

NEVADA  COUNTY
RANCHER
SPRING 2024



CALOLEA OLIVE OIL

GOLD IN THE FOOTHILLS

**BUFFALO
CONSERVATION
RANCH SLATED
FOR NEVADA
COUNTY** ★

**4-H PROVIDES
LOCAL YOUTH WITH
OPPORTUNITIES
TO EXPAND THEIR
LEARNING** ★

**NO ROOM
FOR
SCOTCH BROOM**

NEVADA COUNTY
RANCHER

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ON THE COVER



Courtesy Stoney's photography

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Support through the Generations

At Hooper & Weaver Mortuary, we're honored to have long supported generations of our agricultural community, including the farmers and ranchers who have helped build such a solid foundation for our community. We are pleased to have supported you through 4-H, FFA, and the Nevada County Fair—and also during those difficult times when you needed us most. We thank you for your commitment to our community and for honoring us as your mortuary of choice for more than 80 years.

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A MESSAGE FROM NCRCD'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) was the first booth I went to at the Nevada County Fair in 2022 when my spouse and I were considering purchasing 20 acres in Penn Valley. The staff at the NCRCD were so helpful and knowledgeable and I walked away with an infinite number of resources for creating a conservation plan for my property, including forest health management practices, health soils solutions, and wildlife best practices. If you have ever been to our office, you know wonderful Anne Solik, our office manager is always willing to help—come on by!

Healthy land stewardship can feel overwhelming, depending on one's knowledge, the season, the economy, and the amount of community resources available. However, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District has been faithfully serving the community of Nevada County since 1943. I have witnessed this firsthand, as I am a long-time resident of our beloved county, including my middle and high-school years. I have watched the landscape and population of our community change drastically since I was young.

With so many changes to a small rural community, it is always a balance to sustain resources. The dedication to conservation practices within our agricultural natural and working lands are no exception. When I became aware of a leadership position with the NCRCD, I was immediately interested in learning more. With my background in non-profit management and a lifelong passion for Conservation and Agriculture, I was proud to accept the position of Executive Director in March of 2023.

Our mission is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through education, leadership, technical assistance, and project facilitation. Within the year, we have received over \$1,000,000 in grant funding to provide additional resource support to the community, including doubling our staff to four, our new team members are introduced in the following pages.

Spring is a time for new beginnings and 2024 will be no exception for the NCRCD. Our vision continues to be to educate and assist landowners and land managers in establishing a balance between a high-quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape, and a healthy economy for the community. Not only will we be providing additional staff resources for community projects, but we will be working closely with many of our local organizations and partners to ensure that we are building a sustainable

and viable future for agricultural to conserve and protect our invaluable resources. Stay tuned and continue to support your local ranchers and farmers!

Briana Bacon
Executive Director



Courtesy photo | Briana Bacon



BUFFALO CONSERVATION RANCH SLATED FOR NEVADA COUNTY

By Buffalo Billy's Bison Brotherhood

The buffalo are about to roam in Nevada County alongside a five-star, 5900 Sq ft guest lodge, according to the bison nonprofit, Buffalo Billy's Bison Brotherhood. The stated goal of the ranch is to provide conservation for generations of bison while preserving the land as a working ranch, continuing the county's Western heritage.

The financial plan calls for a self-sustaining ranch without the sale of bison for meat. The founder of the nonprofit said, "This will be accomplished through lodging income, and hosting fun events such as Western-style birthday parties, weddings, cook outs, and cooking classes in the 20 ft, two-story gourmet kitchen. However we will not be serving bison. We are preserving bison." She added, "We will have a physical and online gift shop, a community garden incorporated into the landscaping, we will develop products from live bison like organic fertilizer and bison hair clothing, and of course we will always gratefully accept donations, whether it be in time volunteering, labor, money or land." She hopes to expand to more ranches and herds.

