

# Biotech goat ranch owners agree to close down

By DICK LITTLE

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SANTA CRUZ — The owners of Santa Cruz Biotechnology said they will comply with the Coastal Commission's directive and remove 1,600 goats from their land on the North Coast while at the same time accusing the Coastal Commission and its staff of "setting back cancer research worldwide."

The goats used by the biotechnology goat ranch produce enzymes that are extracted and used for cancer research. The commission has told the firm to halt their operation in the next seven days and move their goats and the left-over manure off the property.

President and CEO John Stephenson, in a response to Coastal Commission Deputy Director Tami Grove, called the directive "a hardship," and said, "under duress, Santa Cruz Biotechnology Inc. hereby notifies the California Coastal Commission's Central Coast District office that it will comply with the commission's July 10, 2000 directives, and 'remove all goats, manure, and all materials contaminated with feces and/or urine' on or before July 21, 2000."

The ranch is located four miles north of the Santa Cruz city limits. The firm has a plant in the city's West-side industrial area and Stephenson says the plant will not be relocated.

Ranch Manager Matt Mullen said it has not been decided where the company will take the goats, but when the decision is made there will not make any formal announcement because the company does

not want to have their operation endure further harassment. "I don't know if the goats will ever return," he said.

Grove told the firm in her letter they could no longer "operate as an unpermitted facility."

Mullen, who has represented the Biotech firm in front of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors in recent months, said the commission's order was "puzzling... The Coastal Commission (staff) knew what we were doing. (They) knew the county had placed a group of conditions on the site while developing the master plan, and it seems to me (the commission staff) suddenly moved forward with these directives. It was a complete surprise."

The county said they allowed the goat farm to operate because it was an "agricultural facility."

Attorney Bill Parkin, who represented Friends of the North Coast, claims the operation was more like a feed lot, "and a feed lot must be placed in an industrial zone." He said the size of the herd was too large for the site. Parkin specializes in representing groups in environmental disputes.

Mullen said the firm would "have a presence at the ranch," but did not know if they will ever again have goats on the site.

Mullen added the company was never contracted by Grove or anyone else prior to sending the letter, and input was never requested about their operation. "It seems there was a lack of due process," he said. However, he said, the firm does not have any intention of filing suit at this time.

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