



MARCH 2026

The GROWERS' GUIDE

Volume 44

48 Pages

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Number 10



Andy Millison, farm manager, feeds a lamb that had been born earlier that morning on Feb. 10 at Crystal Creek's sheep dairy farm near Dallas, Ore. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)

Got (sheep) milk?

Experts see growing interest and potential for niche segment

By **KYLE ODEGARD**
Capital Press

DALLAS, Ore. — Tyler Thackeray picked up a newborn ewe — clad in fleece “lambie jammies” to stay warm — and talked over a chorus of bleats about the chaotic nature of lambing season.

“There’s quite a few babies. We can have anywhere from three to 30 lambs per day. It’s pretty hectic,” said Thac-

keray, CEO of Crystal Creek, which has a sheep dairy nestled in the foothills of the Coast Range.

Things are about to get more hectic for his family thanks to expansion plans for their farm and ice cream businesses.

Crystal Creek milks 220 ewes, producing 145,000 pounds of milk in 2025, and should see a boost this year

See **SHEEP**, Page A6

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Kay Riley, Suzanne Takasugi at the Idaho Ag Summit in Boise Feb. 17, 2026. (Courtesy Candi Fitch)

Onion leader receives Takasugi Leadership Award

Capital Press

Idaho Ag Summit Feb. 17 in Boise.


BOISE — Kay Riley, an onion industry leader regionally and nationally, received the Pat Takasugi Leadership Award at the

Takasugi was a grower-shipper who served as director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

See AWARD, Page A5

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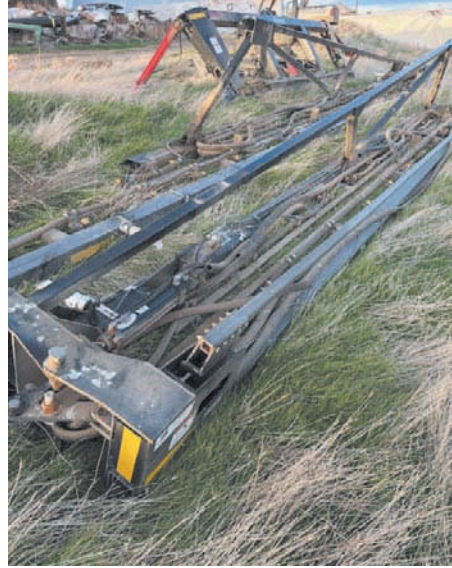
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AWARD

continued from A2

The award was presented by the Idaho-Oregon Fruit & Vegetable Association and Suzanne Takasugi, Pat's widow.

Riley "is someone whose career, character and commitment reflect everything the Pat Takasugi Leadership Award represents," Suzanne Takasugi told the summit audience.

Riley grew up on a family fruit farm in Utah. What started as a planned "couple of weeks" helping at a packing facility "turned into nearly five decades of leader-

ship in the fruit and onion industry across Utah, Oregon and Idaho," Takasugi said.

From managing fruit and onion packing operations to serving as operations vice president at Muir-Roberts Co. and co-founding Snake River Produce (Nyssa, Ore.), "Kay has consistently stepped forward when leadership was needed. He helped build businesses, guide ownership transitions and strengthen the Treasure Valley onion industry for generations to come."

Riley was instrumental in forming the Utah Onion Association and served as its first president. He served on the Idaho-Oregon Fruit

and Vegetable Association, later becoming president. He chaired the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee for a decade and is a former National Onion Association board president.

When the Food Safety Modernization Act created irrigation water standards that threatened onion production in the Treasure Valley, he worked alongside industry partners, universities and regulators to secure science-based standards that "protected both food safety and farmers' ability to operate," Takasugi said. "That work safeguarded our industry for years to come."

Riley in 2009 helped organize

Certified Onions Inc., serving as president from the beginning and "ensuring integrity and accountability in pesticide and pathogen testing," Takasugi said. His leadership helped establish a model of third-party testing that "strengthened trust throughout the supply chain." Riley remains president.