“ We will have a physical and online gift shop, a community garden incorporated into the landscaping, we will develop products from live bison like organic fertilizer and bison hair clothing, and of course we will always gratefully accept donations, whether it be in time volunteering, labor, money or land. ”

—Billy's Auntie

Initially, the lodge's suites will be rented 21 days a month, with seven days' lodging donated free of charge to other profit groups, whose healing programs include nature and animals, such as Wounded Warriors, veterans with PTSD, people with disabilities, at risk teens, and abused children. The founder of the "Brotherhood" said, "I know from personal experience how connecting with these awesome animals and to nature completely impacted my life. We want to provide that kind of life altering experience to all visitors, whether for a day trip or a week's stay, and to educate them about these super intelligent, sensitive beasts, who after surviving 10,000 years, were almost completely



Photo sourced from Metro Creative

exterminated in the late 1800s." She added, "If people hear their tragic story, our National Mammal, the American Bison, will be better appreciated and protected."

The Brotherhood builds their herd through rescue and through their program: EVERYONE CAN OWN A BISON, where donors purchase a bison through the nonprofit, who then brings the buffalo into their herd. There is no



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—Billy’s Auntie

further financial obligation for their lifetime of care.

The founder prefers to be called Billy’s Auntie, or just The Auntie saying, “I want all focus to be on the bison.” Coming from a background in interior design, Billy’s Auntie laughed when asked how an interior designer became so passionate about “scruffy” bison. She responded, “I always have loved bison and read enough to become quite an expert. . .in theory. However when I discovered three emaciated bison near my home in Grass Valley, I knew I needed the experience from some big guns to try to save them. I soon discovered there were no bison vets in California.”

The Auntie contacted a bison expert/researcher from the University of Saskatchewan, who then worked with two local vets and the Veterinary School at UC Davis. She explained, “The common mantra is, if bison get sick, they die. I did not want that outcome and I was prepared to do everything possible.”

After caring daily for the bison (or buffalo as they are commonly called) for over four months, she formed a strong bond with them...especially the male named Billy, for whom she named and dedicated the nonprofit. She wrote a book about her experience, “My Love Affair with Buffalo Billy” offered on Amazon or from local booksellers.

She said, “Bison are wild animals, not cattle. With their enormous size (like a 2000 lb SUV), their lethal pointed horns, and independent nature, they can be dangerous. They can outrun a quarter-horse, turn on a dime and jump six-feet in the air. They only do what they want to do. So if you want them to do something else, you need to make them think it was their idea!” She added, “I never challenge them and they are free to be wild. I love and respect them and that trust is what keeps me safe. . . and I became family. . . just one of the herd.” She winked, “Just not quite as hairy.”

Contact Buffalo Billy’s Bison Brotherhood to donate or volunteer to be a part of this exciting community project: email Buffalobillysbisonbrotherhood@aol.com or call 925-766-1821.

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CALOLEA OLIVE OIL: GOLD IN THE FOOTHILLS

By Patti Bess

The foothills of North Yuba County are a stark, almost barren beauty this time of year. The red dirt contrasts with the slate-colored granite and meadows of amber thistle. Similar to the climate of Mediterranean countries, olives grow well here in the rocky, decomposed granite soil.

Olives were brought to California by the Spanish explorers. By 1860, there were olive trees planted at each of the state's 21 missions. The town of Oroville, in Butte County, is considered the birthplace of California's olive industry. The story goes that in 1895, Freda Ehrman, 56, was widowed and turned to the only asset she had for her livelihood—20 acres of olive trees. Marketing them in the Northwest and Chicago, she began the first commercial olive oil production in California and is considered the mother of the olive oil industry.

Still today when some people think of olive oil, they assume it comes from Napa or Sonoma County. The truth is that the finest quality olives in the world grow right here in the Sierra Foothills. Not so much in Nevada County but in the surrounding counties of Yuba, Tehama, Placer, and Butte.

