

# Producer Groups: What Are These About, How Do They Work, And Why Can They Be So Successful?

Presenters:

Dr. Woody Lane, Livestock Nutritionist & Forage Specialist, Lane Livestock Services, Roseburg, Oregon

Dave Ollila, South Dakota State University, Extension Sheep Field Specialist, Rapid City, South Dakota

Host/Moderator: Jay Parsons

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# Agricultural Education in U.S.

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- Complex, Integrated Systems
  - Technical
  - Business
- Universities, 2-Year Schools – **Age < 25**
  - No families, No Decision-Roles, No Schedule F
- Operating Farmers & Ranchers – **Adults**
  - Can't leave the farm for 4+ weeks
  - Workshops, Extension, Neighbors, Internet

# **Course:** **“Forage & Grazing Management”**

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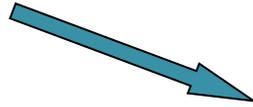
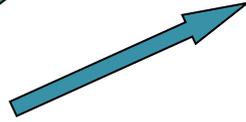
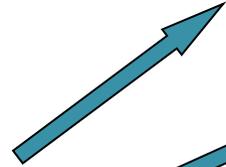
- 7-10 Weeks
- 1x Weekly — 3 Hours, 6–9 pm
- Private Location
- Producer Registration Fees
- Agribusiness Sponsorship

TEXT  
NONE - ALL DONE!  
Sat 4/13 - BEEF TOSTY RICHMOND  
TUES 9/16 - ROSEBURG 7AM  
          BREKST  
Wed 4/17 - EUGENE BREKST 6:30AM  
JUNE 21-25 BSG - EUGENE  
          FRI - SUN  
JUNE 20-22 WET + WINDY  
          THUR - SAT SANDWICH FIREA





