

## Resources for Raising Livestock in Unincorporated Alameda County

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**Part 1: Context and Research Process:****The library and user context**

The Alameda County library system contains eleven branches. While the majority of these branches are in urban, city settings, The San Lorenzo, Niles, Dublin and Castro Valley Branches are either in unincorporated areas (San Lorenzo and Castro Valley) or border on rural, unincorporated areas. In those rural areas, farming and livestock raising are commonplace. While many of those farms are well established family farms or ranches, backyard farming is gaining popularity. For example, on my drive to take my children to school our street passes by horses, cattle, goats, chickens as well as some more exotic livestock such as emus and llamas. I have friends who raise chickens for eggs. The daily drive and the friend with the chickens were the inspiration for this pathfinder.

The users of this pathfinder were assumed to be backyard farmers or those who are interested in becoming backyard farmers. These may be people who are interested in producing their own locally grown products: eggs, milk or cheese or maybe they just want to keep a horse for all the local riding trails that go through the hillsides that divide the urban and rural areas of the county.

**Research Process:**

I began my search at my local library branch: Castro Valley. I went to the livestock books and checked out one book for each animal that appeared to be the most comprehensive. I didn't necessarily chose the newest ones as they seemed to include instructions on how to buy coops and fencing, whereas the older ones had specific instructions for building most of the necessary equipment and housing. I thought the hands-on approach would be more educational for pathfinder users.

After reading and annotating the books I lugged home, I logged into the library's catalog and did a call number search across all the branches for two reasons. The first was to "walk" through the call numbers to see exactly where different animals were classified. The second was to see what other interesting books I might have missed. Alameda County maintains "floating shelves" meaning that books stay shelved at the branch they are returned to regardless of where they started. The library encourages patrons to put books on hold to get exactly the titles they are interested in reading. With that in mind, I wanted to see the whole collection of livestock books that would be available to any Alameda County library patron.

The last thing I did with the library was look at their reference selection and their online databases. The reference books were about what I expected. As the reference books stay with the branch that bought them, I tried to keep my list of pathfinder books down to the ones only kept in the branches best situated to serve backyard farmers (San Lorenzo, Castro Valley and Dublin). When looking at the online databases, I have to say here I was a bit disappointed by what was

available. With so many print references, I had hoped that the electronic ones would show as much diversity.

From my work with the Alameda County library catalog, I narrowed down my livestock list to the most common animals kept in the county: horses, cattle, sheep, goats, swine, chicken and rabbits. With that list in hand, I went next to the Alameda County government website. I expected to find the government website discouraging residents from keeping livestock. To my surprise, I found just the opposite. The website was incredibly helpful and encouraging, citing the county's long history of agriculture.

A surprising fact I learned in the process of going through the country, state and federal websites, I learned that California is the top producer of goats. Alameda County maintains a livestock report, and while number of head of cattle has dropped from a 1990s high, cattle are still kept at nearly the same numbers they were in the 1940s. I had expected to see more of a drop off in over all ranching (see the CFBF link in the pathfinder).

The last thing I did was look for associations that backyard farmers might be interested in joining or using for research. I think this was the most difficult piece of the process. I had a few false starts before I found groups that were local and of interest to a casual farmer.

**Part 2: The Pathfinder:**

**Library:**

Alameda County Public Library: <http://www.aclibrary.org/>

**Introduction:**

Alameda County has a long and rich agricultural history. The environment lends itself to keeping livestock. Homeowners may think their land is too small for animals, but it could still support rabbits, chickens or goats.

This pathfinder is specifically designed for homeowners in the unincorporated areas of the county interested in owning some livestock. Homeowners living within a city need to consult with their city's regulations (typically animal control) before acquiring livestock.

**Call Numbers (Dewey Decimal Classification):**

636: Livestock  
636.0831: Shelter for livestock  
636.089: Veterinary medicine  
636.1: Horses  
636.2: Cattle  
636.3: Sheep/Goats  
636.4: Swine  
636.5: Chickens  
636.9: Rabbits

**Electronic Resources:**

**ACRCD (2011).** *The Alameda county conservation project.* [Website].

<http://www.acrcd.org/> (Accessed March 24, 2011).

