

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RUSSELL L. RUSTICI RANGELAND AND CATTLE RESEARCH ENDOWMENT
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Annual Research Proposals due November 5, 2026 by 5:00 p.m. PST to rusticiresearch@ucdavis.edu.

Extension Activity/Outreach Proposals accepted year around to rusticiresearch@ucdavis.edu.

Time Period

- Research awards: January 1, 2027 – December 31, xxxx (not to exceed three years)
- Extension Activity/Outreach awards: requests accepted year around (not to exceed three years)

Mission

The Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment was established within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, University of California, Davis, through a generous gift from the estate of Russell L. Rustici. Earnings from this endowment will be allocated annually via this call for competitive projects. Funding is available to University of California personnel to support problem-solving research to benefit California range cattle producers. The goal of this program is to promote and support collaborative research between UC academics and range cattle producers to provide practical answers to critical issues and challenges facing the industry. More information about the Rustici rangeland endowments can be found on the UC Rangelands website at <https://rangelands.ucdavis.edu/rustici-endowment>.

Funding Available

It is anticipated that 3 to 4 research proposals will be awarded. Research projects will typically be funded for 1-2 years, with a maximum annual budget not exceeding \$100,000/year. Proposals may request funding for up to 3 years; however, the total project budget may not exceed \$200,000. In addition, funding will be available to support outreach/extending knowledge activities, with awards of up to \$20,000 per project for a duration of 1-2 years; 1 to 2 extension activity/outreach awards are anticipated each year. Matching funds from other sources that provide leverage will be favorably considered.

Eligibility for Submission

All principal investigators must be University of California faculty/Cooperative Extension (CE) specialists or advisors. Proposals based on clear collaborations among UC faculty and specialists, CE advisors, California State University (CSU) faculty, and range cattle producers are highly encouraged.

Restrictions on the Use of Research Funds

- Indirect costs/overhead are not allowed.
- Funds do not support salary of faculty (i.e., IR, AES, or CE appointments as professor, specialist, or advisor in cooperative extension).

- Only in-state fees for graduate students are allowed.
- Travel is restricted to the U.S. with a preferred focus on California.
- Equipment is not allowed unless critical to the research and requires prior approval.

Research Priorities for Call (not in order of priority)

The Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment supports research and extension that addresses critical challenges facing California's rangelands and range cattle industry. The Endowment welcomes research and extension proposals that address the broad priority areas listed below; the examples provided are intended to illustrate the types of work of interest but are not meant to be an exhaustive list. Proposals may draw on expertise from the biophysical, veterinary, animal, and/or social sciences. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and direct engagement with range cattle producers and rangeland managers are particularly encouraged. All proposals are expected to 1) build upon existing published research 2) advance the scientific base of knowledge, and 3) propose novel solutions to critical problems. Proposals that address management and policy gaps are encouraged, including, for example, work that evaluates the practical management applications of new technologies, tools, and practices or links applicable research findings to policy recommendations. Prospective applicants may contact rusticiresearch@ucdavis.edu with questions.

- **Improving Cattle Health, Genetics, Productivity, and Quality**
Healthy, productive, high-quality cattle are a cornerstone for sustainable ranching operations and are essential in meeting the demands of both conventional and niche markets. Proposals are encouraged that address the suite of issues associated with range cattle welfare; genetics, breeding and reproduction; herd health and disease prevention; nutrition; antibiotic stewardship; and emerging challenges influencing cattle health, productivity, and quality.
- **Advancing Rangeland Sustainability**
California's rangelands provide a suite of benefits to society, including clean water, healthy soils, nutrient sequestration, forage production, wildfire prevention and recovery, and support for livelihoods and communities. Proposals are encouraged that address information gaps faced by rangeland managers and policymakers seeking to sustain and enhance both ecological and agricultural benefits on cattle grazed rangelands. Proposals that advance innovative approaches to strengthen the long-term sustainability of California's rangelands, ranching operations, and the communities and public benefits they support are also encouraged.
- **Enhancing Viability and Resilience of Rangeland Cattle Operations**
Rangeland cattle operations must continually adapt to complex environmental, market, regulatory, and social conditions while maintaining long-term economic viability. Proposals may address strategies to improve economic and business resilience of ranching operations, identify opportunities to add value and increase profitability, assess regulatory and policy impacts, evaluate workforce needs and opportunities to strengthen network capacity, and examine opportunities to improve coordination and communication among stakeholders to navigate change and unanticipated shocks.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposal must be submitted in .pdf format. All items (1 - 11) must be included in the single .pdf submission.

