, Jay Davison, Chuck Petersen and Beth Burritt for a great workshop.

BEHAVE Facilitators - a survey is coming your way via email for our final report on our SARE grant. Please take time to fill it out. Thanks!

Workshop participants also heard about Jay Davison's project on grazing

BEHAVE Principle of the Month:

Early experience matters most. In past newsletters I've discussed the importance of mom on her offspring's food and habitat choices and the effect of experience on the structure and function of the body. Experiences early in life have the most profound and long-lasting effects because young animal's bodies and brains are still developing. Also young animals are more likely to try new foods and engage in new behaviors. You can make training easier and increase the likelihood it will spread through the herd by using young females when changing behavior.

Early exposure of Ram-Lambs to Ewes Changes Ram Behavior

At the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station near Dubois, ID about 15 to 20% of ram lambs show no interest in breeding ewes in heat. Of those about half or 6 to 8% prefer to breed other males rather than females. These rams are sometimes referred to as non-breeders.

change the behavior of non-breeder rams. Researchers exposed ram lambs just after puberty (7 to 8 months of age) to cycling ewes for 17 days. Another group of ram lambs were not exposed to cycling ewes.

Interestingly, when researchers put non-breeder rams into a typical breeding herd, they bred as many ewes as rams labeled as low-libido rams but not as many as high-libido rams.

At the time of breeding when lambs were 17 to 18 months of age, rams in the early exposure group engaged in more courtship behavior, mounts and ejaculations than rams without early exposure to ewes. Also, the percentage of non-breeders in the early exposure group was only 1%.

Researchers at the sheep station wondered if early exposure to cycling ewes would

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BEHAVE

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We'd Eat It: Heifers Learn to Eat Late Season Diffuse Knapweed

In 2004, Kathy Voth began using behavioral principles to teach cows to eat weeds. It wasn't that hard because most weeds are nutritious. But last summer in a project sponsored by Boulder County Parks and Open Space in Colorado, she learned the same training techniques can be used to teach cows to eat weeds low in nutrients: late season diffuse knapweed.

Cattle familiar with diffuse knapweed eat it readily during the bolt stage when it contains 18% protein. According to a Colorado State University study, grazing diffuse knapweed during bolt reduces density and seed production of the weed by 50%. But since a single diffuse knapweed plant can produce as many as 18,000 seeds, managers continue to look for more ways to fight the weed.

Last summer, Kathy worked with Rob Alexander, Boulder County's Agricultural Resource Manager, to train 50 heifers to eat diffuse knapweed in the bud and bloom stage to further reduce plant density and seed production by knapweed.

Kathy took 50 angus/limousine crosses through the training process and began feeding weeds the afternoon of day four.

"At this late stage in its growth the plant is only about 8% protein and looks like tumbleweed with some buds and blossoms. So I was worried that the cows might not eat it," said Kathy.

By day 7, the cows were cleaning the knapweed out of their tubs. They ate it readily in a two acre test pasture and continued eating it in a 40 acre pasture. Owners of the heifers had never seen their cattle eat knapweed so late in the season.

This summer, Kathy will follow her trained heifers as they teach their calves to eat diffuse knapweed. She also plans to add 50 untrained heifers to the herd and record how rapidly untrained heifers learn from trained animals. Finally, she wants to know how quickly she can train all 100 heifers plus the calves, to a new weed, Dalmation Toadflax, using trained animals as mentors during training. Stay tuned! www.livestockforlandscapes.com/boulder.htm for more information.



Before grazing



After grazing

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