Website offers agricultural strategies for residents of Alameda county. There is a page specifically for rural landowners.

**ACGOV (2010).** *Alameda county's official website.* [Website].

<http://www.acgov.org/> (Accessed March 24, 2011)

For unincorporated areas, Alameda County regulates livestock.

**CDFA (2007).** *The 2007 California Brand Book* [PDF]. California Department of Food and Agriculture.

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Livestock\\_ID/2007\\_Brand\\_Book.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Livestock_ID/2007_Brand_Book.html) (Accessed March 24, 2011).

Includes a list of registered livestock brands in use in California.

**CDPH (2010). Veterinary public health section (VPHS). *California Department of Public Health*. [Website].**

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/vphs/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed March 24, 2011).

Includes information on various diseases, links to related organizations and specific information on animal importation.

**CFBF (n.d.) *Alameda county farm bureau*. California Farm Bureau Federation. [website].**

<http://www.cfbf.com/counties/?id=1> (Accessed March 24, 2011)

Contact information for farm related issues and questions for Alameda County.

**Sweet Ranches (2011). *Sweet Ranches*. [website].**

<http://www.sweetranches.com/> (Accessed March 24, 2011)

A blog and collection of ranching / farming news from Livermore California. Includes resources on beef promotion, industry news, the California Rangeland Coalition and photo gallery.

**USDA (2011) Grain inspection, packers and stockyards administration. *United States department of agriculture*. [website].**

<http://www.gipsa.usda.gov/> (Accessed March 24, 2011)

"The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products, and promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture."

**Print Resources:**

**Belanger, J. D. (1974). *The homesteader's handbook to raising small livestock*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, Book Division. DDC: 636**

Though the book is 37 years old it contains a comprehensive how-to list for all manner of small livestock: goats, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, sheep and hogs. Book includes instructions for building shelters and how and what to feed different types of animals.

**Belanger, J. D. (2000). *Storey's guide to raising dairy goats*. Pownal, VT: Storey Books. DDC: 636.39142**

According to the book, California is the largest producer of goats. This book has many useful line drawn illustrations. It has descriptions of the different popular breeds. It also includes feeding instructions, including good and bad native plants. There's a chapter on milk production, one on housing the goats and one on breeding goats.

**Damerow, G. (2002). *Barnyard in your backyard: A beginner's guide to raising chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, sheep and cattle*. DDC: 636**

*Barnyard in your Backyard* has much of the same information as *The homesteader's handbook* but is designed specifically for suburban homes in semi-rural settings such as Castro Valley, Fairfield and Palomares. Livestock included are: chickens, geese, ducks, goats, sheep and cattle. There is information for basic health, breeding and the sexing of offspring. There are line drawn illustrations of key points.

**Fry, J. (2007). *Backyard horsekeeping, new and revised: The only guide you'll ever need.* Guilford, CT: Lyons Press. DDC: 636.1093**

The book guides the new horsekeeper through the process of finding suitable land, choosing a veterinarian, constructing a barn, organizing the paddock and the feeding and care of the horse. There is updated information on equine nutrition and training.

**Kilarski, B. (2003). *Keep chickens! Tending small flocks in cities, suburbs, and other small places.* North Adams: MA: Storey Pub.**

This book is aimed at people living in urban or suburban areas who want to keep chickens for eggs. It gives clear instructions for the minimum coop and pen sizes needed as well as amount of time needed daily for the caring of the flock and the gathering of eggs. Apparently ear color is a good determinant for the color of the eggs a chicken will lay. The last chapter in the book has full color photographs of different breeds and coop designs. Includes a bibliography and a list of chicken suppliers.

**McBane, S. (2004). *The horse owner's essential survival guide.* Newton Abbot, England: David & Charles; F&W Publications: Cincinnati, OH. DDC: 636.1083**

The book provides information for people who wish to keep horses but don't have the time to work with the horses every day due to work or other obligations. It has information on horse personalities, how best to board horses, horse health, diet and necessary equipment. Includes color photographs and illustrations.

