

# Goat and Sheep Grazing:

## A Wildfire Solution For New Mexico

### The need:

Hot and dry conditions and the buildup of invasive weeds that serve as ladder fuels continue to increase the risk and prevalence of devastating wildfires. In 2025 alone, approximately **186,000 acres burned statewide**. These fires threaten communities, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, and culturally important landscapes including the Rio Grande bosque.

The primary tools currently used in New Mexico include prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, mowing, hand crews, and herbicides. Each of these treatments has its strengths and weaknesses. Prescribed grazing gives land managers an additional tool.

### What is prescribed grazing?

The intentional use of livestock to achieve a vegetation-management goals, including the reduction of fire fuels and controlling invasive vegetation.

### What it can accomplish

|                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>Reduce fire fuels</b><br><br>Goats and sheep reduce highly flammable weeds and bushes that serve as ladder fuels, taking the fire from the grass up into the tree canopy. | <b>Promote native vegetation</b><br><br>By controlling invasive plants, prescribed grazing can reduce competition and support the restoration of native vegetation. |
| <b>Manage difficult terrain</b><br><br>Goats and sheep can treat difficult terrain that cannot be managed by humans or machinery                                             | <b>Support Soil Health</b><br><br>As goats graze, their droppings return organic material and nutrients to the soil                                                 |

### Already a proven concept in New Mexico

Galloping Goat Grazing is a New Mexico-based prescribed grazing provider serving public agencies, local governments, tribal communities, and private landowners. Their projects have ranged from fire fuels reduction to invasive vegetation management and soil restoration.

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| <b>1,000+</b><br><b>ACRES TREATED</b><br>Since operations began | <b>APPROXIMATELY 200</b><br><b>ACRES TREATED</b><br>During 2026 |
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# Making Prescribed Grazing More Accessible

*New Mexico already recognizes prescribed grazing as land management and fuel reduction treatment in some programs and planning documents; however, it does not appear to be consistently identified across wildfire grants and restoration programs.*

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## Barriers To Wider Use

### Limited awareness

Many land managers are more familiar with herbicides, mechanical thinning, and mowing and may not realize that prescribed grazing is an available treatment.

### Unclear Funding Pathways

While New Mexico recognizes grazing as land management and fuel reduction treatment, it does not appear to be consistently identified across wildfire grants and restoration programs.

### High upfront costs

Prescribed grazing requires trailers and vehicles to pull them, temporary or virtual fencing, portable water, labor, and animal care. When grants are reimbursement-only, service providers may be unable to start their grazing business even if they want to due to the high cost of the needed equipment.

## Commonly Asked Questions:

**How are goats/sheep kept in one place?** Electric net fencing, polywire, or virtual fencing collars.

**How are goats/sheep protected from predators?** On remote jobs, livestock guardian dogs protect the flock. Electric fencing also dissuades would-be predators like coyotes. On day jobs, employees protect the herd, keeping an eye out for domestic dogs as well as more traditional predators.

**What about toxic plants?** Galloping Goat Grazing reports their herd has no problem eating plants that are considered toxic if stocking density and duration is adjusted to ensure that no one animal is eating too much of that plant.

## A REASONABLE NEXT STEP

Explore how prescribed grazing is recognized and funded within New Mexico's wildfire prevention, vegetation management, and rural development programs and examine what changes will create the most meaningful opportunity for prescribed grazing to become a larger part of the solution for wildfires in New Mexico.

Sources: National Weather Service Albuquerque, *2025 Annual Highlights — Fire Weather: Fire Weather Summary for Central & Northern New Mexico*, p. 2; Galloping Goat Grazing internal project records.

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