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JUNE 2026 Volume 45 • Number 6

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Forest Service Announces Additional 2026 Fee-Free Day on June 6



The U.S. Forest Service announced an additional 2026 recreation fee-free day on June 6 in celebration of National Trails Day, providing no cost use of all standard amenity recreation sites on national forests and grasslands.

National Trails Day was established by the American Hiking Society in 1993 and occurs annually on the first Saturday in June. It brings together federal land managers, partners, and volunteers to celebrate trails and accomplish trail stewardship projects to ensure they are safe, well-maintained, easy-to-follow and accessible.

"We are so excited to invite Americans to visit our national forests free of charge on National Trails Day and view the beauty of our nation in person!" said Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins. "We hope families and friends can come together and celebrate this special day and reconnect with our nation's spirit in this positive setting and learn more about our amazing forest landscapes."

"For National Trails Day in 2025, Forest Service trail managers, partners, and volunteers hosted 80 events, including 54 stewardship projects, engaging with more than 3,100 volunteers who maintained 173 miles of trail," said Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz. "We hope those who love Forest Service trails will join us at the trailhead on June 6, whether it's volunteering to build new trails, pick up trash near a trailhead, participating in a nature walk, or taking advantage of the fee-free day benefits."

Find a local National Trails Day event and join the nationwide movement. Consider hosting an event in cooperation with local Forest Service staff if one doesn't currently exist near you. The Forest Service is also encouraging all visitors to Take the #NationalTrailsDay Pledge and commit to leaving the trails better than you found them.

The Forest Service-managed trail system, at more than 165,000 miles, is the largest public trails system in the U.S. with trailheads in nearly every state making recreation opportunities accessible to hike, bike, ATV, ride horseback, snowmobile, snowshoe, etc. In 2025, volunteers and partners accounted for more than 60 percent of all trail maintenance accomplishments, or nearly 26,000 miles.

Here's additional 2026 Fee-Free Days:

- National Get Outdoors Day: June 13, 2026
- Independence Day: July 4, 2026
- Constitution Day: September 17, 2026
- National Public Lands Day: September 26, 2026
- Theodore Roosevelt's Birthday: October 27, 2026
- Veterans Day: November 11, 2026

For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

The Forest Service waives recreation fees at most day-use sites on lands managed by the agency. Participation by concession-operated sites may vary.

Young people ages 9 to 18 invited to UC Range and Mustang Camp in Modoc National Forest



Range and Mustang Camp will offer youth an opportunity to learn about wild horse health and management.

Would wild horses drag the attention of teenagers away from their phones? University educators are offering 4-H summer camps for youths age 9 to 18 to experience the outdoors while learning about wild horse management and careers in natural resources.

To educate young people about healthy lands and healthy horses, Utah State University and University of California Cooperative Extension have developed mustang camps across the United States. The 4-H camps are funded through a U.S. Bureau of Land Management grant.

"Research shows that learning outside of the classroom is a great way for young people to grow their interests and learn to take care of the natural world and protect it for the future," said California camp organizer Laura Snell, UC Cooperative Extension livestock and natural resources advisor.

For the third year of the Northern California camp, UC Cooperative Extension is partnering with the CalPac section of the Society for Range Management to expand the Mustang Camp

into a three-day, two-night Range and Mustang Camp, Aug. 6-8, 2026. It will be held in Modoc National Forest in the northeast corner of California.

Range and Mustang Camps will also be hosted in Idaho, Utah, Colorado and Nevada with more locations added throughout the year. Visit <https://extension.usu.edu/utah4h/events/mustang-camp> to learn about all Mustang Camps offered this year.

Curriculum, materials designed for two age groups

"We split the camp into two groups for learning – an introduction and advanced group," Snell said.

The curriculum and educational materials are designed for two age groups – 11 to 13 and 14 to 18. Both groups will learn about managing public lands, rangelands, wild horses and burros. Campers will be invited to:

Take a deeper look at the relationship between healthy lands and healthy horses

Participate in the Mustang Camp curriculum to learn about managing wild horses on the range and in holding

facilities

Get close-up experience at a Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse Facility and see wild horses out on rangelands

"New this year, the youth will learn about natural resource career opportunities such as forestry, soils and hydrology," Snell added.

Participants to enjoy camp experiences in Modoc National Forest

"We are moving camp to Blue Lake Camp in the Modoc National Forest," Snell said. "This new location allows the young people to participate in traditional camp experiences such as swimming, canoeing and toasting s'mores - along with making lifetime camp memories."

Anyone aged 9 to 18 is eligible.

Camp capacity is limited to 25 youths. Cost is \$125 per camper and includes all meals from lunch on Thursday, Aug. 6, to lunch on Saturday, Aug. 8. Housing will be in bunk houses. Participants should bring a sleeping bag or bedding (e.g., sheets, pillow, blanket).

For anyone who is not already a 4-H member, the camp fees will cover 4-H registration for the 2026-27 program year. Register online at <https://link.ucanr.edu/mustangcamp2026>.

For more information, please contact Laura Snell at lksnell@ucanr.edu or (530) 233-6400.



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Lay Mor Self Propelled Sweeper, Model 8B, John Deere E1 120 Riding Lawn Mower w/Basket Nice, New Holland TC33D Tractor W/Loader 1045 Hours, Scarifier Scraper, Toyota 7FGU30 5000 # Forklift. 46' JCB Boom Lift, 26' JCB Scissor Lift, (2) Rotoplat 507, Sullair 85CKM Air Compressor, Can-Am 1000R Turbo 4 x 4, Polaris 800 High Output Ranger, Can-Am Dragon Fire 4x4, (7) Honda Recon's, (3) Recon's, 2012 & 2019, Honda, 2003 250 EX Sportrax, (6) Kubota RTV1140 For Parts.