"It's a real honor, especially where Pat and Suzanne were partners in Snake River Produce," Riley told Capital Press. "Pat was a real example of leadership, and it was a real honor for Suzanne to present the award. It was a very wonderful experience. I was honored to receive it."



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SHEEP

continued from A1

as more animals enter their prime.

A good portion of that milk goes to create ice cream for Dreamies Creamery, which started as a food cart in 2022.

Dreamies now has brick and mortar locations in Dallas and downtown Salem and is scouting for a third shop.

Crystal Creek also oper-

ates as a dairy service company, building and maintaining facilities. It is converting a warehouse in nearby Independence, Ore., into a new creamery that will greatly increase its production capabilities.

A commercial kitchen will be offered to other local farms.

Some of the Thackeray family's sheep milk also goes to Negranti Creamery, which is a partner in the new production facility. Negranti Creamery has 10

ice cream shops in California, Idaho and Arizona.

With its extra capacity, Crystal Creek plans to recruit and support new sheep dairy farmers in the area to secure more milk.

"I'd love to have 10 farms around here all milking 100 sheep," Thackeray said.

That would be a massive change for the region, as experts said only two sheep dairies currently produce significant volume in Oregon.

Thackeray said running a sheep dairy, while plenty of work, isn't as dangerous as milking cattle, has lower entry costs, requires less land and can be profitable at a smaller scale.

"A big part of this is creating something that farmers want to do again. Our dream is to build back the farming community that's been struggling," he added.

A shift for sheep dairy industry

The growth of Crystal Creek and Dreamies Creamery is unusual but also emblematic of a shift for sheep dairies, experts said.

The niche segment is experiencing a combination of greater interest and increased production, but challenges and considerable turnover remain.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity for growth in the dairy sheep industry and I think the industry is making a lot of gains," said Andrea Mongini, a California sheep farmer and veterinarian.

Despite a sense of growth, there's no reliable data.

The segment is so small



Tyler Thackeray, CEO of Crystal Creek, holds a newborn lamb at his family's sheep dairy farm near Dallas, Ore. The lambing season is hectic but also means the return of much-needed sheep milk. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)



Ashley Mitchell scoops ice cream made with sheep milk at Dreamies Creamery in downtown Salem on Feb. 10. The Salem ice cream shop opened in summer 2025 and was the second for the business, which is actively scouting for a third location. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)

the USDA doesn't track it and no major university research centers exist.

"I don't know if there are more sheep dairies in North America than there were a decade ago, but the dairies that do exist are larger and significantly more professional," said Kyle White, a Dairy Sheep Association of North America board member who farms in Ontario, Canada.

"Production per animal has increased pretty significantly in the last 10 years and that is very much due

to genetics," he added, in an email.

Dairy without discomfort, increased production











The segment has more demand thanks to awareness of healthy, non-traditional dairy products.

Sheep milk is loaded with A2 protein and short-chain fatty acids, and many people who can't consume cow milk can digest it without

See SHEEP, Page A7

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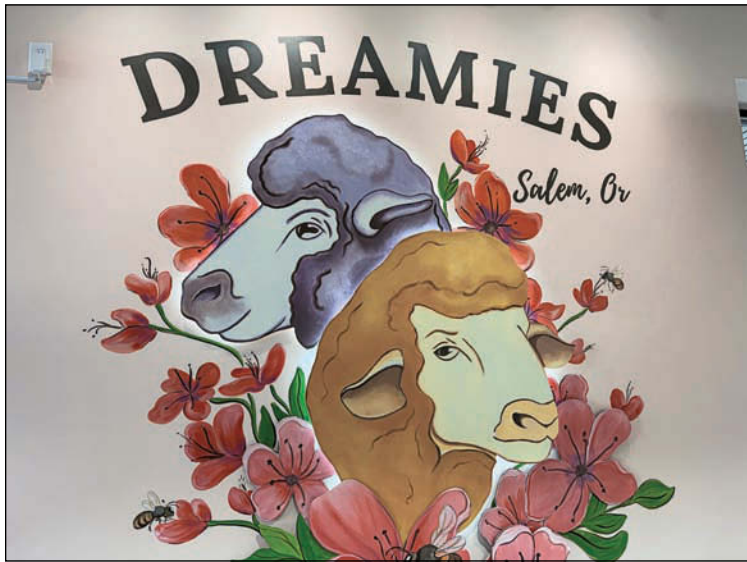