**Forage  
Courses**



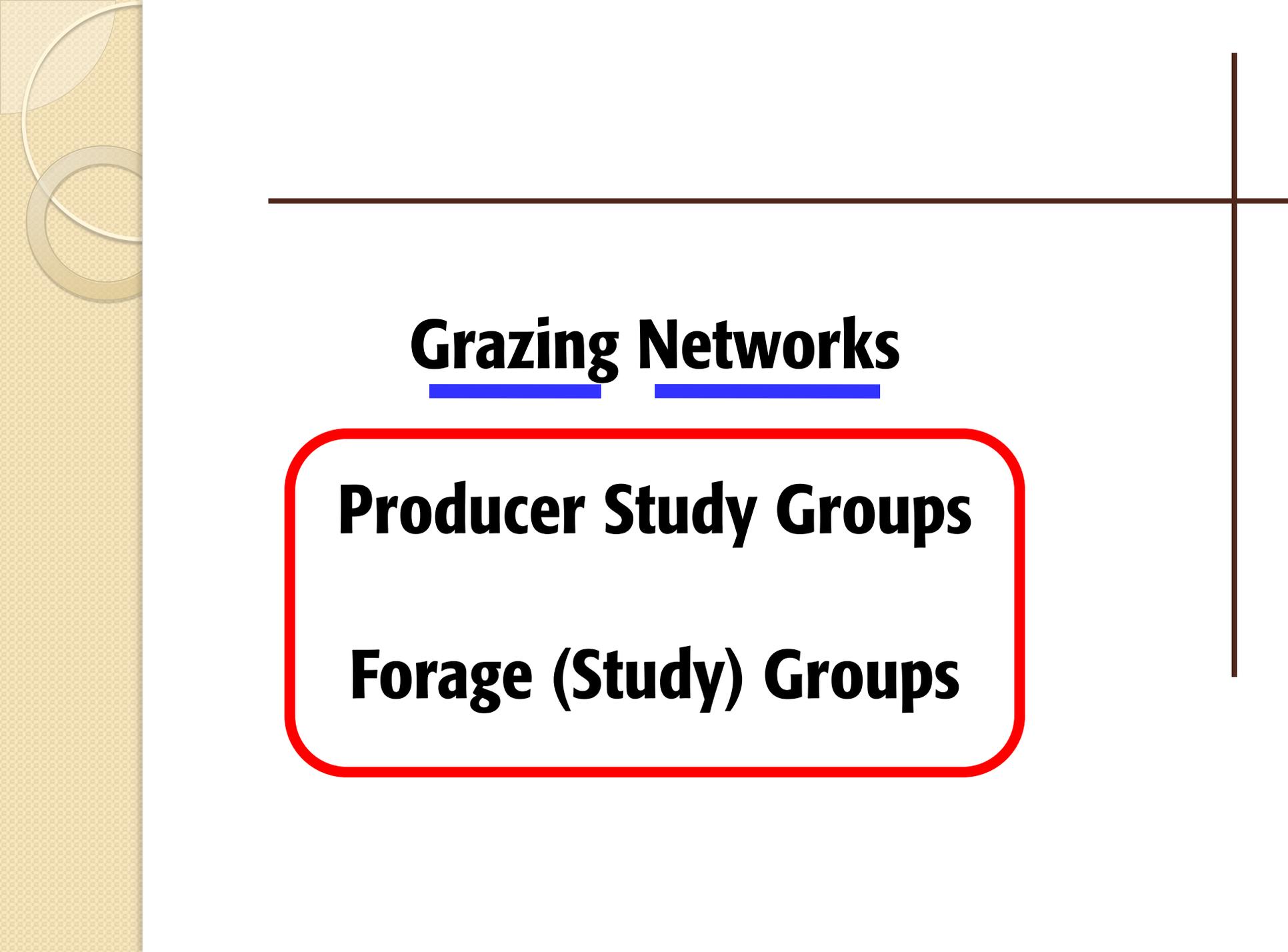
**Producer  
Study  
Groups**

# Oregon

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## **Private, Self-Financed Producer Study Groups**





# **Grazing Networks**

**Producer Study Groups**

**Forage (Study) Groups**

- **UVFSG – 1995** ( **184** )