(6) New China Golf Carts, Put Together, (2) New Skid Steer Loaders, (7) Electric Tricycle's, (10) New Steel Storage Buildings, 8'x14' Storage Building, Pipeline Clamps, Barton Temp & Flow Gauges, Sockets to 1", Drive Torque Wrenches, Power Tools, Pipe Plugs, Threaders, Expecting Office Trailer, Heavy Square Tubing & HD I Beam To 40', 6"x8", 6"x16", 5"x8 1/2", 2"x10"x25'.

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FEATURES

8 CDR supports honeybee producers. If your ELAP determination is impacted, seek guidance about review or appeal options. Our focus is simple, ensure producers receive accurate and fair determinations based on current laws and regulations

9 Western Growers unveiled the details behind its three-year, \$1.5 million partnership with on-farm agtech robotics innovation center Reservoir Farms, a commitment that gives WG members and affiliated startups exclusive access and opportunities for robotics field trials.

10 As Glyphosate Debate Intensifies, LASCO Highlights Electric Weed Control Alternative for Modern Farming. The Lightning Weeder™ supports long-term soil stewardship while helping growers expand weed management strategies. herbicide-resistant weeds continue creating costly operational challenges for growers across the country.

12 The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an increase to the State Water Project (SWP) allocation for 2026. The allocation is now 45 percent of requested supplies, up from the previous allocation of 30 percent announced on January 29. The allocation establishes how much water the State plans to deliver to the 29 public water agencies served by the SWP, which provides water to 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland.

16 New Report: Rising Tide of Invasive Pests Requires Dynamic, Resilient, Comprehensive System. Pest prevention in California isn't quite the same as it is elsewhere. The state's vast agricultural diversity—more than 400 crops across dramatically varied climates—creates a bounty that is as appealing to invasive insects and pathogens as it is to consumers.

18 UC ANR research suggests tea could offer high-value returns on smaller acreage. After six decades of farming oranges, pistachios and grapes in Fresno County, grower Stan Ishii didn't expect to see tea thriving in the Central Valley. But curiosity brought him—and nearly 100 others—to Tea Day at the UC Kearney Research and Extension Center in Parlier, where researchers shared new findings on the viability of Camellia sinensis in California's arid climate.



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CDR Advocates for Fair 15% ELAP Mortality Rate for Honeybee Producers

CDR supports honeybee producers. If your ELAP determination is impacted, seek guidance about review or appeal options.

“ Our focus is simple, ensure producers receive accurate and fair determinations based on current laws and regulations ”

— David & Kimberly Lott



Founders of Crop Disaster Recovery:
David & Kimberly Lott

LAKE PLACID, FL, UNITED STATES, Crop Disaster Recovery (CDR) is actively advocating on behalf of honeybee producers nationwide regarding a critical issue impacting Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP) payment determinations.

In July 2025, Congress enacted Public Law 119-21, directing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to apply a 15% normal mortality rate when determining eligible honeybee colony losses under ELAP. However, current implementation guidance limits the use of this updated rate to 2026 and future program years, rather than applying it to eligible 2025 claims.

As outlined in CDR’s formal correspondence to USDA leadership, a letter to the secretary of AG written by CDR Co-founders David & Kim Lott, this interpretation may materially impact producers. Many honeybee operations filing

or receiving determinations after enactment are still being evaluated using the prior mortality rate, resulting in reduced payment calculations and, in some cases, significant financial shortfalls.

CDR’s position is that the statutory language is clear and controlling. The law directs that the Secretary “shall utilize” the 15% mortality rate, and this requirement should apply to claims filed, pending, or determined after the law’s enactment.

“Our focus is simple, ensure producers receive accurate and fair determinations based on current law,” said CDR leadership. “We are working through appropriate administrative channels to support consistent and correct implementation.”

CDR is currently:

- Engaging with USDA and administrative leadership
- Providing supporting analysis

and examples from impacted claims

- Assisting producers with navigating appeals and documentation
- Monitoring for additional guidance or clarification

Importantly, this effort is not only about individual claims but about ensuring consistency across all counties and states so that honeybee producers are treated fairly nationwide.

CDR also encourages industry awareness and engagement. Producers, associations, and stakeholders who have relationships with agricultural policymakers are encouraged to help elevate awareness of the issue to support timely clarification and resolution.

Support for Producers

CDR remains committed to supporting honeybee producers through this process. Producers who believe their ELAP determinations may be impacted are encouraged to seek guidance to understand their options, including potential review or appeal pathways.

About Crop Disaster Recovery (CDR) Crop Disaster Recovery helps agricultural producers build accurate, defensible, and audit-ready positions within USDA programs, ensuring they receive the payments they are entitled to while maintaining full compliance.

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Western Growers Announces \$1.5 Million, Three-Year Partnership with Reservoir Farms

Deal will help WG members evaluate agtech solutions for their toughest challenges

By Ann Donahue

Western Growers unveiled the details behind its three-year, \$1.5 million partnership with on-farm agtech robotics innovation center Reservoir Farms, a commitment that gives WG members and affiliated startups exclusive access and opportunities for robotics field trials.

"This commitment confirms our confidence in Reservoir Farms and particularly our strategic alignment with Danny Bernstein and his team," said Western Growers President and CEO Dave Puglia. "Western Growers members will be in the driver's seat to prioritize companies with workable automation and efficiency solutions that can address escalating labor and other food production input costs threatening domestic farm viability."

Reservoir Farms helps startups get to the first viable product in less time and for less capital by providing shared R&D space; shared commercially grown field acreage; shared equipment from partners like John Deere and real-world grower feedback on products they are building.

Western Growers will provide Reservoir Farms \$500,000 in partnership funding each year for the next three years in addition to the \$250,000 the organization previously provided. In return, Western Growers will have:

WG-branded demonstration days every year at any Reservoir

Farms location, including Salinas, Calif.; California Wine Country and a soon-to-be launched Central Valley location. These events will allow growers to evaluate performance, scalability and ROI in real production environments. Demonstrations will focus on solving key challenges, such as labor constraints, input efficiency and operational scalability.

In coordination with the Western Growers Center for Innovation & Technology, select agtech startups will receive a sponsored residency at Reservoir Farms. Startups will test and refine technologies alongside growers in real-world conditions to ensure practical application.

