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# Hungry sheep may solve Florida kudzu menace

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TALLAHASSEE, Florida (Reuters) -- Parks officials in Florida's capital city are chewing over a plan to tame an overabundance of kudzu by bringing in hungry sheep to munch the ubiquitous vines down to size, a report said Monday.

"It would cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars to clear out the kudzu," the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper quoted Parks & Recreation Department's Chuck Goodheart as saying. "Sheep would get out there and say, 'Ooh, I really like those sprouts'."

Kudzu vines were imported from Asia into the southeastern United States in the 1900s by railroad workers, who counted on the deep tuber-like roots to shore up embankments. Used in China as livestock forage, the vines grow as much as a foot a day and have crowded out native plants in many areas.

State and city environmental officials approached a New Hampshire farmer, Dick Henry Jr., on learning he had sent a flock of sheep to clear another nonnative plant, razor-edged cogon grass, from a Florida community. The farmer assured them that sheep like kudzu and are agile enough to graze over rugged embankments.

"They can take a three-acre site and pretty much chew it down to bare nubbins in about 24 hours," Greg Jubinsky, program manager for the state Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Invasive Plant management, told the newspaper.

Under the proposed pilot program, Henry would bring between 250 and 500 lambs to Tallahassee by cattle truck. The herd would be dispatched among three parks where kudzu threatens native trees. Portable fences would be erected and a shepherd who lives in a camper on-site would tend the flock with the aid of border collies.

The sheep would be herded onto one-acre tracts to mow down everything in site, then moved to a new area

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