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Artwork at Dreamies Creamery makes clear where the milk for the ice cream comes from. Dreamies also sells milk from Crystal Creek's sheep dairy farm when that is available. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)

SHEEP

continued from A6

problems.

To-go pints of ice cream at Dreamies Creamery are labeled "dairy without discomfort."

Diversity also has contributed to demand.

Immigrants from Europe, the Middle East and other regions want sheep milk products and find it unusual those aren't widely produced in the U.S.

Better dairy sheep genetics have increased supply, as well.

Experts said U.S. sheep production has historically equaled wool and meat.

But in 2017, frozen semen shipments for dairy sheep were allowed into the U.S., bringing in genetics for breeds that produce more milk.

"That's where we started to see things take off," said Lynn Swanson, owner of Glendale Shepherd on Washington's Whidbey Island.

Swanson added production per animal doubled or even tripled within a few years for many farmers.

'You can't have enough sheep milk'

Swanson started milking sheep at her farm in 2006 after experiencing allergy problems.

Her old meat ewes did not enjoy the process but their milk was delicious, she said.

Swanson, whose family background is in dairy cattle, said sheep milk has more solids and less water, resulting in higher yields and product quality.

"Having things taste good, that's my goal," Swanson said.

Swanson now milks 65 ewes and prioritizes cheeses at her farmstand and farmers markets.

She also makes yogurt, distills vodka from whey, and bottles milk when there's oversupply.

"You can't have enough sheep milk in the U.S.

People want that product so much," said Swanson, DSANA's treasurer.

"I sell everything I make without a problem. I don't even wholesale," she added.

Like most sheep dairy producers, Swanson also sells manure and lambs for meat.

Experts said lamb meat has been buoyed by high

beef prices and demand from ethnic groups.

Fiber at sheep dairies is typically more of a byprod-

See SHEEP, Page A9

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Lynn Swanson, who operates Glendale Shepherd on Washington's Whidbey Island, holds a lamb. She milks 65 ewes and prioritizes cheeses at her farmstand and farmers markets. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)



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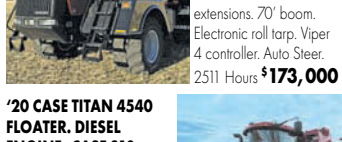
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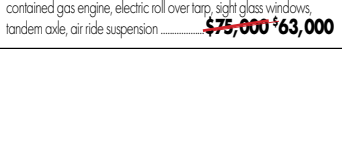
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SHEEP

continued from A7

uct, but farms are trying to develop wool pellets for use as mulch and fertilizer.

Successful business traits, challenges

Mongini, who operates Ewetopia Dairy and M&M Veterinary Practice in Denair, Calif., said successful sheep dairies tend to have similar traits.

They generally are medium-sized and create value-added products that can be stored, such as cheese.

Sheep produce milk seasonally, though that can be frozen and used later, unlike cow's milk.

Strong sheep dairies also typically develop reliable direct-to-consumer sales channels, Mongini said.

Experts said one of the biggest advantages and challenges for sheep milk and products is the price point.

"Sheep's milk is expensive to produce and that makes the retail products expensive," said Mongini, who also serves as a nutritional consultant for Crystal Creek.

During tough times people tend to become more conservative with spending and trade down from premium foods.

"We're really at the mercy of the economy," Mongini said.

Experts said there also are misconceptions about the taste of sheep milk and products.