**Umpqua Valley Forage Study Group**

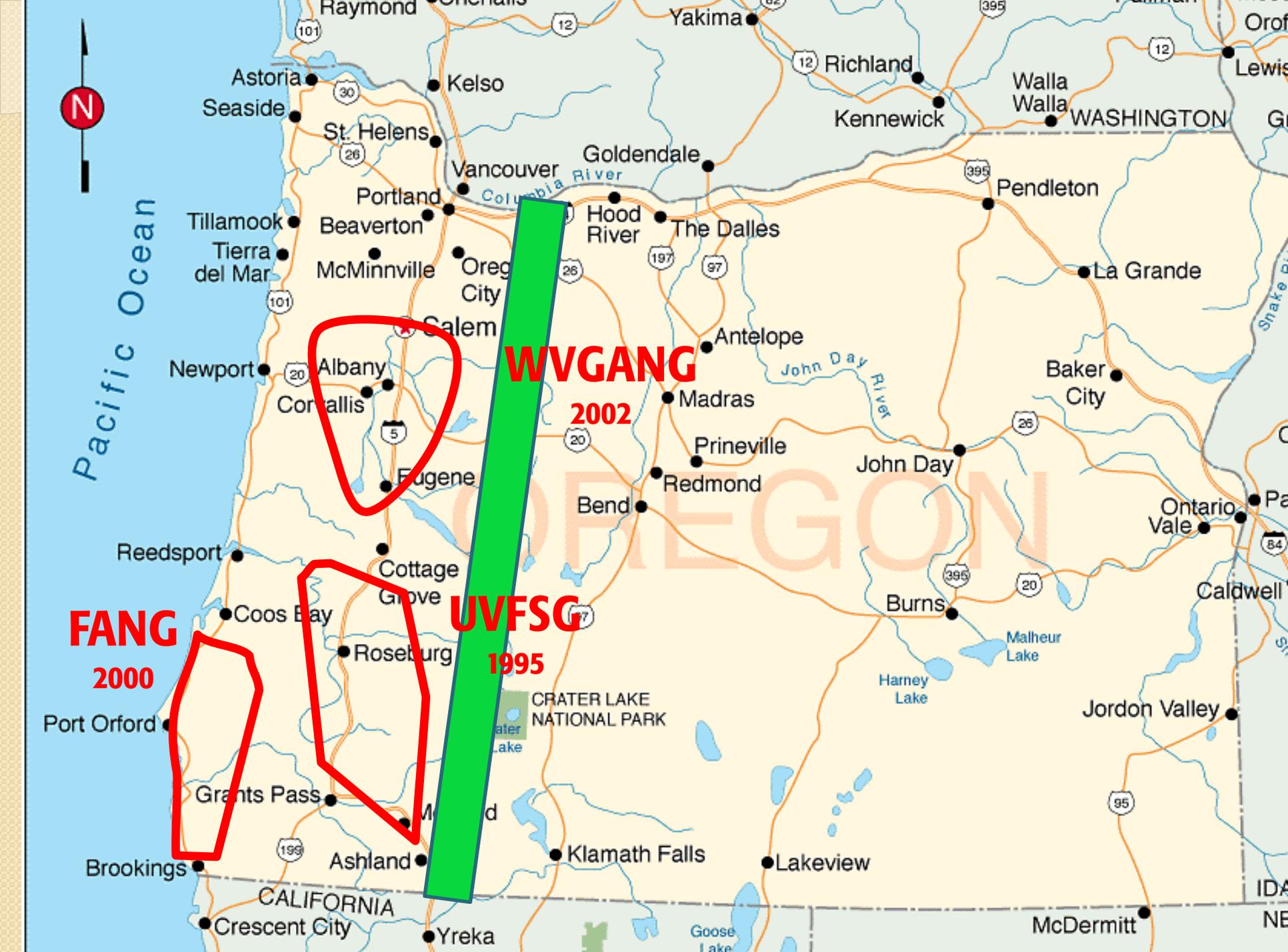
- **FANG – 2000** ( **184** )

**Forage And Nutrition Group**

- **WVGANG – 2002** ( **163** )

**Willamette Valley Grazing And Nutrition Group**

***Total Meetings = 531***



**WVGANG**

**2002**

**UVFSG**

**1995**

**FANG**

**2000**













# Organization

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- **Closed Groups**
- Fees – \$150-200/year
- 15-30 Members
- Membership — by Farm (Operation)
- Monthly Meetings
- Rotate – Member Farms or Other Places
- Facilitator – **Hired by the Group**

# Membership

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- Membership = *Everyone* from the farm
- Types of operations =
  - Beef Cattle                      Feed-Fertilizer Companies
  - Dairy                                      Seed Companies
  - Sheep                                      Government Agencies
  - Goats                                      Horses                                      Hay
- Commercial, Purebred, Larger, Smaller
- Marketing Goals =
  - Standard, Direct, Contracts, Grass-Fed, Organic

# Membership

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- “Prerequisite” –  
Courses or Equivalent Background  
Forages, Grazing
- Extension Agents ?  
Invited  
Members
- All in the same Room



# Typical Meeting

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- 3+ hours
- Late Afternoon or Evening
- Pasture Walk
- Focus Topic
- Speaker, Interactive Discussion, Announcements
- Guest — In-Person, Telephone
- Working Meeting — **Not** a potluck

# Typical Meeting

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- 6:00 (or 5:00) Pasture Walk

- 7:00 – 7:30

Indoors – house, barn, etc.

