

# San Francisco Chronicle

## **In praise of the state's 'original environmentalists'**

**April 22, 2008**

Editor - The nation celebrates Earth Day today, and Californians will be among the most adamant supporters of green causes. Earth Day causes us to reflect on our stewardship of the planet, to consider more sustainable lifestyles, and to recycle more often.

We should also celebrate some of California's original environmentalists, the cattle ranchers. They continue a long tradition started by the California Missions and Spanish land grants. Those settlers came here to raise cattle and send leather back to Spain. Today, California's ranchers manage more than 20 million acres of private land. They pay taxes, raise cattle, and protect wildlife in a sustainable manner. These are the green hills and mountain meadows you drive by on your travels.

One claim about cattle and greenhouse gases continues to concern me. I am familiar with research the University of California is conducting on cattle production and the environment. This research and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's annual greenhouse gases inventory show in the United States, cattle are a negligible source of greenhouse gases. The cow is a net re-cycler of carbon dioxide, for example.

As we celebrate Earth Day, remember California's original environmentalists, the cattle ranchers, are at work every day.

**JOHN MAAS**

DVM Extension Veterinarian

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