In 1999 Monica and Michael Keller were looking for a place to settle down. Michael dreamed of buying an olive orchard, and they did. They bought ten acres of abandoned olive trees in Loma Rica, just off of Highway 20 in Yuba County. The trees were planted over 100 years ago in the same way the Spanish missionaries planted their orchards. Because it had been untouched for so many years, the Kellers were able to use organic growing methods immediately.

“Our small family farm attributes its superior tasting olive oils to the unique growing terroir. . .”

—Monica Keller

“Our small family farm attributes its superior tasting olive oils to the unique growing terroir,” commented Monica Keller.

The first year their company, Calolea Olive Oil, produced only 80 gallons of oil which sold to friends and family. Twenty three years and a lot of hard work later, the company is still growing strong. The Kellers' enthusiasm level barely wavers (except occasionally after 7 p.m. at night). Their oil is on the shelves of SPD, Briarpatch, and Farmer's Markets throughout northern California. One



Courtesy Stoney's photography

of their best customers is Three Forks restaurant in Nevada City where they use Calolea olive oil exclusively.

“If consumers really want Olive Oil that is truly extra virgin with the flavor and health benefits they expect, it's probably best to buy from local growers that you know and trust,” commented Monica.

Extra virgin oil contains less than .08% acidity. Calolea's olive oil has been certified “extra virgin” by the California Olive Oil Council and has an acidity level of 0.13%. Many European and Middle Eastern countries produce excellent quality oils, but they only ship their lesser quality oils to America. A dark color of oil does not depict quality.

In most farming communities these days the difficult issue is labor, but the Kellers managed to keep their same crew for seventeen years. Business got rocky during the pandemic for Calolea. The main problem being the bottles



“ If consumers really want olive oil that is truly extra virgin with the flavor and health benefits they expect, it’s probably best to buy from local growers that you know and trust. . . ”

—Monica Keller

they usually bought for their oils were in high demand for hand sanitizers. Monica was forced to hold her breath for a few months while she ordered a whole container of bottles from China, pre-paid.

The Keller’s primarily grow Mission and Manzanillo olives. This year they have added two new varieties: Arbosana and Arbequina. Both have a higher yield and a more pronounced nutty flavor at the first pressing.

After more than 23 years, their trees are still hand-picked, custom milled, and cold pressed within 24 hours to create the highest quality oil possible. At each step of the growing, harvesting, milling and storing process, the goal is to minimize the oil’s exposure to air which causes oxidation and destroys the rich variety of polyphenals and antioxidants. Storing the oils in dark bottles and tightly sealed is essential to maintain its shelf life and nutritional benefits.



Photos courtesy Michael Keller

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In recent years, misleading marketing has led people to believe that coconut oil is superior to olive oil for cooking. Though coconut oil is excellent when it comes to cooking Asian foods or dishes where it fits, olive oil has always been an excellent choice, both for its stability under heat and its nutritional value. If, however, it is heated over 400 degrees there may be a reduction of polyphenols, but the oil is not damaged.

Calolea recently released its fresh-pressed olive oils (Olio Nuovo), and you can find their products at the Nevada City Winter Farmers Market and at the Auburn and Roseville farmers markets year-round. Be on the look-out for them at the Grass Valley Farmers Market in April, 2024. For more information about Calolea, visit calolea.com.

An Easy Kalamata Olive Appetizer

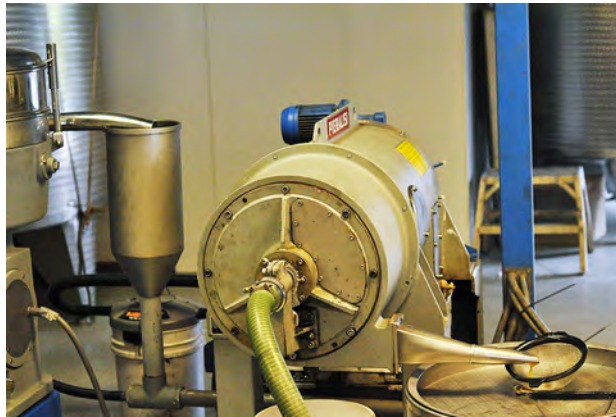
- Eight ounces goat cheese (or Brie) at room temperature
- Six tablespoons Calolea Meyer Lemon Olive Oil
- One teaspoon dried lemon thyme or two teaspoons fresh (you can also use regular thyme and a squeeze of lemon juice)
- One half cup Kalamata olives, drained and sliced
- Four green onions, sliced thin

Sauté Kalamata Olives, green onions, and thyme in small skillet with Calolea Meyer Lemon Olive Oil for 3 minutes. Cool slightly. Pour over cheese and serve with crackers or sliced French baguette.

