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# COMINGin California Agriculture



## Researchers define buffer zones between grazing and crop systems

Nown as the nation's "winter salad bowl," the Imperial Valley produces fresh fruits and vegetables on more than 100,000 acres. With nationwide product distribution, the industry has a tremendous impact on the U.S. food supply. Because growers integrate crop and animal agriculture, sheep or cattle may graze on alfalfa close to food crops such as leafy greens. While growers follow guidelines for buffer zones set by the California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement, to date there has been little scientific data on the best setback times and distances between livestock operations and crop systems.

In the next issue of *California Agriculture* journal, investigators report results of studies to accurately define buffer zones appropriate for grazing of sheep near production of leafy greens. Given that there are approximately 650,000 sheep and lambs in California and up to 150,000 in the Imperial Valley on a seasonal basis, this new information on important human pathogens associated with sheep is critical to growers and consumers alike.