VEGETATION ASSOCIATION: DAIRY AND LIVESTOCK FEEDYARDS

MAPPED SUBASSOCIATIONS: None

DATA CHARACTERIZATION

Because dairy and livestock farms are registered with the County and State, and information regarding land use is recorded with the County by parcel, the mapping of this Vegetation Community is considered to be very accurate. There may be areas of open space which are under grazing pressures but still support native or slightly-altered vegetation communities and are not mapped under this category.

BIOGEOGRAPHY

Dairy and livestock feedyards occur in nearly all human-inhabited areas of the world.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION WITHIN WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Milk is Riverside County's largest agricultural commodity, yielding $335 million in 1998 (CDFA 1999). In 1999, 116,131 cows on 106 dairies were present in Riverside County (CDFA 2000). According to the vegetation classification of this planning process, dairy and livestock feedyards occur in 123 separate locations covering 5853 acres of the Plan Area. The largest areas of dairy and livestock feedyards are located north of San Jacinto and north of Juniper Flats in the communities of Lakeview, Mystic Lake, Nuevo, southeast Perris, Eastvale, and Lake Norconian off of Bellegrave Avenue. Other occurrences include: along Tenaja Road south of the Santa Rosa Plateau, along Wilson Creek, in the Cahuilla Valley, south of Black Mountain off of De Portola Road, in the area of Canyon Lake off of Newport Road, in the City of Menifee, in and around the Domenigoni Valley off SR-79, in the community of Winchester off of Simpson Road, in Diamond Valley west of the Santa Rosa Hills, in Moreno Valley, in Cherry Valley, between Lake Matthews and Gavilan Plateau south of Cajalco Road, in the community of Woodcrest, in Norco, and in Glen Avon. The SR-91 corridor through the City of Riverside also contains a number of small dairy and livestock farms.

VEGETATION CHARACTERISTICS

The type of vegetation occurring in dairy and livestock feedyards varies widely due to location and farming practices. Pasture lands typically consist of a mix of perennial grasses and legumes that provide 100 percent cover (Zeiner 1988). The height of the vegetation varies by

season and livestock type (Zeiner 1988). Wetter areas often contain more weeds which can grow several feet tall (Zeiner 1988). In southern California, Bermuda grass *(Cynodon dactylon)* often dominates pasture lands (Zeiner 1988). The dominant weedy vegetation which persists in a feedyard, or pastoral community, are often either low-growing, distasteful, and/or bear spines (Holland and Keil 1995). Often weedy plants which establish in these areas reproduce vegetatively through rhizomes (Holland and Keil 1995). Feedyards may also support isolated patches of annual or native grasslands (Holland and Keil 1995).

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Although dairy and livestock feedyards have been established under a variety of physical conditions, some general statements can be made. Pastures generally are limited to flat ground or gently sloping hills and often are placed on soils not suitable for other crops (Zeiner 1988). Many farmers also irrigate their pasture lands and rotate pasture use with crops (Zeiner 1988).

ECOSYSTEM PROCESSES

It is thought that historically there were few native herbivore species in California and for that reason native vegetation is not well-adapted to grazing (Holland and Keil 1995). Grazing was important in creating an environment that allowed exotic grasses to become established in California, even though in many areas non-native grasses now perpetuate themselves and exclude natives without grazing pressures (Holland and Keil 1995).

Other ecosystem processes, such as fire and regeneration of native plant communities, were not reviewed for this account.

THREATS

No threats to dairy and livestock production have been identified in the literature review for this account. It can be stated that the main threat to dairy and livestock production is economic competition for land.

LITERATURE CITED

California Department of Food and Agriculture. 1999. California Agriculture Resource Directory State of California, Sacramento, California.

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Zeiner, David C. 1988. Pasture. *In* A Guide to Wildlife Habitats of California. ed. Kenneth E. Mayer and William F. Laudenslayer, Jr. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Sacramento, California. 128-129.