**McFarlen, A. B. (2008). *Pigs: Keeping a small-scale herd for pleasure and profit.* Laguna Hills, CA: Hobby Farm Press. DDC: 636.4**

*Pigs* covers the essentials for raising a small herd, such as finding the right breed, selecting the right pasture and building pigpens. There is information on safe handling, routine health care, breeding and the care of piglets.

**Price, S. D. (2000). *The Horseman's illustrated dictionary.* New York, NY: Lyon's Press. DDC: 636.1003**

"Full explanations of more than 1,000 terms and phrases used by horsemen past and present"--  
Cover

**Rath, S. (1998).** *The complete cow*. Stillwater, MN: Voyageur Press. DDC: 636.2

After a brief history of cattle in human history the book contains a lengthy list of different breeds with color photographs to illustrate some of the different types.

**Thomas, H. S. (2005).** *Getting started with beef & dairy cattle*. North Adams: MA: Storey Publications.

Updated version includes information on "organic farming." Has instructions for maintaining a small scale cattle herd. Has information on breeding, health care, dairy cattle and meat cattle.

**Woginrich, J. (2010).** *Chick days: an absolute beginner's guide to raising chickens from hatchlings to laying hens*. North Adams, MA: Storey Publications.

Day by day chronicle of the life of the chicken from chick to egg laying hen. Includes sample diary entries and full color illustrations. Has information on housing, feeding, hygiene and health care.

#### **Almanacs, Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:**

**Barlough, J. E. (1996).** *UC Davis book of horses: A complete medical reference guide for horses and foals*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers. DDC: 636.1089

This book offers concise equine health information aimed at owners, breeders, exhibitors, trainers, grooms and anyone else who works with horses. The compiled facts were written by teachers and students of veterinary medicine at U.C. Davis.

**Fraser, C. M. (ed) (1991).** *The Merck veterinary manual: A handbook of diagnosis, therapy, and disease prevention and control for the veterinarian*. 7th edition. Rathway, N. J.: Merck & Company. DDC: 636.089

Reference guide for veterinary medicine for a wide variety of animals and ailments.

**State of California, Bureau of Agriculture. (1987-1990).** *California brand book*. Sacramento, CA: The Bureau of Livestock Identification. DDC: 636.2

Lists all the registered livestock brands in California. The 2007 version is offered as a downloadable PDF from the CDFA.

**West, G. P. (ed) (1995).** *Black's veterinary dictionary*. 18th Edition. London: Black. DDC: 636.089

Organized in dictionary form, this book offers advice on medical conditions, housing nutrition and other care needs for a variety of animals. Includes information on tropical diseases and traveling with animals.

**Databases:**

**Gale Cengage Learning (n.d.) *Agriculture collection*. [database].**

[http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=PPAG&userGroupName=alamco\\_main](http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=PPAG&userGroupName=alamco_main) (Accessed March 24, 2010)

Requires an Alameda County library card to log in.

The database has 400 titles focused on agricultural issues.

**Gale Cengage Learning (n.d.) *Gardening, landscape & horticulture collection*. [database].**

[http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=PPGL&userGroupName=alamco\\_main](http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=PPGL&userGroupName=alamco_main)(Accessed March 24, 2010)

Requires an Alameda County library card to log in.

The database has access to 100 gardening and horticultural journals as well as specific reference sources from Gale / Cengage Learning.

**Associations:**

**American Farmland Trust:** <http://www.farmland.org/>

**American Rabbit Breeders Association:** <http://arba.net/index.htm>

**California Cattlemen's Association:** <http://www.calcattlemen.org/>

**California Cattlewomen:** <http://www.cattlewomen.org/>

**California Native Grasslands Association:** <http://www.cnga.org/>

**California Poultry Association:** <http://www.cpif.org/>

**California Rangeland Conservation Coalition:** <http://www.carangeland.org/>

**California Wool Growers Association:** <http://www.woolgrowers.org/>

**The Nature Conservancy: California:** <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/california/>