Patti Bess is a freelance writer and cookbook author who lives in Grass Valley.



Photos courtesy Michael Keller



Photos courtesy Michael Keller



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4-H PROVIDES LOCAL YOUTH WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND THEIR LEARNING

By Matthew Rodriguez,
4-H Youth Development Advisor

Importance of 4-H agricultural education

4-H is the largest youth program in the country with nearly six million youth ages five to 19. Central to the 4-H program is an emphasis on helping youth have life-changing positive experiences that can shape their leadership, civic engagement, and college and career readiness. Many young people in the Nevada County program decide to learn about large animals, such as raising cattle. These formative experiences teach young people important skills, such as personal responsibility, biological sciences, mathematics, economics, troubleshooting, and teamwork.

This year, 197 young people enrolled in the Nevada County 4-H program decided to participate in a large animal project. Of those, 30 youth

“My 4-H ‘spark’ [passion in life] has always been to help the youth of Nevada County find their own sparks and excitement in raising their livestock and preparing their animals for showmanship and market. The relationships I have gained have made my ‘spark’ worth the hours I’ve spent.”

—4-H Student



Photos courtesy Matthew Rodriguez | Taylor, a local 4-H'er, presents at the Nevada County 4-H Council on Agricultural Literacy (Veteran's Hall in Grass Valley).

focused on raising cattle. Many young people will end up showing their animals at the Nevada County fair.

What 4-H'ers are saying

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview several of our 4-H youth club presidents to understand what impact the 4-H program has had on them. One common theme is that youth felt that animal projects helped give them a positive experience.

One young man explained to me:

“My 4-H ‘spark’ [passion in life] has always been to help the youth of Nevada County find their own sparks and excitement in raising their livestock and preparing their animals for showmanship and market. The relationships I have gained have made my ‘spark’ worth the hours I’ve spent.”

Another young man told me, “As a 4-H'er, one of my proudest accomplishments was showing



Photos courtesy Matthew Rodriguez | Matthew Rodriguez, PhD, manning the 4-H booth at the Nevada County fairgrounds.

“As a 4-H’er, one of my proudest accomplishments was showing my market goat at the 2023 county fair. I received third in my market class and fourth place in novice showmanship. I am proud of this because this was my first year taking an animal to the fair.”

—4-H Student

my market goat at the 2023 county fair. I received third in my market class and fourth place in novice showmanship. I am proud of this because this was my first year taking an animal to the fair.”

4-H provides our young people with the opportunity to try new things! While this young man had not previously taken an animal to the fair, the 4-H program provided him with the mentorship and resources to do something he had never done before—raising and showing a market goat.

Finally, 4-H helps young people consider—and achieve—future goals. A young woman explained how 4-H helped her focus on future opportunities: “[In three years], I would like to be actively involved in leadership and continue to challenge myself with showing animals.”

4-H is for ALL youth (and even adults who are kids at heart!)

One important characteristic of the 4-H program is that youth from various age ranges can participate. Kids as young as age five all the way



From left to right: Jill Simmons and Matthew Rodriguez man the booth at the 2nd Annual Latino Family Festival in Condon Park, Grass Valley.

up to high schoolers aged 19 can fully participate in the 4-H program and receive outstanding mentorship and leadership opportunities to help them prepare for college or their future career. These 4-H learning experiences are having a positive impact on our community.

