

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

It's been difficult to get into the year-end holiday spirit as 2017 draws to a close. The Thomas Fire terrorized Ventura County for nearly two weeks before turning its unwelcome attention to our neighbors in Santa Barbara

County, and although the flames no longer pose a direct threat to people or structures, the trauma it inflicted on our community lingers.

For the hundreds of families whose homes were destroyed, fire was only the beginning. They now face the ordeal of cleanup and reconstruction, a process that may take years. They also must deal with the trauma that began with a fearful evacuation in darkness and smoke and the terrible glow of flames advancing on furious winds, was compounded the following morning by uncertainty about the fate of homes and

belongings, and was amplified days later by the sorrow of certain loss and the stress of long-term dislocation.

For the scores of farmers and ranchers directly affected by the flames, the ordeal also will have lingering effects. Many of them have harrowing stories to tell of flames charging into orchards day after day, night after night, each incursion met by frantic response to douse spot fires and stamp out hot spots. Others saw grazing land, barns, fences and outbuildings incinerated, most in the first hours of the fire's sprint from Santa Paula to Ventura, others days

later as Thomas pivoted toward Ojai and Fillmore and Carpinteria. Many of the battles succeeded, often with the help of trained fire crews, others did not. Ahead of them lies damage assessment, and the prospect of a long-term reduction in revenue with which to recover. Some also lost their homes.

And of course, there were the lives lost: a retired teacher, trying to flee the flames in a rural canyon near Santa Paula; a firefighter on the front lines near Fillmore, protecting orchards and homes.

For all those who suffered loss in the fires — a home, the life of a loved one, financial security, a lifetime's work — we here at Farm Bureau of Ventura County send our best wishes and our fervent hope for a full physical and emotional recovery.

Let us not forget the collateral damage. The spouses of many farm workers in the Ojai Valley have been laid off indefinitely by closure of tourist-dependent businesses such as the Ojai Valley Inn and Spa, or sent home from restaurants and retailers whose customers have been driven away by road closures, smoke, ash and uncertainty about the valley's fate, prompting business owners to reduce staffing and hours of operation. Already living paycheck to paycheck, they will struggle to remain afloat. Their employers, too, face uncertain prospects as they miss out on the important holiday season. And how many gardeners and housekeepers employed by homeowners in Ventura's decimated hillside neighborhoods no longer have yards and homes for which to care?

Even for those of us who avoided the flames, the weeks when Thomas held the county in its grip were a time of constant stress and jittery uncertainty. Thousands were evacuated, many of us multiple times. We watched as the fire charged our neighborhoods and was driven off, only to make another charge at us days later from a new direction. After so many days and nights on edge, seeing that terrible orange glow in the darkness above the hills in first one direction and then another, it remains hard to relax. The lingering scent of smoke and sting of windblown ash ensures that we will not, perhaps, until the rains began to fall.

And at that point, we can begin to worry about mudslides and debris flows.

For all those who suffered loss in the fires — a home, the life of a loved one, financial security, a lifetime's work — we here at Farm Bureau of Ventura County send our best wishes and our fervent hope for a full physical and emotional recovery. We also take comfort in the remarkable strength, compassion, bravery and communal spirit brought forth by the fire. Thomas came at us like a dragon, and the people in its path responded like heroes, like good neighbors, like family. Friends supported friends, strangers supported strangers, and an army of visitors from near and far assembled to protect us and help us recover.

And Thomas is gone. We are still here.

— John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at john@farmbureauvc.com.

What's Inside?

- Post-fire recovery advice for ranchers
- Assessing fire-damaged avocado trees
- Are you ready for the produce safety rule?

Post-fire recovery advice for ranchers

By Matthew Shapero

Although wildland fire is a regular feature of grassland and chaparral vegetation types here on the Central Coast of California, it poses serious challenges to livestock operators when it occurs. Your response after fire will depend upon your goals and objectives and the resources available to you. What follows is a brief summary of the ecological impacts of wildland fire to rangelands and available response options.

Impact to soil and soil seedbank:

The pattern and severity of burning during fire is highly variable across landscapes and depends on slope, soil texture, humidity, wind direction, and temperature. Likely, your ranches burned unevenly, and you may have areas where there was hot and severe fire and other areas where combustion was incomplete and aboveground biomass is still largely present. Generally speaking, wildland fire poses two immediate threats to the rangeland resource: 1) physical changes to the soil and removal of vegetation make soils vulnerable to erosion and can lead to excess runoff; and 2) elevated temperature and smoke during fire can affect the soil seedbank and compromise the following season's regrowth. The extent of these impacts across your property, however, will be uneven due to the fire's patchy behavior.

