

2009 Annual Operating Instructions
 Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill Sheep Allotments
 New Meadows Ranger District, Payette National Forest

These annual operating instructions are for implementing grazing management activities on the Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill allotments for the 2009 grazing season. This plan was developed with the participation of the livestock permittee on January 8, 2009. The interdisciplinary resource personnel and livestock permittee who participated in development of this plan are:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Frank Shirts	Permittee
2. Kimberly Brandel	New Meadows District Ranger
3. Rick Belnap	Idaho Dept. of Lands
4. Brian McMorris	Range Specialist

These instructions are a guideline for grazing management. Any changes in management from these instructions require approval by the Forest Service prior to implementation. Refer to Part 2 of your term grazing permit for general terms and conditions that apply to these operating instructions. Also included and incorporated with these Annual Operating Instructions are maps indicating areas opened and closed to grazing.

Grazing fees must be paid prior to livestock entering the National Forest. The New Meadows District Office must receive confirmation from Lockbox that payment has been made prior to sheep entering the Forest.

2009 AUTHORIZED USE

<u>PERMITTEE</u>	<u>LIVESTOCK NUMBERS</u>	<u>SEASON</u>	<u>ALLOTMENTS</u>
Frank Shirts	Band #1 948 ewe/lambs	6/16- 8/31	Price Valley/Boulder Creek
	Band #2 947 ewe/lambs	6/16- 8/31	Price Valley/Boulder Creek
	1895 dry ewes	9/1- 9/30	Boulder Creek/Price Valley
	14 packstock	6/16- 8/31	Price Valley/ Boulder Creek
	10 packstock	9/1- 9/30	Boulder Creek/Price Valley

TERMS AND CONDITIONS TO SEASON OF USE AND LIVESTOCK NUMBERS

The District Ranger may modify the season of use and livestock numbers permitted on any given year. The season of use is especially dependent upon weather conditions (annual precipitation) which influences annual forage production and range readiness. The District Ranger's authority to modify term grazing permitted use is further described in Part 2, Section 8 (b)&(c) of your permit.

Turnout will not occur prior to range readiness. Range readiness is measured by soil moisture and plant growth. Soils may be damp, but not saturated, and should be firm to avoid excessive compaction due to livestock. Grass species other than bulbous bluegrass and cheatgrass must be a minimum of 6 inches in height and out of the boot stage. Arrowleaf balsamroot should be in bloom or past bloom. All animals must be off the Boulder Creek and Price Valley Allotments no later than September 30, 2009.

GRAZING PRESCRIPTION AND LIVESTOCK ROTATIONS

The grazing prescriptions are designed to meet the resource needs of the soils and vegetation. Additionally, fisheries biologists have completed Biological Assessments on the grazing prescriptions. The known or potential problem areas have been identified along with the respective mitigation measures designed to eliminate each adverse effect

Allowable Use Standards

The following allowable use criteria are to be followed for all grazing activities.

1. Sheep are to move to the next Unit or leave the allotment after 30% use on suitable range is reached. This is equivalent to once over grazing by a band of sheep. When the permittee observes proper use standards being reached, the livestock will be moved to the next Unit or off the Forest and the permittee will notify the Forest Service.
2. Sheep watering is limited to one time per location.
3. One night per bed site.

Salting Requirements

Salting is restricted to the following:

1. No less than .25 mile from water, and not to be placed in meadow bottoms
2. Only at bed grounds.
3. Contained and not placed directly on the ground.
4. Unconsumed salt will be removed from the site.

Other Management Requirements

Sheep are not authorized to bed or salt on Forest Service trails.

The permittee is responsible for ensuring there is no trash left behind when moving sheep camps.

Livestock Rotations

The rotation schedule and maps show an outline of grazing for the 2009 grazing season.

Price Valley and Boulder Creek Allotments

The two ewe/lamb bands will start out on the Price Valley Allotment before moving onto the Boulder Creek Allotment. After shipping of lambs at the Railroad Saddle portable corrals in late August, the dry band will begin grazing on the Boulder Creek Allotment before finishing the grazing season on the Price Valley Allotment. Shipping of lambs will occur at the Railroad Saddle portable corrals approximately August 31. Unit 4 (Fry Pan) on the Boulder Creek Allotment will be rested in 2008.

Unit rotations are as follow:

Band #1

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Allotment</u>
Unit IV – Mud Creek (east ½)	Price Valley
Unit III - East Branch	Price Valley
Unit IV – Mud Creek (west ½)	Price Valley
Unit 1 - Brush Mtn	Boulder Creek

Band #1 will unload from trucks in the Mud Creek (Unit IV) drainage and graze up the east side of the drainage first, and then graze south down the East Branch (Unit III) drainage. The sheep will then graze north up west side of the Mud Creek (Unit IV) drainage. Once at the top they will move over into Unit 1 of the Boulder Creek Allotment near Brush Mountain. After grazing Unit 1 they will move to Railroad Saddle for shipping of the lambs approximately August 31st. When moving towards Railroad Saddle you need to make sure the sheep do not bed in an area bedded earlier and avoid areas already grazed.