The WG Innovation Committee will receive exclusive insight from Reservoir Farms' structured technology and business evaluation of emerging agtech solutions; this will serve to inform and guide member engagement.

"This partnership with Western Growers formalizes a direct line between the problems growers are facing and the technologies being built to solve them," said Danny Bernstein, CEO of Reservoir. "By aligning startup development with WG member priorities and validating those solutions in real farm environments, Reservoir can accelerate the path from prototype to commercial adoption. This is technology as resilience."

As Glyphosate Debate Intensifies, LASCO Highlights Electric Weed Control Alternative for Modern Farming

The Lightning Weeder™ supports long-term soil stewardship while helping growers expand weed management strategies

As public debate surrounding glyphosate-based herbicides intensifies following renewed national attention from recent Wall Street Journal coverage, farmers are increasingly facing pressure to balance productivity with long-term land stewardship, herbicide resistance challenges, and evolving public expectations surrounding agriculture. At the same time, herbicide-resistant weeds continue creating costly operational challenges for growers across the country.

The growing debate comes at a time when even major global agriculture companies are racing to develop new solutions to combat herbicide-resistant “superweeds,” a challenge recently highlighted in The Wall Street Journal¹. Industry reports estimate herbicide-resistant weeds cost U.S. agriculture billions annually, while consumer scrutiny surrounding pesticide residues in food and soil continues to intensify². In response to these shifting conversations, LASCO is highlighting its Lightning Weeder™, an electric weed control system designed to reduce reliance on traditional chemical weed management practices.

For generations, chemical herbicides have played a major role in maintaining clean and productive fields. However, modern agriculture is increasingly placing greater emphasis on soil vitality, integrated weed management, and sustainable long-term production practices that work with the land rather than against it.

Rather than applying chemicals directly to the field, the Lightning Weeder™ uses a patented Electric Discharge System (EDS) that control weeds electrically through direct plant contact. When weeds

touch the applicator bar, electrical energy rapidly evaporates moisture within the plant, disrupting growth while leaving the soil structure undisturbed. Because the electrical current travels through the plant itself, there is no chemical residue left behind and minimal disruption to microbial activity beneath the soil.

“Farmers today are under pressure from every direction — rising input costs, herbicide resistance, regulatory scrutiny, and changing consumer expectations,” said Kevin Olson of LASCO Manufacturing. “The Lightning Weeder™ gives growers another tool to help manage weeds while reducing dependence on traditional chemical-only approaches.”

As agriculture evolves toward more diversified and precision-based farming practices, technologies like the Lightning Weeder™ are gaining attention from growers looking to expand weed management strategies beyond traditional chemical-only approaches. Built for modern agricultural operations, the Lightning Weeder™ combines precision ap-

plication with energy-based weed control technology designed to help growers reduce soil disruption while supporting long-term productivity and sustainable land management. LASCO believes electric weed control can play an important role in the future of integrated weed management and precision agriculture.

The Lightning Weeder™ applicator system is hydraulically controlled for precision height adjustment, while electrical output is managed through an operator control panel. LASCO has also engineered the system with multiple safety protections, including interlock systems and shielded components designed to support safe operation in field conditions.

As conversations surrounding chemical weed control continue evolving across agriculture, food production, and public health sectors, technologies like the Lightning Weeder™ are becoming part of a broader industry discussion around precision agriculture, soil stewardship, and diversified weed management strategies.



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CDFa Announces Vacancies on the Shell Egg Advisory Committee

The California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch announces two vacancies on the Egg Safety and Quality Management’s Shell Egg Advisory Committee (SEAC).

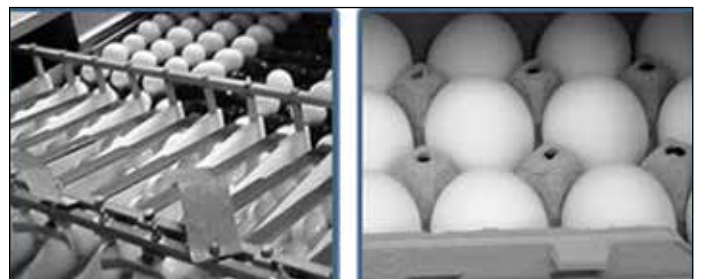
The program monitors egg quality at production, wholesale, and retail levels. The goal is to provide California consumers with eggs that are wholesome, properly labeled, refrigerated, and meet the standard of established quality, while maintaining fair and equitable marketing standards in the California egg industry.

The vacancies are for one industry member and one public member. The membership terms for these vacancies will be 36 months.

Applicants for the industry member must be a registered egg handler or a representative of a registered egg handler in the State of California.

The Public member applicants must not be a registered egg handler or a representative of a registered egg handler. Committee members receive no compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for transportation to and from meetings and for per diem expenses for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses.

SEAC members play a vital role in providing industry ex-



perience to advise the department regarding processes and regulatory oversight.

Applicants interested in being considered for these SEAC appointments should submit resumes by close of business on June 28, 2026, to:

Mrs. Penny Arana
Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch
1220 N Street Sacramento, California 95814
penny.arana@cdfa.ca.gov

Additional information is available on the Egg Safety and Quality Management program’s webpage at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/mpes/esqm.html>.

You may also contact Michael E. Abbott, Egg Quality Manager, at (916) 900-5062.

State Water Project Allocation Increases Heading into Summer Months



A south-facing drone view of the California Aqueduct near Crows Landing, located in Stanislaus County. Photo taken March 9, 2026.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an increase to the State Water Project (SWP) allocation for 2026. The allocation is now 45 percent of requested supplies, up from the previous allocation of 30 percent announced on January 29. The allocation establishes how much water the State plans to deliver to the 29 public water agencies served by the SWP, which provides water to 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland.