In addition to the dry forage that was consumed during the fire, you can expect reductions in forage production for the following two green seasons. Forage production will always be highly dependent upon the timing and amount of rainfall, but you can generally expect production to be 50 to 70 percent of normal and the species composition to shift primarily to forbs (i.e. legumes, filaree, etc.) for the growing season immediately following fire (2017-2018). The second growing season after fire (2018-2019) you can expect production to be about 80 percent of normal. Production should return to normal by the third growing season.

Livestock management

Perhaps your most immediate concern is what to do with your livestock. The options available to you are to 1) ship out of the area to other feed resources, 2) sell livestock, or 3) provide supplementary feed and hold them until range forage returns. Ultimately, your decision will depend upon the individual circumstances of your operation. Option 1 allows you to rest burned pastures

and maintain herd numbers but requires access to pasture elsewhere and will cost money to transport. Option 2 also allows you to rest burned pastures but selling animals means losing herd genetics and can also create undesirable tax implications. If you go this route, check with your accountant as you may qualify for certain deferrals on income tax from the sales of livestock during disaster. Option 3 allows you to keep your animals but may potentially slow range recovery.

The scientific literature is somewhat limited on the subject of grazing after wildfire. To be sure, the most conservative option would be to defer grazing on your pastures until spring (Options 1 and 2). If total rest is not an option, consider reducing your stocking rate in pastures and run lighter than you normally would to avoid excess use. Alternatively, you might select one "sacrifice" pasture on which to feed for the winter, which will allow you to rest other portions of your ranch until spring.

Re-seeding

Seeding rangelands after fire has long been thought to protect against soil erosion and to supplement the soil seedbank with desirable forage species. Seeding for erosion control, however, is no longer a preferred method used by agencies (e.g. U.S. Forest Service) as its effectiveness depends so much on the timing and amount of subsequent precipitation and introducing exotic, non-native

seed can compromise the recovery of native plant species after fire. Additionally, while seeding to promote forage production and to introduce desirable forage species may have temporary benefits, it is unclear whether re-seeding will increase forage production in the first and second growing seasons beyond what would otherwise be available, and it is uncertain whether shifts in species composition achieved by seeding will continue beyond the first couple of years. Accordingly, seeding forage species should be measured against its cost-effectiveness in your operation. Even without seeding, rangeland soil seedbanks should recover by the third growing season to their pre-fire species composition and production levels.

Seeding *has* been shown to promote grass production post-fire in areas that were previously brush. If substantial brushy areas of your pasture burned and you'd like to maintain them as grassland, you might consider seeding those areas; a good option is Italian ryegrass, as it's cheap, germinates quickly, and is a good competitor.

With or without seeding, erosion on burned hill slopes will remain a concern post-fire, especially if early precipitation is concentrated and/or intense, and should be something that you continue to monitor.

Mulching

Mulching is another practice used to protect soils from erosion after fire, although the scale of fire on range- *(continued on page 3)*

Are you ready for the produce safety rule?

By Bryan Little

Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS) has partnered with Safe Food Alliance (SFA) through a California Department of Food and Agriculture contract to provide produce safety training, a new requirement of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), for an unprecedented low price of \$35 per attendee.

The Ventura County training session will be on Jan. 31, 2018, at the Courtyard by Marriott, 600 E. Esplanade Drive, Oxnard.

Most farms are required to have at least one designated supervisor who has been trained in accordance with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. Upon completion of the course, attendees will receive an official certificate from the Association of Food & Drug Officials.

What sets SFA and FELS apart is their more than 100 years of combined experience and their dedication to providing technical guidance and leadership to the California agriculture community.

Class size is limited, so register today to guarantee your seat. Register online at safefoodalliance.com/events/produce-safety-training-19/.

You can find more information about the Food Safety Training Partnership, the Produce Safety Rule, and FSMA, at foodsafetytrainingpartnership.com. For more information call (916) 561-5672 or email info@foodsafetytrainingpartnership.com.

— Bryan Little is chief operating officer of Farm Employers Labor Service, and serves as director of labor affairs for California Farm Bureau Federation.

Assessing fire-damaged avocado trees

By Ben Faber

The destruction after a fire can be pretty gruesome and sad. Many times, though the fire moves through the orchard so fast that, even though the canopy has turned brown, there is a good chance the trees can come back. It all depends on how much damage has been done to the trunk.

