

## THE END OF SUMMER AT OHA

September, October before the rainy season in California, grazing animals break down the thatch and weed skeletons so that the old plant matter makes contact with the soil. These decaying plants provide nutrients for new growth when they rot over the winter, and the open canopy allows new seedlings to get sun when grasses germinate at the end of October.

Usually, we get germinating rains around the third week of October – germinating rains soak in to a sufficient depth to allow seeds to sprout. The usual pattern is a bit of rain at the end of September, dry winds and high fire danger in the early part of October, and then, the soaking rain before the end of October.

With the onset of rain, the California Newts start their migration back to Baby Bottle Pond – you will see them on their trek. All of our work in and around the Pond stops, South Park Drive in Tilden is closed, the North Corral is closed, so that we do not disturb riparian habitat for the newts, the frogs, and all the California creatures dependent on this major season change.

October 15 is the date Fisheries & Wildlife says we must stop working on the tules in the Pond or doing any work on the springs in our pasture.

The horses also go through major changes in this season. We prepare them with vaccines, we begin to supplement their feed, we anticipate the ticks, they start their winter coats and, sometimes, they are prone to colic.

## FEED ON WEEDS

We will truck feed in the Plateau for a month, with portions widely spread on the mustard, starting near the Middle Meadow and working across the plateau so that we get the herd to trample everywhere we can on the mustard skeletons.

Take the time to WALK some feeding portions to the back of the targeted mustard patch – a little bit of strategic walking can accomplish a lot.

## MUSTARD

The unusual late spring rains and warm winter the past couple years have favored a major mustard invasion. Knocking down the dry plant skeletons, and trampling the new seedling when they emerge over the winter, are our main management strategy. Hoof action works wonders.

Where we can, we will mow or weed eat mustard in bloom. Grazing with goats, if we able, will also help to nip the bloom before it seeds. Main target for mustard in bloom is the middle slope in the Forest Meadow – the same area where our winter feeding and spring mowing have been so effective against the hemlock. Cutting back the mustard in bloom here will favor the grass that has so successfully grown into the areas that used to be predominated by hemlock.

## SCOTCH BROOM

Scotch Broom is a major invasive in some of the lower pastures. Since we stopped grazing the saddle area of the Pear Orchard, scotch broom has taken over the old access routes up the hill from the Lower Pear Orchard. Because the goats only graze the grassy saddle area, there are no deterrents. The Old Dairy, the Lower Sullivan also have major patches. It is really hard to remove once the plants have passed the seedling stage, except...

At this time of year, the Scotch Broom plants are at their weakest – cutting or chopping them below soil level is an effective method of control. Take advantage while you can!

At other times of the year, pulling them out by the roots is the main method – the roots are really deep and require a mechanical device during their long growing phase. This is the time.

(See the Cal\_IPC article for a complete description.)

## COYOTE BUSH

Coyote Bush is native plant associated with California oak grasslands, but without the huge migratory herds of grazers and without fire as a management strategy, we need to step in and manually tip the balance toward grass.

This is an advantageous time to tip the balance. Chopping or cutting the coyote bushes is most effective right now because the plants are least able to re-grow.