The proposal should be scientifically and technically sound and should be written in a manner such that a non-specialist can evaluate. (Note: review committee consists of both industry and research members.) Do not exceed 8 pages including tables and figures, 1" margins and not smaller than 11-point font in the main text. The literature citations, budget, budget justification, biographical sketch, and letters of support are not included in the **8-page maximum length**.

The research proposal should include:

1. Principal investigator name(s), institution, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address(es).
2. Project title.
3. Project background, objectives/hypotheses, and scientific significance of the proposed work.
4. Approach and methods.
5. Project timeline (three year maximum).
6. Relevance to the mission of the Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment (please see the "Mission" section on page 1). If the PI has previously received research funding from the endowment, please provide a detailed description of the research accomplishments (impact) and outreach activities delivered by the previous work. If this is a continuation of endowment-supported research, clearly distinguish how the proposed research differs from the previous research objectives.
7. Project Team and Stakeholder Involvement: List all team members and their affiliations, qualifications, and project roles. This section should also clearly describe how non-UC stakeholders are engaged in the proposed work.
8. Literature citations.
9. Budget and budget justifications.
10. Biographical sketch of the PI(s). Include brief vitae, professional and academic experience, and contact information. List up to five refereed publications most closely related to the proposed project and up to five other significant publications, including those *in press*. This document should not exceed two pages per PI and is not counted in the 8-page limit for the proposal.

11. Letter(s) of support for the value and benefit of the project from key non-UC stakeholders engaged in the proposed project (e.g., ranchers, rangeland managers). If you need assistance in identifying or contacting potential producer partners, please contact Leslie Roche, Rustici Endowed Specialist, at lmroche@ucdavis.edu; Billy Gatlin (CA Cattlemen's Association) at billy@calcattlemen.org; and/or a UC Cooperative Extension range/livestock/natural resources advisor.

IMPORTANT BUDGET NOTE:

One UC investigator should be designated as the primary investigator; all funds will be allocated to this individual's department. The budget submitted should reflect this by indicating expenditure by category, i.e., supplies, travel, personnel, not by investigator. Any distribution of funds to other investigators will be the responsibility of the recipient department.

Review Process

All proposals will be reviewed and ranked by the Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment Advisory Committee according to the following principal criteria of quality:

- **Competence** – Technical soundness of the proposed research questions and approach; innovativeness of research; feasibility of successfully completing the research within the designated timeframe, capability and recent research performance of the principal investigator(s), and adequacy of the resources available.
- **Intrinsic Merit** – Likelihood that the research will lead to new discoveries or important advances, research that does not duplicate existing research funding of the PIs, and that will improve our understanding of issues critical to the sustainability of California's rangeland cattle industry.
- **Relevance** – Likelihood that the research will contribute to the achievement of the priority issues of the Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment and to the advancement of science contributing to the sustainability of the California rangeland cattle industry. **Letter(s) of support for the value and benefit of the project from key non-UC stakeholders, particularly support from cattle ranchers, will be an essential aspect of this review criteria.**

Final funding approval will be determined by the dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences based on recommendations from the Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment Advisory Committee consisting of the designees of the dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at UC Davis, the president or first vice president of the California Cattlemen's Association, and a designee selected by the Board of Directors of the California Cattlemen's Association.

Reporting Requirements

Researchers receiving funding will submit a report each year.

For one-year projects, the final report will contain research results and a financial reporting of how funds were expended. The report will be due no later than three months following the end date of the research project.

For multi-year projects, a progress report will be due at the end of the project's first year and should cover and update on research activities and a financial accounting of how the funds were expended. Continued funding for multi-year projects will be contingent upon receipt of an annual report demonstrating satisfactory progress toward the goals of the project. When the multi-year project is completed, a final research report and financial accounting will be submitted within three months following the end date of the research.

All research reports will be compiled and published by the dean, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Grantees must participate in meetings of the Russell L. Rustici Rangeland and Cattle Research Endowment if required.

Proposals and questions should be submitted to rusticiresearch@ucdavis.edu.