If the fire has substantially damaged the base of the trunk, it is unlikely to come back, even if the canopy is still green. That is the saddest thing, because you think you've dodged the bullet, but if the trunk is too damaged, the canopy collapses gradually over a few weeks. However, the canopy may look like it's a goner, but if the trunk is still intact, the tree will come back and may still be as productive as before.

The thing to look for at the base of the trunk is the discoloration. If it's black, it's probably not coming back. However, it can

come back if after a few weeks you don't see the pencil-sized cankers that indicate that the sap has bubbled to the surface (see photo).

If after a few weeks, the trunk is still clear of those bubbles, even though the canopy looks gone, it is quite likely to come back.

It's also possible that the tree may be damaged in just one part of the trunk and not on the rest. In this case, it can also come back. The problem with these is that they may come back, and given enough time will be good trees again. But if they haven't recovered enough and there's a heat spell, they may go down suddenly as if they had been burned again. That's the way they will look, like they have been burned again. Given enough time, though the avocado will grow from good areas to cover the poor areas and the tree may be productive again.

Avocados are amazing in their ability to recover. Eucalyptus also can do it. But if you singe the trunk of a lemon, goodbye lemon.

— Ben Faber is a farm advisor in the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ventura, specializing in soils, water, avocados and minor subtropicals. This piece originally appeared on the UC Topics in Subtropics blog at ucanr.edu/blogs/topics/index.cfm. Contact Ben at bafaber@ucanr.edu.



Post-fire recovery *Cont'd from page 2*

lands frequently makes mulching cost-prohibitive. If sensitive areas on your ranch suffered severe burns, however, you might consider spot mulch treatments. This may include mulching riparian areas, springs, or stock ponds where you are concerned about sedimentation. Consider applying weed-free rice straw to a depth of two to three inches (or, approximately 40 bales/acre).

Further resources

U.C. Cooperative Extension is available to visit your ranch and/or discuss rangeland soil health, range seeding rates and species composition, grazing practices, and erosion control measures. For more information,

call (805) 645-1475 or email mwkshapero@ucanr.edu.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering cost-share programs to help you rebuild infrastructure you may have lost during the fire. Contact their Oxnard office at (805) 984-2358.

And finally, the Farm Services Agency (FSA) may have insurance programs available to you to compensate you for lost livestock or forage resources. Contact their Santa Maria office at (805) 928-9269.

— Matthew Shapero is the University of California Cooperative Extension's Livestock & Range Advisor for Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Contact him at mwkshapero@ucanr.edu.

Member Benefits

TICKETS & DISCOUNTS

Farm Bureau members qualify for discounts on admission to many of Southern California's most popular theme parks and other attractions. To take advantage of any of these special offers, drop by the Farm Bureau office at 5156 McGrath St. in Ventura. You can also place an order and pay by phone, and have the tickets mailed to you. For more information, contact Farm Bureau at (805) 289-0155. Have your membership number handy. We accept Visa and MasterCard.

Aquarium of the Pacific, Long Beach; Adult (12+ yrs) \$20.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$15.95 (save \$2). Valid thru 12/31/18. Closed 12/25/2018.

Cinemark & Rave Theatres — All Cinemark, Century & Rave locations; Platinum Super Ticket. Valid any regular movie anytime. Regular price up to \$12, you pay \$9.25 (save \$2.75). Additional premiums may apply for specially priced films and/or events priced higher than normal box office. No expiration on physical tickets only.

Knott's Berry Farm — Buena Park. Adult (3+ yrs) \$38.95 (save \$40.05). Valid thru 3/16/2018.

Regal Entertainment Group — All Edwards & Regal locations. No expiration date on physical tickets only. — Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.25. — Unlimited Movie Pack: 2 Unrestricted Tickets and \$10 Gift Card, \$28.50. (Surcharge for IMAX, RPX, 3-D films & 4DX films, premiere or luxury seating locations or select theaters.)

San Diego Safari Park — Escondido. E-ticket valid at least thru 8/15/18. Adult (12+ yrs) \$45.50 (save \$8.50); Child (3 to 11 yrs) \$37.50 (save \$6.50). Includes Africa Tram, all shows and exhibits.

San Diego Sea World — Adult (10+ yrs) Single Day Ticket \$66.50. Child (3-9 yrs) Single Day Ticket \$66.50. Valid thru 12/31/18.