Band #2

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Allotment</u>
Unit III – East Branch	Price Valley
Unit II – West Branch	Price Valley
Unit 2 – Boulder Creek	Boulder Creek
Unit 5 – Ant Basin (east ½)	Boulder Creek
Unit 6 – Twin Forks (east ½)	Boulder Creek

Band #2 will unload in the lower end of the East Branch (Unit III) drainage by the log and block fence and graze north up the East Branch Weiser River for a little ways and then loop back south towards the Price Valley Guard Station. They will need to avoid the northern Idaho ground squirrel site west of the log and block fence and north of the Price Valley Guard Station. Once the sheep reach the south end of the allotment they will graze north up the West Branch (Unit II). Once they reach the top of the drainage they will move into Unit 2 (Boulder Creek) in the Boulder Creek Allotment near Yantis Ditch and will start grazing northeast in Unit 2. After the sheep graze to the northeast end of Unit 2 they will graze back southwest in the same unit, while also grazing (eastern) portions of Units 5 (Ant Basin) and 6 (Twin Forks) until shipping of the lambs at Railroad Saddle approximately August 31st. When moving towards Railroad Saddle make sure the sheep do not bed in an area bedded earlier and avoid areas already grazed.

Dry Band

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Allotment</u>
Unit 6 – Twin Forks (west ½)	Boulder Creek
Unit 5 – Ant Basin (west ½)	Boulder Creek
Unit 3 – Cold Springs	Boulder Creek
Unit 7 – Head of Boulder	Boulder Creek
Unit I – Head of Boulder	Price Valley

The dry band will be made up after the lambs are shipped and will start grazing in Unit 6 (Twin Forks). The band will continue grazing north through Unit 5 (Ant Basin) and then graze Unit 3 (Cold Springs) before looping back to Unit 7 (Head of Boulder). After grazing Unit 7, they will move into Unit I (head of Boulder), until the standards are met or September 30th (whichever comes first). The livestock will then be trucked off the Forest at Railroad Saddle. You will need to make sure the sheep don't use areas that were grazed with the ewe/lamb band.

Sheep are to be trucked off the National Forest by September 30.

Curren Hill S&G

Resource Protection Non-Use.

MAINTENANCE OF RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

All range improvements must be maintained prior to turning livestock into the unit scheduled for use. If an existing range improvement has been properly maintained but requires reconstruction, a cooperative effort can be made between the Forest Service and permittee to reconstruct the development, depending on funding. The permittee is required to provide the materials and labor during routine maintenance.

Portable corrals will be utilized at Railroad Saddle for shipping.

LIVESTOCK SHIPPING PROVISIONS/LIVESTOCK TRAILING PROVISIONS

Lambs from both bands will ship from corrals at Railroad Saddle. Shirts Brothers Sheep will also be shipping from Railroad Saddle this year.

The dry ewe band will be trucked off the Boulder Creek and Price Valley Allotments at Railroad Saddle. They must be off the National Forest by September 30th.

MONITORING OF THE ANNUAL LIVESTOCK GRAZING ACTIVITY

We are requesting you to report actual use information for each unit grazed. If you have any questions about completing the form, please call the Range Department at the Forest Service at (208) 347-0300. We request the forms be returned no later than February 1, 2010.

MULTIPLE USE REQUIREMENTS

All plantation grazing must be coordinated with the Forest Service prior to grazing the plantations. Refer to the herder folder for maps.

Brush Mountain Timber Sale plantations are within Unit 1 of the Boulder Creek Allotment. This unit is scheduled to be grazed this year. In 2007, all the plantations were opened to grazing. There will be no bedding or salting allowed in them, and it is preferred that sheep graze the plantations in an uphill direction.

Three timber sales could have cleanup activity taking place this year in the vicinity of the Price Valley Guard Station; Squirrely Billy, Upper Squirrel, and Upper Weiser. There is potential for these areas to have an underburn take place in the fall (probably October). See map for locations.

The Muddy Squirrel Timber sale could potentially start road work and logging this year. See map for location.

The Boulder Thinning Project will be going on this year. See map for location.