An important reason for the success of the 4-H program is through the hundred 4-H volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to invest in the lives of our young people. For all of you 4-H volunteers past and present, we say a hearty “thank you!”

4-H provides expanded learning to Nevada County schools

Another way the 4-H program is helping our Nevada County community is through partnering with local schools to provide expanded learning



“[In three years], I would like to be actively involved in leadership and continue to challenge myself with showing animals.”

—4-H Student

programs. Recently, the 4-H program has partnered with the Grass Valley Unified School District to provide 4-H Embryology (incubating chicken eggs) and STEM Robotics education to students participating in before and after-school programming. To learn more about our 4-H programs for elementary, middle, and high schools, please visit our 4-H Expanded Learning online catalog (https://ucanr.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PM1SeH0k9YhDz8).

4-H impacts our local community

A recent study found that California 4-H alumni were almost twice as likely to graduate with a bachelor's college degree compared to the general population. Also, California 4-H alumni were found to be twice as likely to feel financially stable and twice as likely to be optimistic about their future compared to the general population. Further, California 4-H alumni overwhelmingly believed that everyone had a responsibility to be involved in community activities to support local issues.

Our Nevada County 4-H programs impact our community. Our 4-H'ers are the next generation of ranchers, first responders, teachers, and community leaders. With our community's support, we can help our local 4-H'ers “make the best better!”

For further information about the Nevada County 4-H Youth Development Program, please visit: <https://ucanr.edu/nevadacounty4h>



4-H Meadowlarks Beef Project at the Nevada County fairgrounds.



From left to right: Jill Simmons, John and Cindy McIntosh, Jonathan, Eva Nau, Sue Ramey, Matthew Rodriguez, and Vince Lucia.



NO ROOM FOR SCOTCH BROOM

Submitted by NCRCD

Scotch broom infestations can attain a biomass of over 108,680 to 123,500 acres in three to four years. Seeds are toxic to ungulates and the foliage causes digestive disorders in horses.

Seeds are known to survive at least five years in soil and possibly as long as thirty years. The seedbank can build to over 2,000 seeds per square foot, and the period of most rapid vegetative growth is May to July.

Scotch broom is a perennial, long-lived shrub six to ten feet tall with 3-12 seeds per pod. Native to Europe and North Africa, it was introduced to California in the 1850s.

One medium-sized shrub can produce over 12,000 (!) seeds per year. After ballistic dispersal, seeds are further dispersed by ants, animals, or in mud clinging to road grading or maintenance machinery. Scotch broom is also readily dispersed by rain wash on slopes.

How Do I Get Rid of It?

- **Manual/mechanical removal:** Pulling with **weed wrenches** is effective; the wrench removes the entire mature shrub. However, the resultant soil disturbance tends to increase the depth of the seedbank. Close monitoring and removing of broom seedlings for five to ten years is recommended.
- **Brush hogs**, which twist off above-ground biomass can be used for broom removal. Less labor intensive but resprouting can be a serious problem.
- **Saw cutting** undertaken at the end of the summer drought period (August to October) resulted in a resprouting rate of less than seven percent



Courtesy photos



versus other times of the year where resprouting rates were 40 to 100 percent.

- Plants greater than one-quarter inch in diameter cut below two inches from the soil surface had less than 1.5 percent resprout rate.
- **Biological control: Grazing.** Heavy grazing by goats during the growing season for four to five years has been reported effective. The disadvantage associated with using goats is that they are not selective and native species are also eaten.
- **Chemical control:** Foliar sprayed until wet with glyphosate has been used to kill mature plants. Adding surfactant improves effective-

ness; the foliar spray impacts non-target species and resprouting may occur. Triclopyr ester has also proved effective; it is more time-consuming and does not affect non-target species. Both of these chemical methods should be used during periods of active growth after flower formation. Chemical removal alone results in standing dead biomass that presents a **major fire hazard**.