In the spring, SWP allocations are based on current hydrological conditions, existing reservoir storage, and remaining snowpack. While California saw record heat in March and early snowmelt, consistent rainstorms in April provided critical runoff through the system that allowed DWR to capture more water and meet environmental regulations without using stored water. Currently, the SWP's largest reservoir, Lake Oroville, is at 99 percent of capacity. Statewide, reservoirs are 117 percent of average for this time of year.

The challenge remains that California's snowpack, the state's frozen reservoir, is essentially gone. As of today, the statewide snowpack is just 12 percent of average. The snowpack peaked in mid-February and has since melted off.

"California's reservoirs are full, but most snowpack melted off weeks ago. We must use this stored water carefully because there's no backfill until next season," said

DWR Director Karla Nemeth.

Learn more about how snowmelt impacts State Water Project allocations: <https://youtu.be/vXdP6s8Kq0E>.

The SWP utilized real-time operational flexibility to benefit water users and the environment despite the fact that so much of this year's precipitation came as rain instead of snow. Water managers at Lake Oroville coordinated closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to capture as much water as possible while still providing flood protection to downstream communities. These flexible operations, coupled with the improved runoff in the system resulted in an additional 400,000 acre-feet of storage in Lake Oroville. This puts the SWP in a better position to provide water supply to contractors this year while maintaining robust carry-over storage to meet water supply and environmental needs

should next year be dry.

Each year, DWR provides an initial SWP allocation in December based on available water storage, projected water supply and water demands. Allocations are updated monthly as snowpack, rainfall and runoff data is analyzed, with a final allocation typically determined near the end of the season in May or June. This season, the initial allocation was 10 percent on December 1, updated to 30 percent on January 29, and increased to 45 percent today.

Historical data on SWP allocations is available at <https://water.ca.gov/programs/state-water-project/management/swp-water-contractors>.



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Glyphosate-Resistant Weeds in California



Jorge Angeles, UCANR Weed Management Advisor

Glyphosate is a systemic post-emergence herbicide that is used for weed control in many crops in California. This herbicide is a non-selective herbicide that controls many broadleaf and grass weeds and can be safely used in different cropping systems. It is commonly used in orchards, vineyards, agronomic crops, and non-crop areas. However, reliance on glyphosate herbicides over time has led to the development of glyphosate-resistant weeds in California.

Herbicide resistance normally occurs when a weed population develops the ability to survive an herbicide application at a dose that would normally control the weed. This is caused by the repeated use of herbicides with the same mode of action. Over time, these weed escapes survive, reproduce, and become the dominant weeds in the field.

In the last two decades, there are many glyphosate-resistant weeds that have been confirmed in California such as horseweed (marestail), hairy fleabane, Italian ryegrass, rigid

ryegrass, annual bluegrass, junglerice and Palmer amaranth. These weeds can be commonly found in different cropping systems, including orchards, vineyards, and glyphosate-tolerant crops. Hairy fleabane is one of the weeds that has become widespread across different cropping systems in California, especially in cropping systems where glyphosate is frequently used. Herbicide resistant weeds are more commonly developed in orchards, vineyards, and non-crop areas because repeated applications of glyphosate are relied upon for weed control.

Glyphosate-resistant weeds can affect crops in different ways. Poor weed control can lead to increased competition for water, nutrients, and light. This competition for resources leads to the reduction of crop vigor, yield and quality. Some species, such as Palmer amaranth, grow rapidly and can interfere with harvest operations, increasing labor and management costs. Once herbicide resistant weeds become dominant in a field or orchard, growers are often forced to sequential applications or adopt more expensive or less convenient weed control strategies.

Using herbicides with different

modes of action is important for long-term weed management. A mode of action refers to how an herbicide affects a plant at the biochemical level. For example, Glyphosate inhibits an enzyme required for protein synthesis. When the same mode of action is repeatedly used, it creates strong selection pressure that favors resistant individuals. Tank-mixing and rotating herbicides with different modes of action can help reduce this selection pressure. By using herbicides with different modes of action, there is less of a chance that a weed will survive an herbicide application. This approach improves weed control and reduces the risk of weeds developing resistance to herbicides.

To reduce the risk of weeds developing herbicide resistance, it is important to use pre-emergence herbicides with residual activity, tank-mix herbicides with different modes of action, and control weed escapes. Controlling weed escapes after an herbicide application is critical to preventing weeds from setting seeds and spreading. In addition, using multiple weed control strategies such as crop rotation, equipment sanitation, mechanical, and cultural weed control methods can.



Photo Credit: Glyphosate-Resistant Horseweed, Fresno County — Sacramento Valley Orchards

DPR Makes Language Services Permanent for County Agricultural Commissioners

What You Need to Know: DPR will permanently fund interpretation and translation services for County Agricultural Commissioner offices, expanding access to pesticide use enforcement and information for farmworkers and communities across California.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) announced it will permanently fund language services for County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs). The program offers CAC offices across all 58 California counties no-cost access to a 24/7 interpretation call line and document translation services covering more than 100 languages.

This resource builds on the success of the department's 2024–2026 pilot program to provide a resource for counties to address language barriers experienced by farmworkers and community members when reporting pesticide incidents or accessing pesticide enforcement information. The announcement accompanies the release of DPR's Pilot Language Access Hub Summary Report, which documents outreach efforts, usage data and lessons learned from the pilot program.

"It is critical that all Californians, regardless of the language they speak, can access information on pesticide safety and workers' rights, and report incidents to their County Agricultural Commissioner," said Karen Morrison, DPR Director. "Expanding language access resources for counties is central to our strategic goal of fostering engagement, collaboration, and transparency with the communities we serve and increasing capacity for enforcement of pesticide use laws and regulations."

DPR launched the Language Access Hub pilot in February 2024 to determine whether a centralized language program would meaningfully support CAC offices serving communities with limited English proficiency. As detailed in the summary report, the pilot confirmed both the need for these services and the value of sustaining language access support for counties long-term.