Focus Topic

Guest

- (coffee, cookies)
- Announcements
- 9:00 End





JANF







# Sharing Among Members

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- Current Forage/Feed **Status**
- Labor-Saving **Ideas**
- **Goals** – Short-term, Long-term
- **Whole-Farm Profitability**

# Sample Focus Topics

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- Reducing Winter Feed Costs: Hay-Balage
- Alternative Legumes, Grasses, Brassicas
  - Plantain, Gala Grazing Brome, Graza Radish, Crabgrass, Persian Clover, Balansa Clover, etc.
- Fertilizer Costs – Efficient Use – Pricing
- True cost of making hay – replacing fertility
- High-Sugar Ryegrasses
- Ultra-high Stocking Densities (>200,000 lb/a)

# Some Member Techniques

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- MIG
- K-Line Irrigation
- Stocking Density
- T-SUM 200
- Soil Moisture Meters
- Soil Tests, Pastures
- Compost for Pastures
- Hybrid Forage Brassicas
- Grazing Radish
- Plantain, not Chicory
- Gala Grazing Brome
- BMR S-Sudangrass
- Hi-Sugar PRG

# Last 3 Meetings:

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- **FANG**

- Library. Guests from California & North Carolina
- Accelerated Lambing System: 3-in-2. Lamb Marketing.
- Soil Tests, variability, pH, nutrient interactions, organic matter

- **UVFSG**

- Sheep-Goat Farm, Pasture Walk, new fields for operation
- Satellite areas in same enterprise, economics
- Insurance issues for farms, LRP Lamb Price Insurance

- **WVGANG**

- Bison farm, pugged pastures, renovations, species, ARG
- Winter pastures, Winter Feed Alternatives
- Cover Crops



# The Facilitator

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- Meeting Leader, Discussion Leader
- Pasture Walks –timekeeper, “stockdog”
- Background Organization
  - meeting & financial arrangements, guests, hosting sites, group records, announcements
- Monitors Members
- Technical Expertise, Trust, Advice

# The Facilitator

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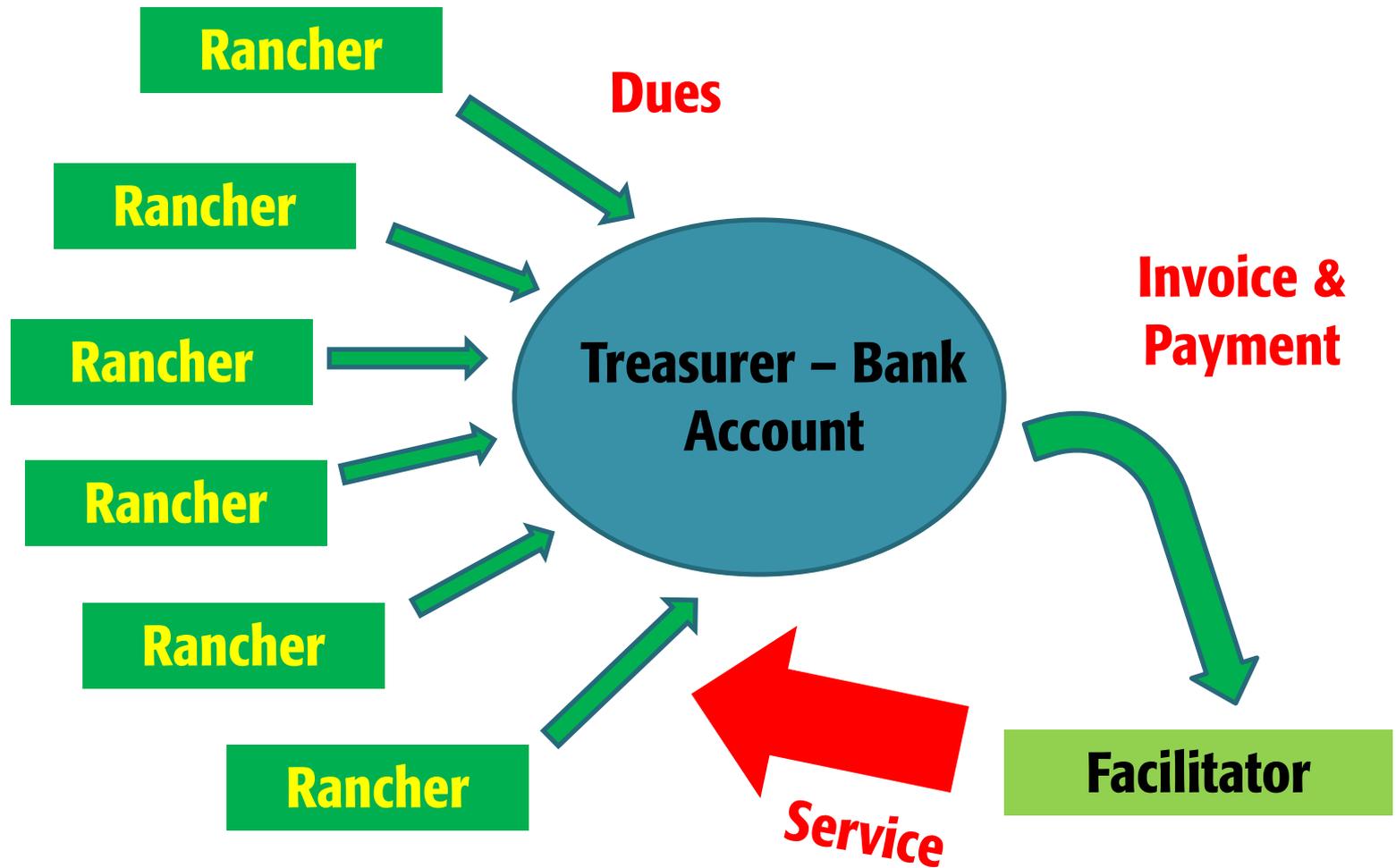
- Enthusiastic, Upbeat
- Confidentiality
- Each meeting – Must be Valuable to All