Many people think sheep's milk will be "gamey" or have a tang similar to goat's milk.

Consumers become believers when they discover sheep milk is sweeter, richer and creamier than cow or goat milk, experts said.

Another obstacle — and a common problem for agriculture — is long and hard hours for farmers.

A one-woman operation

Tin Willows Sheep & Dairy Ranch near Lexington, Ore., is a one-woman operation run by Terry Felda, who was once an interior designer in Philadelphia.

Was the career change worth it?

"It depends on the day and the time of day," Felda said, then laughed.

She milks about 65 ewes twice a day at her Eastern Oregon property for much of



Sheep roam at Tin Willows Sheep & Dairy Ranch near Lexington, Ore. The one-woman operation is run by Terry Felda, who sells her sheep milk to Crystal Creek. There seems to be ample demand for sheep milk," Felda said. (Courtesy Tin Willows)

the year.

"It's bigger than I have been in a while. I may even go higher than that next year. There seems to be ample demand for sheep milk," said Felda, a DSANA board member.

She encouraged farmers new to the segment, including those from traditional dairies, to join DSANA for its wealth of information and mentorship.

"This is a different animal," Felda said.

Many sheep dairy owners are women because ewes are small and easy to handle, Felda said.

Some businesses started because women wanted fresh milk for their children, she added.

Felda said it's been wonderful to see the industry's development.

"I got into this because I wanted to get in on the ground floor. Twenty years later, I'm still on the ground floor, but we're finally moving," she added.

Unlike many sheep dairy producers, Felda doesn't do value-added products or direct sales.

She sells all her milk to Crystal Creek.

Swanson, in Washington, said she saw positives in Crystal Creek's plan to recruit more sheep dairy farmers.

"In many ways, if you are just milking and selling the milk, you have half the job," she said.

Planned on starting small

When it has extra supply,

Crystal Creek also bottles milk, including chocolate milk, selling at Dreamies locations and LifeSource Natural Foods in Salem.

Thackeray would like to provide milk for more specialty grocers, but there's no plans to put ice cream in other stores because profit margins aren't strong.

Crystal Creek also eventually hopes to expand into whey protein.

The Thackeray family's pivot to sheep dairies started during the pandemic.

While servicing a farm along the Southern Oregon Coast, Thackeray's father Ben Thackeray brought home sheep milk and made ice cream — a hobby of his since attending Brigham

Young University.

Lactose intolerant family members tried the dessert, became hooked and developed a modest business plan.

Crystal Creek and a partner eventually purchased the

coastal farm's dairy sheep and moved them to the Willamette Valley.

"We figured it would start small, but it took off way faster than we expected," Tyler Thackeray said.

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Kitchen Corner: Cooking with lamb

By DANA

March — in like a lion, out like a lamb. So, this month, lamb recipes from the American Lamb Board.

Slow-cooked American lamb stew with fennel and olives

Ingredients

1 1/2 lbs American lamb stew meat, cut into 1-1 1/2" cubes

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tbsp olive oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped

3-4 garlic cloves, minced
1 fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced (reserve fronds for garnish)

Zest and juice of 2 oranges

1 cup dry white wine
2 cups low-sodium chicken or lamb stock

1-2 bay leaves
1 tsp dried rosemary

1 tsp dried thyme
1 lb Yukon gold potatoes, halved

1 cup pitted Castelvetrano olives

Directions

Season & Brown: Pat the American lamb dry



Lamb stew with fennel

with paper towels and season generously with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown the lamb in batches until all sides are nicely seared. Transfer browned American lamb to a plate.

Aromatics: Reduce heat to medium and add the chopped onion and sliced fennel. Cook until softened and starting to caramelize, about 8-10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another minute until fragrant.

