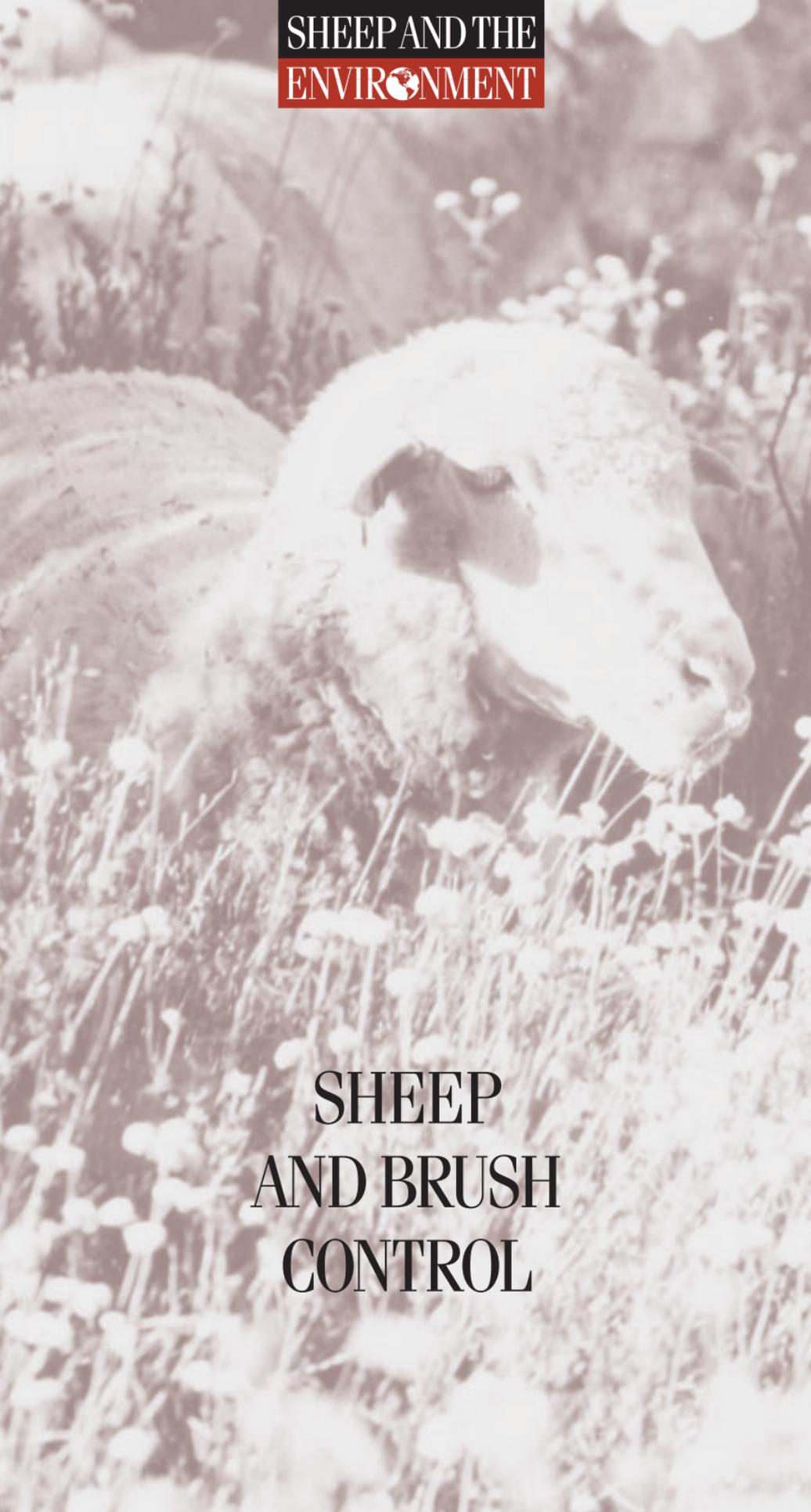


**SHEEP AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

A close-up photograph of a sheep's head in profile, facing right. The sheep is grazing on a field of tall, thin-stemmed plants with small, light-colored flowers. The background is a soft-focus field of similar vegetation. The overall color palette is warm and natural, with shades of brown, tan, and cream.

**SHEEP  
AND BRUSH  
CONTROL**



Throughout the United States, brush and woody plants are invading areas previously dominated by grassy vegetation. Such invasions significantly affect the environment by reducing both forage and plant diversity, altering wildlife habitats, causing soil erosion, and decreasing water available for farms and cities. Uncontrolled forest undergrowth can trigger massive wild-fires that destroy local ecosystems, threaten nearby communities and, in some cases, jeopardize human lives.

Sheep grazing is an ideal brush-control tool. Managing brush and woody plants with sheep benefits the environment by eliminating the use of herbicides and benefits land managers by minimizing the need for costly manual clearing.

- In public and private forests in California and the Pacific Northwest, sheep help prevent wildfires through the prescribed grazing of overbrush and tall grasses. For example, in California's Angeles National Forest, northeast of Los Angeles, a herd of 6,000 sheep keep 13,000 acres of ridge top firebreaks free from flammable chaparral and other brush.
- In California, Oregon, and Washington, the U.S. Forest Service finds sheep an effective replacement for herbicides in the control of brush and weeds that would otherwise crowd out conifer seedlings.

- In Alberta, Canada, the Ministry of Environmental Protection reports that 20 percent of its native elk habitat has been lost to brush encroachment. Studies by the Ministry found that sheep are effective in controlling this brush invasion. The Ministry now is seeking ways to expand sheep grazing projects in these areas.
- At Vermont's Mount Snow Ski Resort and in Alberta, Canada, sheep are used to control brush invasion on ski slopes during the summer months. From mid-June through late August, Mount Snow employs 60 sheep as a natural alternative to gas-powered mowers and herbicides.
- In Virginia, the National Parks Service uses sheep to control brush invasions on Civil War battlefields.
- Research indicates that proper sheep grazing can improve sagebrush-grass ranges more effectively than costly chemical spraying, burning or mechanical treatments. In Utah and Idaho, late-fall grazing followed by resting the range in spring increases grass production and decreases brush overstory on sagebrush-grass range.
- Studies show that mixed sheep-goat grazing is a highly efficient and cost-effective means of restoring brush-infested northeastern farmlands to productive use.
- Sheep assist land managers who rely on controlled burns to clear brush from forests and rangelands. Sheep grazing promotes grass growth and suppresses woody vegetation resulting in greater amounts of fine fuels for more effective controlled burns.

## SHEEP AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Sheep and Brush Control** is a publication of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), which represents more than 100,000 U.S. sheep and angora goat producers. Sheep are a natural, low-cost means of managing forests and rangelands, even as they produce important resources, such as wool, meat, and lanolin. ASI is committed to proper grazing that benefits the environment, wildlife, the taxpaying public and consumers. For additional copies of this and other ASI pamphlets on sheep and the environment, contact the American Sheep Industry Association, 6911 S. Yosemite St., Centennial, CO 80112, (303) 771-3500.