- **Works for the Group –**

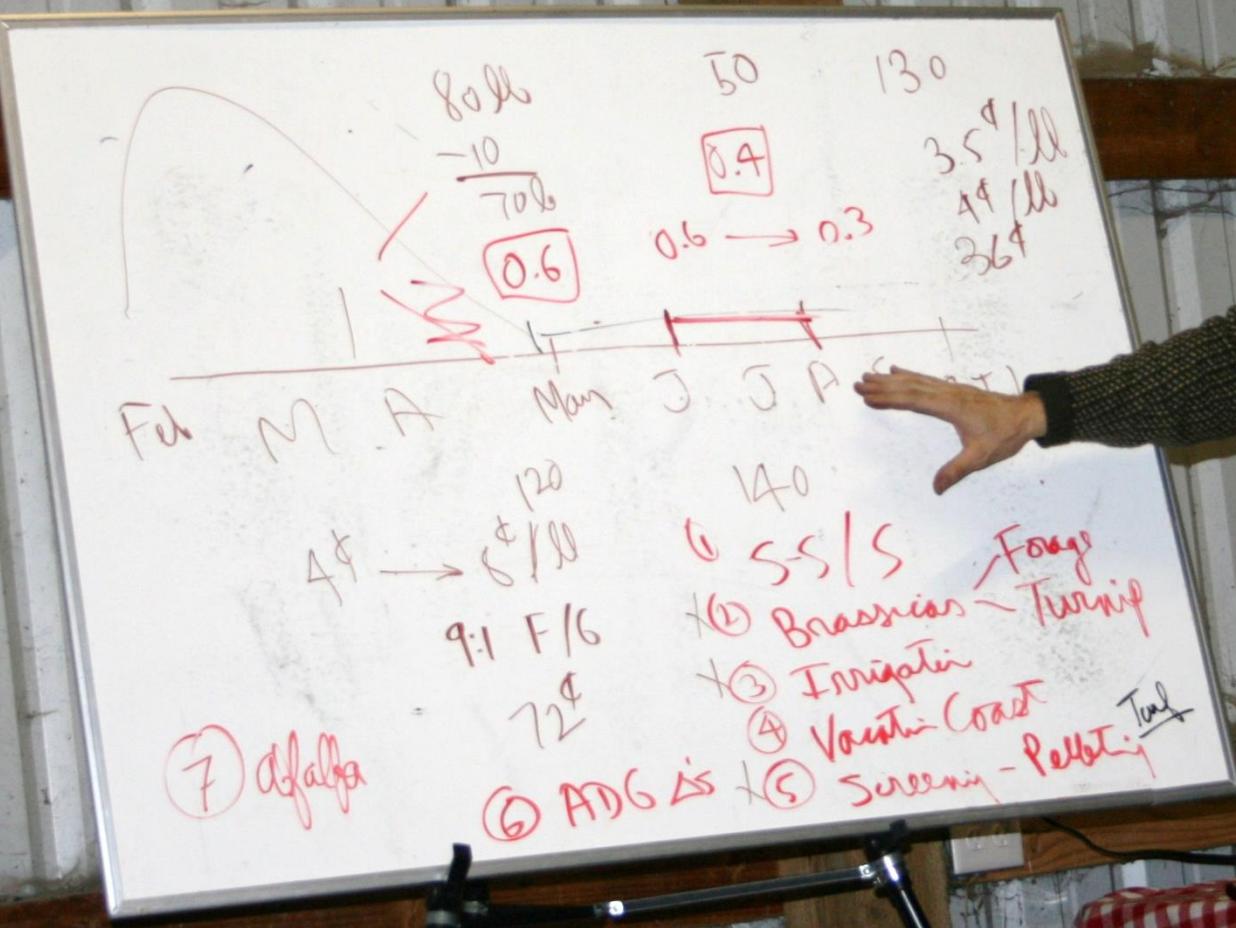
**“Service”**

**“Primary Responsibility”**

# Forage Study Group – Admin







# Value to Members?

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- Information — Forages, Grazing, Nutrition ...
- Interactions — Directional Flow of Info  
Extension, Traditional Flow, **Non-Linear**
- Support — Ideas, Mistakes — Upbeat
- Confidential

*“What’s said in the shed,  
stays in the shed”*

# Value to Members?

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- Cooperative ventures
- On-Farm Research & Demos
- Venue for Opportunities –  
    guests, combined mtgs, OFGC, etc
- **Closed, Advanced Group**  
    Pride, Professionalism