During the two-year pilot program:

- 27 counties requested interpretation or translation services
- 15 languages were requested, including Spanish, Punjabi, Hmong, Mixteco, Korean, and Vietnamese
- 64 documents were translated, including pesticide safety posters, meeting materials, permit conditions, violation notices, and civil penalty hearing information
- 13.5 hours of interpretation were provided

To reach communities most likely to need these services, DPR conducted direct outreach to CAC staff and the public, distributed flyers and brochures, ran social media campaigns, and broadcast radio public service announcements in multiple languages. DPR also hosted a dedicated webinar for CAC staff and established a community outreach partnership with Líderes Campesinas, a California organization that advocates for farmworker women.

"We had a great partnership with DPR to raise awareness about these language services through our 18 chapters and

1 youth group in conjunction with our Pesticide Awareness Month and other outreach efforts," said Suguet López, Executive Director of Líderes Campesinas. "Ensuring that all workers can communicate with local officials is vital for accessing public services and protecting their rights."

"California's farmworker communities speak dozens of languages, including oral-tradition Indigenous languages that standard translation services rarely reach," said Celia Pazos, DPR Deputy Director of Environmental Justice and Equity. "Expanding language access is a key part of our equity-centered approach to broaden education and knowledge-sharing opportunities."

Building on feedback from CAC staff, farmworker advocates, and community members, the permanent program will expand services to include:

• Interpretation services, scheduled in advance, for languages with distinct regional dialects

• Voiceover services for oral-only languages, including Latin American indigenous languages such as Mixteco

• Prioritized subcontracting with Latin American indigenous language providers to strengthen interpreter quality and availability

How to Access Services

Californians can request services in their preferred language by contacting their local CAC office. To find your county's contact information, visit CACASA (external link) or call toll-free 1-877-378-5463 (1-87PestLine).

For questions about DPR's Language Access Hub, email LanguageAccess@cdpr.ca.gov. To learn more about DPR's commitment to environmental justice and equity, visit the Environmental Justice page.

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NEW REPORT: RISING TIDE OF INVASIVE PESTS REQUIRES DYNAMIC, RESILIENT, COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

By Michael Hsu



One female Mexican fruit fly can deposit large numbers of eggs: up to 40 at a time, 100 or more a day, and about 2,000 over her life span. Photo by Jack Dykinga, USDA Agricultural Research Service

Pest prevention in California isn't quite the same as it is elsewhere. The state's vast agricultural diversity—more than 400 crops across dramatically varied climates—creates a bounty that is as appealing to invasive insects and pathogens as it is to consumers.

In 2023–2024, California declared seven separate quarantines for invasive fruit flies, the most ever recorded in a single year. Eradication costs exceeded \$208 million, stretching the state's Pest Prevention System (PPS) to its limits and underscoring the need for a full evaluation of its capabilities.

To address these challenges, the Comprehensive Pest Prevention Program Analysis (C3PA) is now complete. The project provides quantitative evidence of the value of California's pest-prevention efforts and highlights the urgent need to modernize tools, staffing, and infrastructure to keep pace with rising threats.

A partnership between the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA), the research team includes experts from UC, CSU, CDFA, and other state partners. UC ANR-affiliated contributors include Rachael Callahan, Karen Jetter, Neil McRoberts, and Justin Valliere.

“The best investment we can make in our invasive pest system is to prevent infestations from happening in the first place.”

— Karen Ross, CDFA Secretary

“The return on investment for pest prevention is already high... the case for increased funding becomes overwhelming.”

— CACASA Executive Director

EFFECTIVE BUT CONSTRAINED

The C3PA analysis concludes that pest prevention is highly cost-effective, yet consistently underfunded relative to the value of California's agricultural commodities at risk. Strengthening preventive planning, infrastructure, and personnel would significantly improve the PPS and better prepare the state for increasing pest introductions.

The report highlights the importance of perennial exclusion programs such as Detector Dog teams and the state's 16 Border Protection Stations, which intercept pests before they enter California. It also examines pressures from urban agriculture, agri-tourism, and evolving sustainable pest-management policies.

A SYSTEM UNDER INCREASING THREAT

Over the past 20–30 years, pest incursions have increased in both number and complexity. California's agricultural value continues to rise, but the systems protecting it have not kept pace. The strain experienced during the 2023–24 fruit fly eradication effort illustrates the risks of delayed investment.

Key threats include:

- Increasing pest introductions and diversity
- Budget cuts and staffing shortages
- Aging infrastructure and outdated technology

CASE STUDY: THE RISE OF E-COMMERCE

E-commerce has emerged as a major pathway for invasive pests. Of 62 websites surveyed, only 16 clearly displayed shipping restrictions for plant materials entering California. While major platforms like eBay, Amazon, and Etsy have improved compliance, many smaller sellers fail to communicate restrictions—putting agriculture at risk.

LOOKING AHEAD

The C3PA findings align with the California Agricultural Research & Innovation Roadmap, which identifies Integrated Pest and Disease Management as a priority for future research and innovation.

The report outlines immediate funding needs to improve infrastructure, staffing, and exclusion activities. These represent critical shortfalls, not the long-term sustained investment required to maintain an effective, modern pest-prevention system.



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Brewed Awakening: UC Explores Tea's Potential as California's Next Champion Crop

UC ANR research suggests tea could offer high-value returns on smaller acreage

By Michael Hsu — Editorial Adaptation

After six decades of farming oranges, pistachios and grapes in Fresno County, grower Stan Ishii didn't expect to see tea thriving in the Central Valley. But curiosity brought him—and nearly 100 others—to Tea Day at the UC Kearney Research and Extension Center in Parlier, where researchers shared new findings on the viability of *Camellia sinensis* in California's arid climate.

"Tea could be one of the champion crops for the future of agriculture in California because it's a high cash-value crop and a climate-resilient crop," said Atef Swelam, director of Kearney REC and West Side REC. With the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act expected to retire up to 1 million acres of farmland by 2040, Swelam sees tea as a profitable alternative. Some studies suggest tea can generate 5–15 times more revenue per acre than traditional crops—and even more compared to almonds.

A Climate Match for Tea?