The most effective removal treatment in a project in Eldorado Forest in the Sierra Nevada foothills was found to be cutting shrubs in September and October, allowing cut shrubs to dry on site, and then burning dried shrubs in late May and

early June. This reduced the amount of seed in the soil by 97 percent!

Location and retreatment of resprouts is imperative. If any single removal technique is used the site should be examined once a year, when seed germination ends in late spring, for five to ten years.



Courtesy photos





THE 17TH DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION: REMEMBERING THE FAIRGROUND'S ROOTS

By Dora Scott

The average person likely wouldn't associate a name like "The 17th District Agricultural Association" with the Nevada County Fairgrounds where we enjoy rides, carnival food, and various concerts and events. However, fairgrounds in California originated in the 19th century to advance public knowledge of agriculture, and there are now 54 fairgrounds, or District Agricultural Associations (DAA) who hold annual fairs and exhibitions and receive little funding from the state.

"We fall under the Department of Food & Agriculture, so it's very important to remember our roots," explained Andrew Trygg, CEO of the Nevada County Fairgrounds. The hallmarks of agriculture at the fairgrounds are the agricultural programs for FFA & 4-H to show livestock and also the horticulture exhibits that take place during the fair. However, Trygg and Deputy Manager Katie Bielen hope to remind us of how intrinsic agriculture is to the fairgrounds.

Right behind Treat Street, there is the Family Farm area. "Family Farm is basically where we reach out to groups like the Farm Bureau and Sierra Harvest and we bring all of what our community has to offer for agriculture and put it in one spot," Bielen explained. For instance, the Farm Bureau sets up a fake apple tree for people to go pick a real apple, or a woman with a peacock brings all the molted feathers to hand out.

"We try to remember, that this could very well be the first and sometimes the only time that a kid has been within a couple of feet from a steer. They open up their fridge at home and they have

ground beef, but where does the ground beef come from?" Trygg touched on how important it is for children to interact with agriculture in their formative years.

Agriculture comes full circle at the fairgrounds, as it's even present in the much-loved Treat Street, which is run by local nonprofits. "The really cool thing about [Treat Street] is that local farmers are part of these nonprofits," Bielen stated, explaining how Tall Pines Nursery tries to use local produce as much as they can at their booth.

The history of local agriculture is embedded in events like the Draft Horse Classic at the fairgrounds. "Back in the day, they would use these big draft horses to pull logs out of the forest to do all of the logging. Now we have trucks and tractors, but just decades ago they were using these draft horses to pull everything out of the fields, to till, to plant seeds, and so on," Trygg stated.

During the Draft Horse Classic is the Harvest Fair, where people bring the produce from their gardens to show. "That's really neat just being able to connect the community to that," said Trygg, touching on how the fairgrounds strives to foster these connections.

Some other events at the fairgrounds related to agriculture include, but are not limited to: Farm Day, the Grass Valley Sportsmen's Club Trout Derby at Lions Lake, and The Union's Home, Garden & Lifestyle Show. While the fairgrounds receive some state funding, it is all the space rentals that keep it afloat. "Financially, we are able to provide that community service because we are busy; we have events that keep us open," Trygg stated.

Aside from events, the fairgrounds are also



Courtesy Lenkaland Photography

an important place for emergency evacuations like during a wildfire, sheltering animals of all shapes and sizes from hours to days to weeks at a time. Bielen elaborated that while the fairgrounds provides the space and whatever is needed, the animal evacuation teams, like HEART, makes the rescues possible. "In 2022, just a couple days we had all the draft horses showing up for the Classic, we had dogs, cats, pigs, and goats everywhere from an evacuation, so we were able to make some accommodations to move them around," Trygg explained how they make the grounds available during emergencies even when they have events taking place.

While the fair is known and loved for a multitude of reasons, "We don't exist to put on a carnival in August. We exist to teach agriculture to the community, and we exist to provide that learning opportunity and the learning space for it," stated Trygg, adding, "We exist for a ton of different reasons, but agriculture is really the root of why we are here."

For more information about the Nevada County Fairgrounds, visit nevadacountyfair.com.