# Value to Members?

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- **Fees – Value**

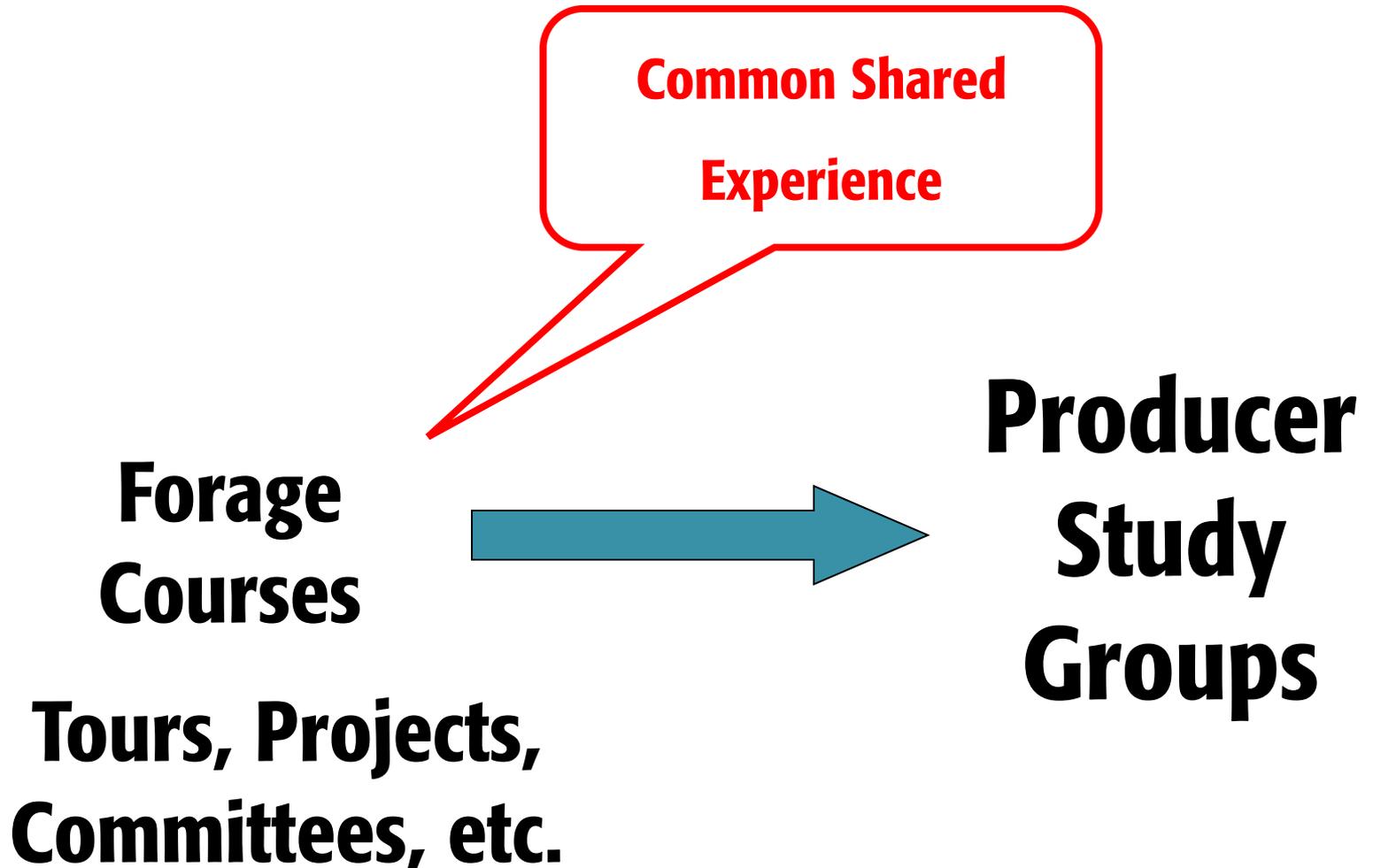
Success?

\$ every 6 months

- **Self-Supporting – Sustainable**

# How To Begin ?

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# Keys for Success – Summary