UC Davis researcher Jacquelyn Gervay-Hague traced the region's tea history back to a 1960s Lipton-funded project that identified cultivars capable of thriving in the Central Valley. Her recent work shows tea performs well under drip irrigation, and California's dry climate actually benefits harvest quality.

"In other parts of the world, too much rain can really destroy the tea plants," she said. Dry conditions reduce disease pressure and allow growers to harvest leaves at ideal moisture levels.

At Redwood Tea Estate near Stockton, owner Patrick Sunbury sees similar advantages. "We don't have to use fungicides because of the dry climate," he said, noting that caffeine also acts as a natural pest deterrent. Intense sunlight and wide day-night temperature swings add "stress" that enhances aroma and flavor—similar to prized high-altitude teas in Asia.

A Case Study in Small-Acre Profitability

Sunbury, a landscape architect turned tea farmer, began with a half-acre plot in 2020. With no established U.S. infrastructure or extension guidance, he relied on trial and error to identify cultivars suited to his terroir. By 2024, his plants reached harvest maturity, allowing him to produce white, green, oolong and black teas from the same species.

He now sells primarily through a tea club, offering quarterly shipments of farm-grown looseleaf teas. Festivals and direct sales supplement income, and he plans to expand to three additional acres in Lodi.

"Tea can be a relatively finicky plant," he said. "Start small, be patient, and expand as you learn."

Growing Demand Through Culture and Generational Shifts

Speakers at Tea Day emphasized that U.S. tea culture is still developing. While coffee sophistication has surged, most Americans still consume low-grade bagged teas. Lecturer



At Kearney REC, the 3,000 tea plants in the greenhouses and 1,000 tea plants in the field are testament to the suitability of tea growing in the Central Valley. Photo by Michael Hsu

Alex Ng of National Chung Hsing University described tea as a cultural experience that brings people together—something the U.S. market has yet to fully embrace.

Younger consumers may drive change. Fresno City College student Eleni Deamant sees tea aligning with trends away from sugary drinks. "Matcha is already popular," she said. "I hope white and oolong teas become part of the younger generation's culture."

Attendee Sue Ruiz noted that health-based marketing helped propel crops like pomegranates and pistachios. "Why can't we do that with tea?" she asked.

Labor, Mechanization and Water: Key Research Questions Harvesting premium tea is labor-intensive. A skilled worker may need one hour to pick a pound of fresh leaf—yielding just a quarter-pound of finished tea. Gervay-Hague sees this challenge as an opportunity to build modern infrastructure from scratch, incorporating mechanization and advanced processing.

Kearney REC is already testing a handheld tea harvester and launching studies on ag-tech integration, irrigation efficiency and cultivar resilience. Water remains a top concern for growers like Ishii and community advocates like Ruiz, who see tea as a potential lifeline for small farmers—if water requirements prove manageable.

Sunbury hopes UC research will also focus on heat-tolerant cultivars. "We had to do our own breeding program," he said. "Insights from UC would be invaluable."

A Growing Research Frontier

With 1,000 plants in the field and 3,000 in greenhouses, Kearney REC plans to expand by another 1.5 acres. Researchers will evaluate soil conditions, irrigation strategies, pest management and mechanization. UC Davis sensory scientist Jean-Xavier Guinard is developing a tea flavor wheel, similar to those used in wine and coffee.

Consumer enthusiasm is already evident. Sunbury's farm tours fill quickly, even without advertising. "People want to connect with a tea farmer," he said. "Having a tea farm here gives them that opportunity."

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UC Cooperative Extension moves to area director model to better serve California

Shift paves way for UCCE advisors to focus on vital research, extension work



Area Director Leonel Jimenez (center, in dark blue shirt) connects with Jaspreet Sidhu, UCCE vegetable crops farm advisor (in blue shirt, tan pants) and the team conducting potato variety trials.

To allow its scientists to focus on research and extension, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources has been transitioning to regional administrative leadership of its UC Cooperative Extension offices across the state.

The UC ANR Area Director model is a regional leadership structure designed to strengthen collaboration, optimize resources and improve administrative efficiency across multiple county UC Cooperative Extension offices.

Historically the UCCE offices in each county were led by UCCE advisors who split their time between administrative duties and their research and extension work. This new model typically features a 100% administrative appointment of an area director, who oversees organizational efficiency, physical infrastructure, personnel, budget management, partnership development and strategic growth for multiple counties.

"We have world-class scientists," said Glenda Humiston, UC vice president for agriculture and natural resources. "By shifting administrative responsibilities to dedicated regional leaders, we are empowering our UCCE advisors to fully dedicate their time and expertise to their core missions of research and extension."

"While some of the county directors didn't mind holding the dual roles of scientist and administrator and were very good at both jobs, we determined that being pulled in two different directions was not the best way to serve their communities," Hu-

miston said.

By handing off administrative tasks, she hopes the academics will become more engaged in leadership and public service roles such as boards, commissions, initiatives related to their research, and science-to-policy activities.

Currently UCCE area directors include:

- Area 4: Matthew Barnes – Mendocino and Lake counties.
- Area 5: Teghpreet Ahluwalia – Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter and Yuba counties.
- Area 6: Michele Fisch – Placer, Nevada, Plumas and Sierra counties.
- Area 7: Lauren Cartwright – Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties.
- Area 8: Karen Warburton – Sacramento, Solano and Yolo counties.
- Area 9: Ariel Rivers – Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado and Tuolumne counties.
- Area 10: Andrew Miller (Interim) – Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

- Area 12: Andrew Miller – Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco counties.
- Area 13: Emily Jane Freed – Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties.
- Area 14: Karmjot Randhawa – Fresno, Madera, Merced and Mariposa counties.
- Area 16: Shannon Klisch – Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties.
- Area 17: Leonel Jimenez – Kern, Tulare and Kings counties.
- Area 19: Rita Clemons – Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.
- Area 20: Chandra Richards – San Diego and Imperial counties.