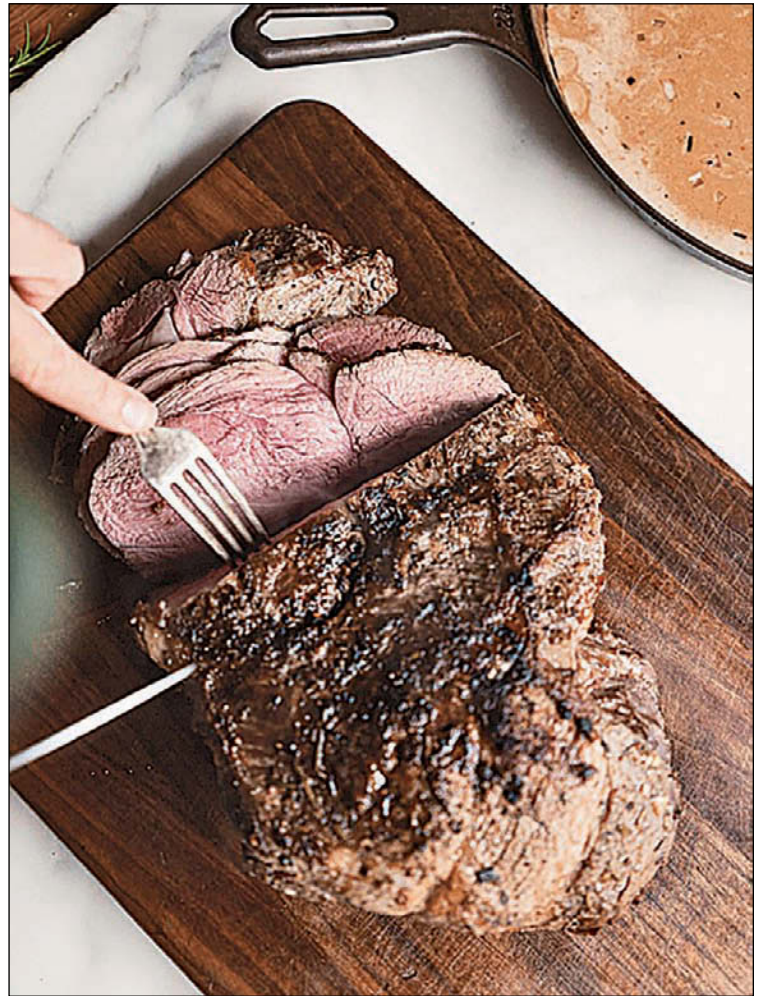
Build broth: Pour in the white wine and scrape up any browned bits from the

bottom of the pot. Let it simmer for 1-2 minutes. Return the browned American lamb to the pot. Stir in the orange zest and juice, bay leaves, rosemary, thyme, and stock. Bring to a simmer.

Slow cook: Cover the pot and lower the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook for 2-3 hours, stirring occasionally, until the lamb is fall-apart tender and the sauce is thickened.

Add olives: About 20-30 minutes before the stew is finished, stir in the potatoes and olives and adjust seasoning to taste. Continue cooking until the potatoes are tender.

Serve: Remove the bay



Leg of lamb

leaves. Serve the stew hot in bowls, garnished with fresh fennel fronds if desired. Great alongside crusty bread, creamy polenta, or buttered noodles.

Lamb leg au poivre with green peppercorn cream sauce

Ingredients

For the Lamb

1 butterflied leg of American lamb (4-5 pounds), trimmed of excess fat
5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon fresh cracked pepper

2 teaspoons kosher salt
3 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, finely grated

For the Sauce

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 shallots, finely minced
2 tablespoons green peppercorns in brine, drained and lightly crushed
1/2 cup cognac or brandy
1 cup beef or lamb stock, reduced by half
1 cup heavy cream
Salt, to taste

See KITCHEN, Page A11

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KITCHEN

continued from A10

Directions

Season the Lamb: Pat the butterflied leg of American lamb dry. Sprinkle lamb all over with 2 tablespoons olive oil, garlic, rosemary, salt, and the cracked pepper. Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes (or refrigerate overnight for deeper flavor, bringing to room temperature before cooking).

