

Exploring the potential of native plant seeds

Perhaps second only to water, the supply of native plant seeds in Nevada has shrunk severely while the demand and price of the indigenous product soared. Reseeding burned and depleted rangelands with native species must follow quickly on the heels of wildfire to prevent rapid growth and establishment of cheatgrass. Ready access to native seeds is essential to these efforts.

UNCE Plant and Soil Specialist Jay Davison collaborates with other agencies and growers to explore ways native seeds can revegetate rangelands, expand supplies and possibly offer a new industry to farmers.

● **Seed collection, education and demonstration.** With support from the Bureau of Land Management, Davison is producing a handbook for native seed collectors that catalogues native plant species, identifies

collection sites and provides guidance on collection techniques and handling of collected seeds. Demonstrations on Nevada farms will determine the viability of native seeds as an alternative crop.

● **Seed-source identification and certification.** The Nevada Department of Agriculture (DOA) plans to sponsor a program that establishes protocols for confirming the source of a collected seed so it can be relied upon as indigenous to an area.

“We are excited about the Nevada

coalition formed to use native seeds to rehabilitate rangelands and explore new markets and opportunities for farmers,” said DOA Director Paul Iverson. “Cooperative Extension has the very important ability to link to and educate growers in each community.”



Photo by Staci Emm

Schurz rancher Randy Emm plants Indian ricegrass seed to test its potential as an alternative crop.

Taking the gamble out of beef

Charlie Hone is a relative newcomer to Nevada's historic Carson Valley. The southern California transplant moved to the 400-acre ranch as a youth and helped his Swiss-born parents manage their Angus and

Gelbvieh cattle. He spent the next 22 years “learning about cows.”

Eight years ago Hone consigned 25 of his steer calves to a retained ownership program, led by UNCE Livestock Specialist Ron Torell. His feedlot-fed cattle produced well on

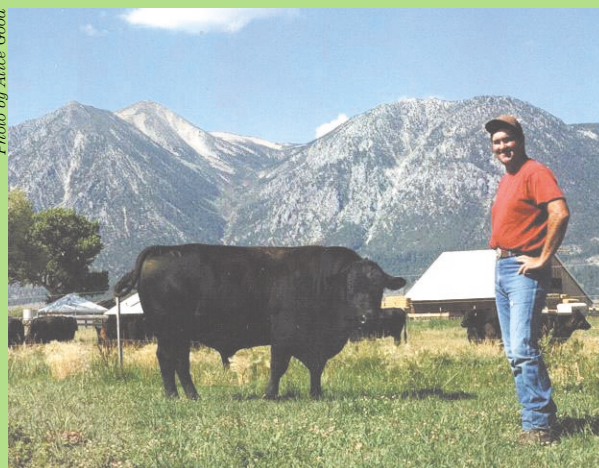
the carcass, so years later, he joined the Inside Beef course. This understand-by-doing process protects retained ownership investments by feeding against futures contracts on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

Hone was one of 80 ranchers from Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and California who consigned cattle to the 2001 program. He made \$200 more per head that year than the previous year. Producers who have implemented these risk-management strategies netted an additional average yearly income of \$20,000. Inside Beef won an award of excellence from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents in 2002.

“I recommend the program to everyone,” Hone says. “It helps with every facet of the business.”

Charlie Hone, a seedstock and commercial rancher in Gardnerville, uses Inside Beef futures and options strategies to assess his overall management scheme.

Photo by Alice Good





4-H: Making the best better

The 4-H Centennial celebration presented an opportunity for Nevada educators to assess how successful 4-H is today in reaching youth and making a positive difference in their lives. An objective evaluation helps counties decide what is working and what is not so programs meet the current needs of youth and families.

Extension Educator Loretta Singletary developed a survey with help from Youth Development Specialists Marilyn Smith and Bill Evans. After a pilot in Lyon County, the team worked with local Extension Educators to coordinate surveys in 15 counties. Volunteers and

parents of 4-H members rated the effectiveness of 4-H in teaching life skills as well as its teaching methods.

Results suggest that 4-H offers a powerful resource for teaching life skills to rural youth, which enhances self-esteem and other attributes; and the more actively a child participates, the more life skills he/she is likely to learn. Surveys in other counties show similar results.

“This survey provides baseline data that counties can use as they work with volunteers and parents to identify program strengths and priorities,” said Smith. “It can guide community 4-H programs and measure changes over time.”



Research indicates that prevention programs such as 4-H are important in assisting families and communities to encourage high levels of achievement from youth.

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4-H achievements lead the way to success in Lincoln County

A whopping 90 percent of Lincoln County youth ages 6 through 18 participate in 4-H youth development activities—that’s 884 young people involved in 64 clubs. “And more than 40 percent are teens,” says Extension Educator Don Holloway, “which is quite a bit

higher than the norm.”

The 4-H program was enhanced by these 2001 achievements:

- Hiring of a new 4-H coordinator to train and supervise the 93 adult and teen volunteer leaders.
- A new 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program students can sink their teeth into.

- 150 youth competed in Public Speaking projects, leading to improved self-confidence and better school grades.
- 100 percent of youth enrolled in Job Readiness classes used their new skills to get summer jobs . . . all this in addition to a nationally recognized range and soil judging program.

Native American youth gain awareness of native fish

The legendary Lahontan Cutthroat Trout—once king of Nevada’s waterways—has been released into the Truckee River by 50 dedicated youth in the Pyramid Lake 4-H program. The

young scientists, first-graders at Natchez Elementary School in Wadsworth, studied their progress while they reared the fish in tanks in class and at home. The Pyramid Lake Fisheries supplied fish eggs and some technical support.

“This pilot project has been fun,” said Staci Emm, coordinator of the Nevada Extension Indian Reservation Program (NEIRP). “It’s made the youth more aware of cultural traditions and water issues that affect daily life.”

Supported by more than \$100,000 in outside funding, NEIRP has revitalized youth, agricultural

and natural resource education on western Nevada reservations. Following are some highlights:

- First Nevada Indian Agriculture Summit, rated “outstanding” by 200 participating reservation farmers and agency representatives. The next conference is October 2–4, 2002 at the Plaza in Las Vegas.
- Range Management workshops will be held at Duckwater, August 21–22, and at Pyramid Lake, August 27–28, 2002.
- Middle school youth program on water issues and conflict resolution, developed by Loretta Singletary, to be piloted in fall, 2002.



Photo by Staci Emm

Youth from the Pyramid Lake 4-H program about to release Lahontan Cutthroat Trout stock into the Truckee River.