During this final phase of the transition, the remaining counties will continue to be served by their current county directors until the right candidates are selected for the new area director roles.

"We aim to have this transition fully completed and the new leadership model implemented across all counties by the end of 2027," Humiston said.

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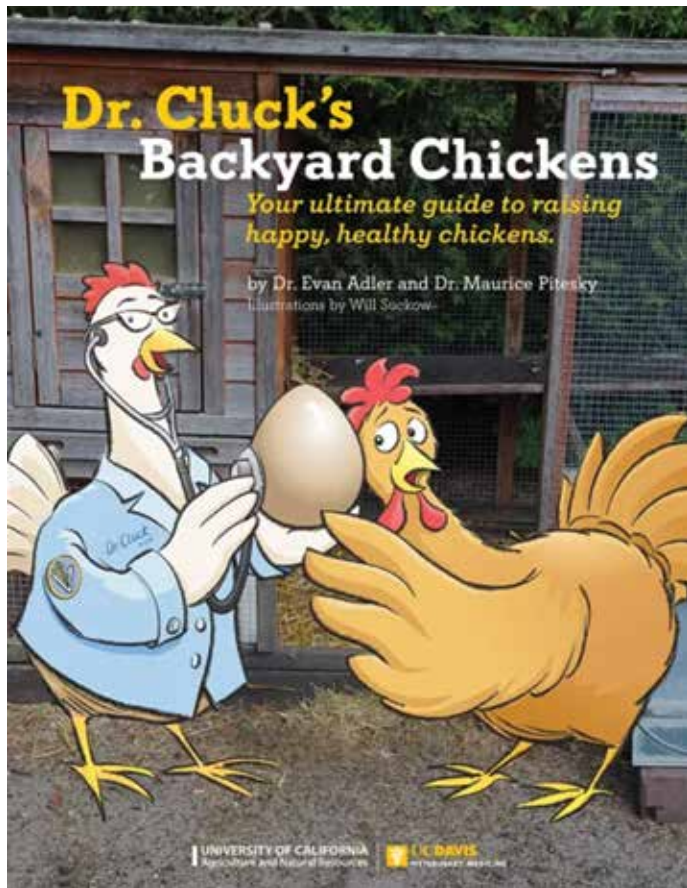
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Don't wing it: Vets pen 'Dr. Cluck' book to help keep chickens healthy, safe

Puns, cartoons enliven comprehensive new guide by veterinarians about backyard chickens



By Pamela S Kan-Rice

Gathering fresh eggs laid by chickens in your backyard may sound idyllic, but keeping the birds healthy requires some special knowledge. Avian influenza, salmonella, predators, food safety, choosing the correct feed, what's snake oil and what's not, and how to pick the right breed for you are just some of the common chicken conundrums people want practical science-based information about.

The new book "Dr. Cluck's Backyard Chickens," published by the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and available in paperback and hardbound, provides backyard chicken owners with science-based advice for poultry care at every life stage.

This fun-to-read guide is the first comprehensive how-to book that is peer-reviewed, poultry vet-approved and reads like your favorite sitcom.

In the book, Maurice Pitesky, professor of Cooperative Extension in the UC Davis Weill School of Veterinary Medicine, and veterinarian Evan Adler advise readers on choosing breeds, setting up a brooder, diagnosing disease, understanding nutrition and making compassionate end-of-life decisions.

"Dr. Cluck," a cartoon poultry veterinarian and her colorful cast of coopmates lead readers through each chapter with chicken puns and personality, making the book as entertain-

ing as it is educational.

"Chickens are fun and taking care of them and reading about them also should be fun," said Pitesky. "While there are lots of backyard chicken books, this book is unique in that it is written by vets, peer-reviewed by experts and entertaining for all."

The book includes a glossary, full index and chapter-by-chapter references so readers can verify and explore the science behind the guidance.

Dr. Cluck, drawn by illustrator Will Suckow, wears eyeglasses and a light blue lab coat and states in the introduction: "I, Dr. Cluck, do hereby pledge allegiance to not use any fancy words in this book without explaining them – with liberty and chicken wings for all."

Co-author Adler, who trained in veterinary medicine at University College Dublin in Ireland, found that illustrations helped him learn. "I am a visual learner and often arranged my college notes into summary diagrams, which ended up being humorous," he said, "which made some pretty boring topics, less boring."

"When I first met Maurice, we each thought the other had a good sense of humor," said Adler, who has worked with farm animals and now works in private practice treating mostly companion animals and some exotic animals in the Sacramento area. "He asked me to join him on this chicken writing adventure. I then made it my personal mission to incorporate my own learning and storytelling techniques to make it easier and most of all more fun to learn about and love chickens."

The book is organized into four parts covering the complete arc of chicken ownership:

- Before Getting Chickens: Space, commitment, choosing ideal breeds, setting up safe coops and brooders, and acquiring your flock responsibly.
- Living with Chickens: Caring for chicks, transitioning to layers, nutrition, weight and health, managing rodents and recognizing illness early.
- Chicken Diseases: Respiratory diseases, Marek's disease, skin diseases, gut and reproductive disorders with practical biosecurity strategies to prevent them.
- End-of-Life Decisions: Humane meat processing and compassionate euthanasia guidance, approached with the same science-based care as every other topic in the book.

"Our format merges science and silliness with the goal of education and entertainment," Pitesky said. "The book can be read crop to cloaca, or cover to cover, or can be a reference book or just a fun coffee table book."

The authors caution against raising chickens for cheap eggs.

"Keep in mind that the eggs the chickens lay will be more expensive than the eggs you buy from the store," said Adler, who has been raising backyard chickens for 10 years.

See *Don't wing it*: page 26



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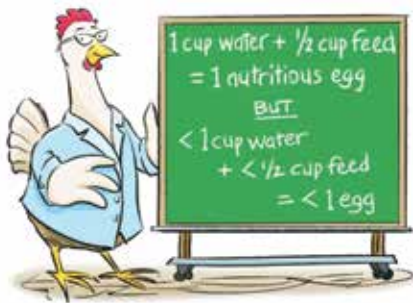
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Hens need to consume about 4 grams of calcium per day to stay healthy and to make an egg.

