

Targeted Grazing Guidebook

1. Problem or Opportunity (200-word limit)

Targeted grazing is an increasingly popular way to manage vegetation and is a growing source of income for U.S. sheep producers. It provides an opportunity for producers to diversify their operations, add a new income stream and help young people get started and stay in agriculture. In a survey conducted in 2021, half of the respondents were aware of targeted grazing projects that were done poorly by individuals who have been in the targeted grazing business for less than five years. There is a growing need for practical, applied information on how to manage and operate this service-based business. In 2006, the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) published “Targeted Grazing: A Natural Approach to Vegetation Management and Landscape Enhancement” which is a technical book lacking the applied information for new and beginning targeted grazers. In 2020, ASI began developing a “Targeted Grazing Guidebook” which aims to guide those wishing to run a targeted grazing business and those wishing to hire them. It is designed as a “How-To” book of practical, applied skills gathered from experienced contractors to be a resource to help new service providers get started and result in improved outcomes from projects. The content has been written and the next steps are to complete the publication process.

2. Project Objectives (200-word limit)

The objective of this project is to complete the “Targeted Grazing Guidebook” (Guidebook) publication process and support the targeted grazing industry by providing needed information and resources for service providers, educators, producers, and land managers. This grant will meet the need for improving and growing the targeted grazing industry. Successfully completed projects validate the benefits of targeted grazing as a vegetation management tool and its positive effects on the environment, which results in an improved perception of grazing and supports the long-term sustainability of targeted grazing with sheep. Specific objectives include:

- Publish a producer-friendly Guidebook that provides practical, applied advice on how to operate a successful targeted grazing business and the qualities land managers should look for in hiring service providers.
- Advance the use of targeted grazing to manage vegetation and control invasive species.
- Complete the publication process which includes preparing the text for hard copy and eBook formats.

- • Print 500 copies, set up a print-on-demand option, and offer a USB as another source of distribution that will include the Guidebook, the 2006 Targeted Grazing Handbook, and other freely available targeted grazing resources.
- • Distribute the Guidebook to all industry stakeholders.
- • Conduct a survey of the recipients of the materials to assess the impact.

3. Description of efforts – Anticipated results (1000-word limit)

Targeted grazing is an increasingly popular way to manage unwanted vegetation, control invasive species, remove excess grass and brush that feed wildfires, and enhance wildlife habitat in both urban and wildland settings. It is a growing source of income for sheep producers and there is great demand for this service. The expansion of solar arrays across the U.S. and the fact that sheep are the best-suited species and most common solar grazing animals is a key driver behind the demand for this service. However, in a preliminary survey conducted in 2021, half of the respondents were aware of projects that were done poorly, and half had been in business for less than five years. There is a need for practical, applied advice on how to operate a successful targeted grazing business and the qualities land managers should look for in hiring.

Providing targeted grazing services is a different mindset than commercial sheep production. Targeted grazing is not about raising sheep for meat or fiber, it is a service business where producers are paid for providing grazing services with a land management purpose. This business model requires an assorted set of skills, from knowledge of plants and animal behavior to understanding contracts to building temporary fences. Most importantly, targeted grazing contractors must know how to work with people and interact with the public. While sheep are suited to graze almost any environment, each targeted grazing project can be different but the basics of managing a targeted grazing service business apply to all projects.

Sheep producers often consider other producers as the best source of practical information on grazing management and this project will be the first compilation of information based on the experiences of targeted grazing service providers. There is a need for more publications on using livestock grazing as an environmental management tool. The “Targeted Grazing Guidebook” (Guidebook) aims to help those wishing to run a targeted grazing business and those wishing to hire them. It is a “How-To” book of practical, applied skills gathered from experienced contractors. It

will provide a resource for targeted grazing service providers that will help new ones get started resulting in improved outcomes from projects. It will also be a resource for those hiring grazing contractors by helping them find someone who will do a good job. This will ensure the reputation and continuation of targeted grazing with sheep as a vegetation management tool.

Two targeted grazing handbooks were published in 2006 and 2007: “Targeted Grazing: A Natural Approach to Vegetation Management and Landscape Enhancement” and “Livestock Grazing Guidelines for Controlling Noxious Weeds in the Western United States”. These technical handbooks are widely used, but there is a need for practical, applied information on how to run this service-based business. The proposed Guidebook will differ from the previous handbooks, in that the information will be based on the experiences of contractors that provide targeted grazing services. This project will be the first compilation of information based on the experiences and lessons learned of targeted grazing service providers. The content of this guide has been written based on survey results, group discussions, and phone interviews. These experiences will be weighed against published research to ensure that this new Guidebook is both practical and scientifically sound.

The background work and text has been completed and the external review process is underway. The next steps are to transform the text into a published format, which includes editing, layout, printing (hard copy and digital), and distribution to all stakeholders. The objective of this project is to complete the Guidebook publication process and support the targeted grazing industry by providing needed information and resources for targeted grazing service providers, educators, producers, and land managers.