If there is damage to Forest System trails by the permittee's livestock the permittee will need to repair it or pay for it to be repaired.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT

The northern Idaho ground squirrel (NIDGS) was listed in April 2000 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. There are two known colonies of NIDGS located on the Price Valley Allotment in Units II, III, and IV (along the East and West Branch and Mud Creek). To mitigate effects of livestock grazing in the NIDGS sites, you will be required to avoid these sites when the livestock are in Units II, III, and IV. Avoidance includes livestock management activities such as trailing, bedding, and grazing within the colony sites. If you are unsure where the NIDGS sites are located, contact the Forest Service and we will show you the sites in order to prevent any accidental use of the areas. There is also a site near Lick Creek Lookout and you will need to avoid the area around the lookout when grazing around this area.

In the event a designated mitigation measure fails to protect a species listed under the Endangered Species Act (Chinook salmon, Steelhead, and Bull Trout), a change in authorized grazing activity will occur. If proper use grazing levels are reached then livestock are to be moved to the next grazing unit or off of the allotment. If livestock grazing does not comply with the terms and conditions of these Annual Operating Instructions, then Forest Service policy and procedures regarding administrative permit actions will be followed.

We ask you or your employees to report the date, time, and location of each bighorn sheep seen to the New Meadows Ranger District immediately after the sighting.

You are responsible for ensuring that your herders are informed and understand the standards, guidelines, and other management direction in this plan.

In addition to these instructions, you identified additional management practices in your letter to me from April 19, 2007. These management practices will need to be implemented for the 2009 grazing season. The management practices you identified are:

1. Perform a careful health inspection of all domestic sheep and remove any old, unthrifty, or sick animals from the band prior to turnout onto the Forest. Cull any old, unthrifty, or sick animals from the band as soon as they are identified throughout the grazing season and when the lambs are shipped.
2. Increase the number of guard dogs.
3. Continue using 2 herders for each band. Ensure that one of these herders is attending each band at all times by staggering lunch breaks, etc. At least one herder will sleep by each band of sheep at night.
4. Each band will have its own pack string which will camp on the ridgelines where the sheep bed each night. The combination of multiple herders and pack strings will allow for continuous control and supervision of both bands for the entire time they are on the Forest, 24 hours a day.
5. Each pack string will have access to a cell phone to enable direct communication with the permittee for the entire grazing season. This will allow more frequent reporting to the owner of death losses and more frequent updates on counts.
6. Herders will count marker sheep (black, horned, belled, etc.) daily to assure that no small groups of sheep have separated from the main band.
7. Each pack string will carry binoculars to improve their ability to spot bighorn sheep.
8. If the herders or pack strings spot any bighorn sheep within the Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill S&G Allotments, they will adjust their grazing path or haze the bighorns out of the area to minimize the possibility of direct contact.
9. The permittee will immediately report any bighorn sheep sightings within the Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill S&G Allotments to the USFS and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
10. Ewes with mastitis (blue bag) will not be left behind to recover and catch back up to the band later, but will be removed from the band or killed.
11. Predator attacks, primarily wolf attacks, create the most significant risk for stray domestic sheep because they cause sheep to scatter from the main band. In such cases, the permittee will immediately notify the USFS, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and

Idaho Wildlife Services and begin efforts to identify the sheep that were killed and to locate and re-gather any scattered sheep.

12. The permittee will implement the IDFG's *Emergency Response Plan* which allows representatives of the IDFG or a permittee to kill any bighorn sheep that come into contact with domestic sheep on a grazing allotment. See letter from IDFG to Hells Canyon Preservation Council dated August 12, 2004 (wherein the *Emergency Response Plan* is referenced). This will ensure that if the permittee observes any intermingling between a bighorn sheep and a domestic sheep, then the bighorn sheep will be killed and not allowed to return to its home herd. The permittee will immediately advise the Forest Service and IDFG if the authority exercised in this *Emergency Response Plan* is implemented.

13. Shirts will allow the IDFG to remove or kill its domestic sheep which are located outside of private lands or permitted public land grazing allotments, or are located within public land grazing allotments outside of the permitted season of use (hereafter referred to as offending livestock), provided that the following conditions have been met: a) the offending livestock are found to be in immediate association with bighorn sheep and pose a health risk to said bighorn sheep; and, b) reasonable but unsuccessful attempts have been made over a 5-day period to notify Shirts regarding the offending livestock so they can remove said livestock; or, c) Shirts is notified and agrees that IDFG field personnel can remove or kill the offending livestock; or, d) Shirts is notified, but fails to remove the offending livestock within 10 days of said notification; and, e) the IDFG makes a reasonable attempt to notify the office of the Idaho state veterinarian prior to any removal action, or as soon as possible after the removal action is taken if the attempt at prior notification fails; and, f) the IDFG immediately turns over to Shirts or to the Idaho state veterinarian any offending livestock removed or killed pursuant to the preceding provisions.

/s/ Kimberly A. Brandel
KIMBERLY A. BRANDEL
District Ranger

1/15/2009
Date

Frank Shirts Jr.
Permittee

Date