San Diego Zoo — E-ticket valid at least thru 8/15/18. Adult (12+ yrs) 1 Day Pass \$45.50 (save \$8.50); Child (3 to 11 yrs) 1 Day Pass \$37.50 (save \$6.50). Both Adult & Child 1 Day Pass includes Guided Bus Tour, Kangaroo Bus & Skyfari Aerial Tram. Valid thru 8/15/18.

Six Flags Magic Mountain — Valencia. General admission (3yrs+) \$54.95. Valid thru 9/9/18.

See's Candy gift certificate — Valid at any See's Candy Shop in the U.S. One-pound candy gift certificate for \$17.45 (Save \$2.45). No expiration on physical ticket only.

FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

5156 McGrath St., Suite #102
Ventura, CA 93003-7305

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Oxnard, CA
Permit #424

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

 Printed on recycled paper.

Board of Directors

Danny Pereira, President*
William Terry, First VP*
Ted Grether, Second VP*
Chris Sayer, Secretary*
Jason Cole, Treasurer*

Bryce Belgum**	Ed McFadden
Brian Benchwick	Will Pidduck
David Borchard	David Schwabauer
George Boskovich III	Melinda Beardsley Wiseman

Chief Executive Officer
John Krist

* Member, Executive Committee
** Advisory member, YF&R chairman

MISSION STATEMENT

We represent the broad and dynamic interests of the agricultural industry through our diverse membership. We serve members by delivering services, promoting policies, developing coalitions, and fostering community action that will ensure the long-term success of agriculture in Ventura County.

• **FOUNDERS CIRCLE**
Beardsley & Son
Brokaw Ranch Co.
Farm Credit West
JK Thille Ranches
Leavens Ranches LLC
Terry Farms Inc.

• **PLATINUM MEMBERS**
Brokaw Nursery LLC
Deardorff Family Farms
Dullam Nursery
Faria Family Ptnr LTD
Fruit Growers Lab Inc
Gimlin & Udy Insurance Agency
Limco Del Mar Ltd
Limoneira Company
Pinkerton Ranch
Pyramid Flowers Inc.
Rabobank NA
Rancho Cream Inc
Rancho Simpatica
Rio Farms
Saticoy Lemon Association
Southland Sod Farms

• **DIAMOND MEMBERS**
Ag Rx
Bob Jones Ranch Inc
Boskovich Farms Inc
Crop Production Services
DeMartini Enterprises LLC
Farmers Irrigation Co.
Hailwood, Inc.
Index Fresh
John W Borchard Ranches Inc
Larry Walker Associates
Kimball Ranches El Hogar
Mission Produce
Nunes Vegetables Inc.
Oxnard Lemon Company
Oxnard Pest Control Assoc Inc
Pecht Ranch
Rancho Abuelos
Rancho Limcado
Rancho Rodoro
Sundance Berry Farm
Travis Agricultural Const Irrig
John W. Borchard Jr.
Katie Brokaw

• **GOLD SEAL MEMBERS**
Ag Land Services
AGQ USA Laboratories
Anacapa Berry Farms Company
Anacapa Berry Farms
Anacapa Homes LLC
Andreini & Co.
Associates Insectary
Barkley Ins. Agent Brokers
Bennetts Honey Farm
Bright View Tree Company
J David Borchard
Mike Brucker
Burns Equipment Services Inc.
Calavo Growers
Camulos Ranch
Betsy Chess
Cole Ranch
Community West Bank
Dole Fresh Vegetables, Inc
Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc
Jack M. Dickenson
El Dorado Inc.
Estate of William Worthington
Flying M Ranch
Edward S. Friel
Friends Ranches Inc
Gardena Nursery

Joseph H. Maulhardt Trust
La Pedrera LLC
Phil McGrath
John McGrath
Darrell Nelson
Newhall Land Farm Co
Otto and Sons Nursery
Quality Ag Inc
Rancho Caron
Reiter Affiliated Companies
Richardson Ranches
San Cristobal Distributing Inc
San Miguel Produce Inc.
Santa Rosa Berry Farms LLC
Sayer Ranch
SC Fuels
Scott Dunbar Ranch & Land Broker
Sierra Pacific Farms Inc.
Sunnyland Nursery LLC
Tierra Rejada Farms L.P.
Tri Tech
Underwood & Son LLC
Ventura County RCD
White Seed Co
Wonderful Citrus
Yamamoto Farms
YCE

FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

5156 McGrath St., Suite 102 • P.O. Box 3160 • Ventura, CA 93006
Telephone 805-289-0155 • Fax 805-658-0295 • www.farmbureauvc.com