

# Santa Cruz Biotech owners face another roadblock

*Goat Ranch*  
By DICK LITTLE

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN CORRESPONDENT

SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz Biotech was hit again by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Tuesday after Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt said the company was behind on their payments to the Planning Department. The estimate is \$7,000.

Wormhoudt pulled a routine request from the Planning Department to postpone a hearing on measures the biotech operation is proposing to help clean water run off from their property on the North Coast. The company has reportedly hired additional consultants to help with developing a plan.

Wormhoudt told her colleagues she wants the company to get caught up with its payments "right away."

Biotech ranch manager Mat Mullen said his firm has paid the county more than \$83,000 so far in permit fees and that does not include the house Biotech owners John and Brenda Stephenson built on the site. Mullen said the planning staff routinely asks for money to put in an account to cover the costs of

*WRP 4-12-00*  
processing permits in the department, and funds are routinely pulled from the account to take care of staff time devoted to the project.

Mullen said the company initiated a program to clean up the water run-off from the buildings in the middle of last year at the site and paid \$13,000 to the staff to go over a plan approved by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. At the time the plan was supported by the staff, but the supervisors voted 3-2 not to approve it with Supervisors Walt Symons and Tony Campos making up the minority.

Mullen also said each time a neighbor complains about something going on at the Biotech goat ranch, money to cover the cost of a staff investigation is taken from the company account. The staff has confirmed the process.

Mullen said he is currently in the process of conducting an audit of the funds collected by the county by his firm so far. At the present time he could not confirm the shortage.

The supervisors eventually agreed to the staff request to postpone the hearing until May 23.