Sear & Roast: Preheat the oven to 375°F. Heat a large ovenproof skillet or roasting pan over medium-high heat. Add 3 tablespoons of oil and sear lamb for 3–4 minutes per side until well browned. Transfer skillet to the oven and roast until internal temperature reaches 130–135°F for medium-rare, about 40 minutes depending on thickness. (For medium, go to 140–145°F.) Remove lamb from the pan, tent with foil, and rest for at least 15 minutes before slicing.

Make the Sauce: Place the roasting pan back over medium heat. Add butter and shallots, cooking until softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in green peppercorns, then carefully add cognac. Reduce until almost evaporated, about 2 minutes. Add reduced stock and heavy cream. Simmer until glossy and thick enough to coat a spoon, 5–7 minutes. Season to taste with salt.

Serve: Slice lamb across the grain into thin slices. Arrange on a platter and pour warm green peppercorn sauce on top.

Braised Soy Lemongrass Lamb Shanks

Ingredients

- For the Lamb Shanks
- 4 American lamb shanks (about 1 1/2 lbs each)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup neutral oil (canola or grapeseed)
- For the Braising Liquid
- 1 medium yellow onion, sliced
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed
- 2-inch piece fresh ginger, sliced into coins
- 2 stalks lemongrass, trimmed, smashed, and cut into 3-inch pieces
- 2 star anise pods
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup dark soy sauce (for



Braised lamb shanks

- depth and color)
- 1/4 cup fish sauce
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 3 cups chicken stock
- For Finishing
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- Steamed jasmine rice, for serving

Directions

Sear the Lamb: Pat American lamb shanks dry with paper towels. Season generously with salt and pepper. In a heavy Dutch oven or braising pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sear lamb shanks on all sides until deep golden brown, 8–10 minutes. Remove and set aside.

Build the Aromatics: Reduce heat to medium. Add onion, garlic, ginger, lemongrass, star anise, and cinnamon to the pot. Sauté 3–4 minutes until fragrant.

Deglaze & Build the Braising Liquid: Add white wine to deglaze, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Let simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in soy sauce, dark soy sauce, fish sauce, and brown sugar. Add stock and bring to a gentle simmer.

Braise the Lamb: Return lamb shanks to the pot, nestling them into the liquid. Cover with lid and transfer to a 325°F oven. Braise for 3 hours, turning shanks halfway through, until the meat is tender and almost falling off the bone.

Finish the Sauce: Remove lamb shanks to a platter and tent loosely with foil. Strain braising liquid, discarding solids. Return liquid to pot and simmer until slightly reduced and glossy, about 10–15 minutes. Stir in lime juice for brightness.

Serve: Spoon sauce

generously over the lamb shanks. Garnish with cilantro and scallions. Serve hot with jasmine rice to soak up the savory-sweet sauce.

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- '09 JOHN DEERE 9770 LL 635D 2719 hrs.....\$65,000
- '00 CASE IH 2388 LL 2WD, 1010-30FT.....\$25,000

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- '07 CASE IH 380 QUAD, 3pt, 36", 12,118 hrs.....\$55,000
- '05 CASE IH 450 QUAD, 30", 10,800 hrs.....\$120,000
- '04 CASE IH 450, PTO, 36", 7340 hrs.....\$115,000
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- '55 IH 300 S/LOADER STRAIGHT.....\$3,500
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Ask About Our Waivers on New & Used Equipment!

It's the Pitts: Miss Understanding

By LEE PITTS

Men can be such wimps! I have come to the conclusion that after the death of their elderly spouse women seem to have far less trouble than men who lose their spouse. Men just can't seem to live without a woman in their life but women seem to flourish without a man in theirs. This became obvious to me after seeing four blue haired widows getting smashed on wine Margaritas at Olive Garden, laughing and having such a good time the manager had to come by and ask them to tone it down.