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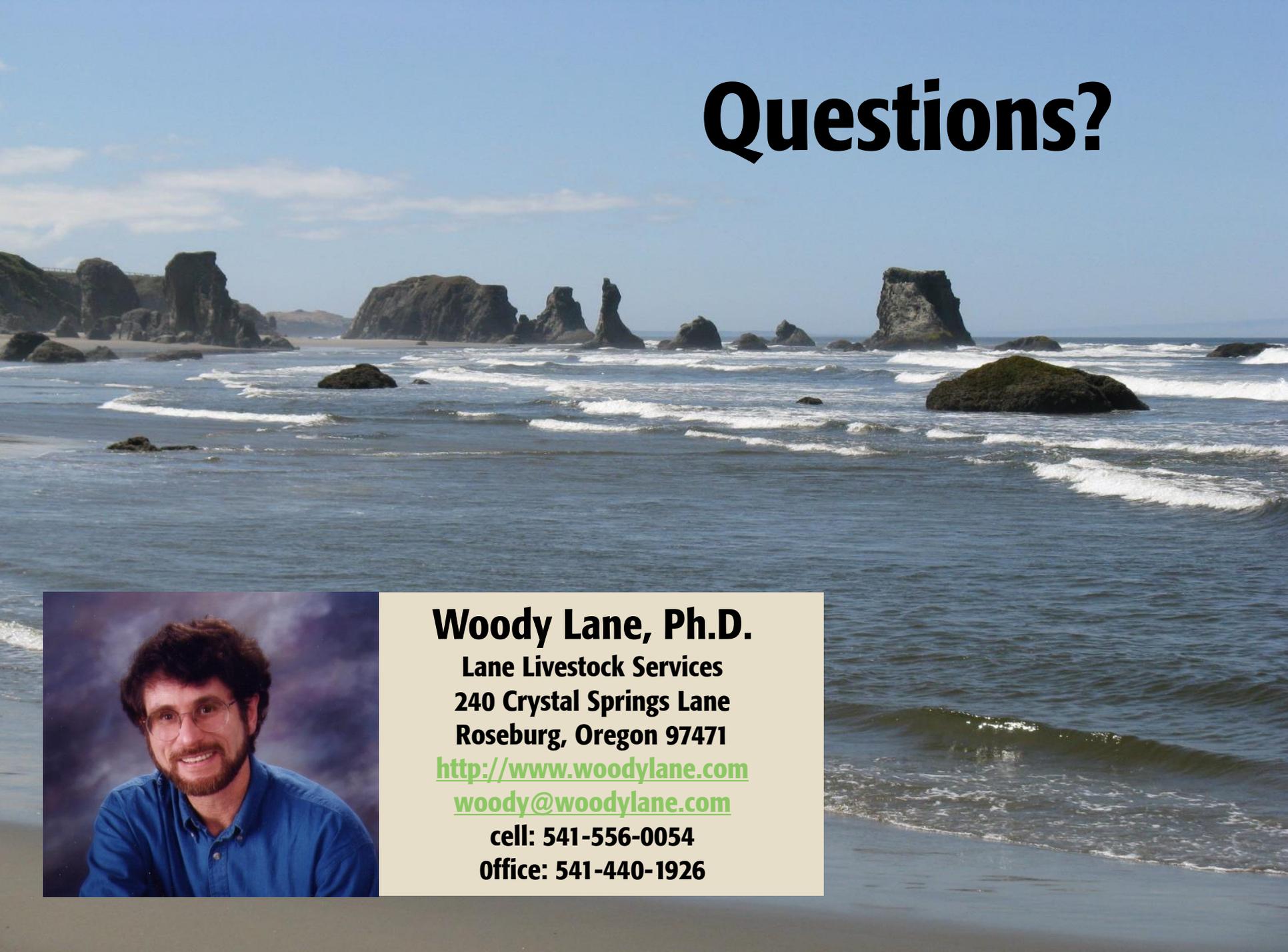
- **Facilitator**
  - Identify
  - Train
- **Group Membership**
  - Closed
  - Paid
- **Regular Meetings**
- **Starting a Group**
  - Common Experience

**BUTTERNUTS**  
**3 FOR \$1.00**  
**\$1.49 EACH**





# Questions?



## **Woody Lane, Ph.D.**

**Lane Livestock Services  
240 Crystal Springs Lane  
Roseburg, Oregon 97471**

**<http://www.woodylane.com>**

**[woody@woodylane.com](mailto:woody@woodylane.com)**

**cell: 541-556-0054**

**office: 541-440-1926**

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- Learning Community Focus
- We actively seek partners who can help us accomplish what we cannot do alone

#### Producer groups

- ✓ sheepSD – supported by ASI
- ✓ SD Post Weaning Lamb Performance Program
- ✓ Western SD Soil Health Council



Dave Ollila-SDSU Extension  
Sheep Field Specialist  
(605) 394-1722  
David.Ollila@sdstate.edu



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