Don't wing it:

continued from page 22
some homework by reading and identifying resources – such as a veterinarian who treats chickens – before there is a problem.

Adler added, “Use proper fencing to keep chickens in and predators and pests out, use a store-bought balanced feed, set up their enclosure before you get them and get the relevant vaccinations.”

He advises poultry owners to observe their chickens to learn what is “normal” so they recognize “abnormal.”

“Keep their daily health simple by

embracing your birds’ FLAWSS: Feed, Light, Air, Water, Space and Sanitation,” Pitesky said. “Backyard chickens are fun, but also a responsibility. Remember backyard chickens often live for more than five years!”

Key book features:

- Comprehensive biosecurity protocols for backyard poultry
- Complete life cycle management and husbandry from chick management through end-of-life care
- Peer-reviewed veterinary guidance presented without technical jargon
- Disease prevention strategies from UC Davis specialists
- Engaging illustrations and entertaining educational icons for easy navigation
- Suitable for young adults through experienced keepers
- Emphasis on community protection through responsible flock management

The 228-page, 8.5-by-11 inch “Dr. Cluck’s Backyard Chickens” book (UC ANR Publications; ISBN 978-1-62711-246-8) can be ordered at <https://anrpublications.org>.

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Equipment

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.....www.worldagexpo.com/

Federal Government

- Army Corps of Engineers**
.....www.nwpl.sec.usace.army.mil
- Bureau of Land Management**
.....www.blm.gov
- Farm Service Agency**
.....www.fsa.usda.gov
- National Weather Service**
.....www.weather.gov/

Organizations

- Almond Board of California**
.....www.almonds.com
- California Assn. of Winegrape Growers**
.....www.cawg.org
- California Cattlemen's Association**
.....www.calcattlemen.org
- California Dairy Research Foundation**
.....www.cdprf.org
- California Farmland Trust**
.....www.cafarmtrust.org
- California Poultry Federation**
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- Associated Equipment Distributors**
.....www.aednet.org/

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Almond Hulls Get GRAS Status: What's That Mean?

For decades, almond hulls have had a specific job — to be a dependable, low-cost animal feed ingredient. But a recent milestone could open the door to a very different future for this familiar byproduct. Based on an extensive evaluation, Almond Hull Powder (AHP) has been confirmed as Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) for use in human food, following a review by an independent expert panel.

That may sound technical, but for almond growers, this decision has the potential to reshape the conversation around almond hull value.

First, What Does “GRAS” Actually Mean?

In plain terms, GRAS status means that qualified experts agree that a food ingredient is safe for people to eat, based on scientific evidence and a long list of safety data. It's a designation recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is a key factor for any ingredient that wants to enter the human food supply.

In this case, an independent expert panel reviewed a comprehensive dossier, more than 180 pages, covering how Almond Hull Powder is made, safety for human consumption, how much people might eat, and what happens when they do. The panel concluded that AHP is safe for its intended uses in food. Just as important: the dossier and expert panel findings are finalized and submitted to the FDA.

Almond Hull Powder

Why Almond Hulls?

Almond hulls make up a significant share of the almond fruit by weight, yet historically they've delivered relatively modest returns to growers. Most hulls end up in livestock rations, where they're valued for fiber and energy, but prices can be volatile, and demand is tied closely to dairy and feed markets.

GRAS status changes the playing field by allowing almond hulls, when processed into Almond Hull Powder, to be used in human food products. According to the expert panel review, AHP can be used in a wide range of foods, including baked goods, cereals, beverages, bars, and nutritional products. That doesn't mean hulls suddenly replace almonds on the grocery shelf. But it does mean there is a pathway where hulls can move beyond feed and into higher-value food ingredient markets.

What the Science Says

The expert panel looked closely at several key questions growers often hear from buyers and regulators:

Is it safe?

Yes. Toxicology, genotoxicity, and environmental contaminant exposure assessments found no safety concerns at intended use levels.

How much would people actually consume?

Even high-end consumption estimates were well below levels associated with any adverse effects, providing wide

safety margins.

How is it made?

AHP is produced using the same well-established industrial equipment and processes already used commercially for almond and food industry, including sorting, cleaning, thermal drying, and milling.

In short, the science supports what growers already suspected: almond hulls are a natural, well-understood agricultural product with untapped potential.

What This Could Mean for the Hull Market

GRAS status doesn't instantly create new demand, but it removes a major barrier. The expert review means food companies can now seriously explore AHP as an ingredient without having to clear safety hurdles themselves. That opens the door to:

- New markets beyond traditional feed channels

- Higher-value applications tied to human nutrition and functional foods

- More diversified demand, reducing reliance on any single end use

The announcement also points to the next steps already underway, including finalizing processing parameters and external engagement with food manufacturers and partners.

For growers, this matters because diversified demand is often the first step toward improved and more stable byproduct economics.

A Stewardship Story Buyers Want to Hear

There's another angle that resonates well beyond the orchard: sustainability.

Almonds are already “zero waste” — everything coming out of the orchard is used. Expanding the option to use almond hulls as a food ingredient supports a more circular use of the crop, finding value in parts of the almond fruit that were previously limited to low-return outlets. The GRAS determination explicitly notes the opportunity to unlock new, high-value food applications for almond hulls while supporting broader sustainability and innovation goals.

That story aligns closely with what many food companies are looking for today: ingredients that are natural, safe, functional, and responsibly sourced.

The Bottom Line for Growers

Almond Hull Powder earning GRAS status doesn't change the hull market overnight. But it does something just as important; it expands what's possible.

By clearing the scientific and regulatory considerations for human food use, almond hulls move from being only a feed ingredient to becoming a potential food ingredient as well. Over time, that shift could translate into new demand streams, new partnerships, and a stronger value proposition for growers.

For an industry always looking to make the most of every pound harvested, this milestone is worth paying attention to.

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