Lee Pitts

A couple years ago I had a rancher friend who had the misfortune of losing his dog and his wife in a span of six weeks. He completely fell apart and went to seed. His once obese body was now skin and bones because he didn't even know how to boil water and his clothes wouldn't even make good shop rags they were so far gone. My friend didn't even know how to wash and dry clothes. He just wore them until they fell apart and

then he'd go to the hardware store and buy new ones. It was like he was having a mid-life crises at age 75. The only thing he had going for him was he he'd inherited what was once a huge Mexican Land Grant that some distant relative had finagled the Mexican government out of.

I felt sorry for my friend and tried to help him, advising him he would be far better off just getting a new one right away.

Shortly after his wife died I was surprised to hear that he was a regular on the dating scene."What the heck are you doing?" I asked. "Don't you think you should show some respect to your widow who stuck by you through thick and thin and was married to you for over 50 years? You should have waited at least a year!"

Dutch researchers have found that men have on average four billion more brain

cells than women but I think they lose them all after their spouse dies. My buddy got so desperate he tried finding a mate on the Internet but found no takers. Then he tried a more traditional approach by advertising in the weekly newspaper's classified ads but he came off as sounding a bit too desperate. His ad read: "Elderly rich guy in poor health looking for a new wife to cook and do laundry. PLEASE Dear God!"

When that didn't work he resorted to the old tried and true method of becoming part of the local bar scene seven nights per week. It wasn't too long before he had a new girlfriend who rode a Harley Davidson, chewed tobacco, hogged the remote control and had already been married four times. It was a total and complete TRASH landing. His new girlfriend had spiked green and orange hair, was hopeless in the kitchen, got drunk, and liked to go dancing every night. In other words, she was the poster child for birth control.

My buddy's new main squeeze looked a little rough around the edges to me but my friend defended her and

said she didn't look all that bad after nine or ten drinks. Worse still, she liked to have sex every which way seven nights a week whereas my buddy had been down to once a month in his first marriage.

Then my friend and his girlfriend went off to Las Vegas and she got him hogtied for good all legal like. Before too long my buddy started seeing the error of his ways. His new wife didn't shave her legs or under her arms, snored so loud it registered on seismographs three counties away and she had a weird fixation with fire-arms which made him a little nervous as two of her previous husbands had died under suspicious circumstances.

When my friend informed me that he was getting remarried just five months after the death of his first wife I blew a gasket. "Are you crazy?" I asked

He countered: "You're the one who told me that after the death of a loved one you should get another one right away to replace the one you lost."

"I was talking about getting a new dog, not a new wife you imbecile!"

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Internal friction threatens WDFW wolf investigations

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press



A rift between Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife enforcement officers and biologists threatens to hinder investigations into wolf attacks on cattle in northeast Washington. (File photo)

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police sergeant and a department biologist traded accusations in October, exposing a rift that could slow investigations into wolf attacks in northeast Washington.

The confrontation contributed to enforcement officers stepping back from investigating depredations in the wolf pack-saturated region, according to people familiar with the matter.

Conflict-specialists and biologists will still investigate. But without officers responding, investigations could be delayed, especially on weekends, giving the heat, maggots, birds and scavengers time to destroy evidence that wolves killed cattle.

Without that evidence, Fish and Wildlife won't consider lethal control to check chronic depredations.

The Teamsters union representing the sergeant described the incident in a recent letter to Deputy Director Amy Windrope. The letter accuses the biologist of refusing to help investigate a wolf depredation, allegedly saying that if he went, he and the sergeant "would fight."

A few days later, the biologist allegedly portrayed the sergeant as the aggressor. The union maintains the biologist threatened the sergeant.

"There are two sides to every story, and we're investigating this incident," Fish and Wildlife spokeswoman Sam Montgomery said.

Montgomery denied that enforcement officers will stop investigating wolf depredations. "Enforcement remains fully engaged in wolf-conflicts in northeast Washington," she said.

According to the union, the sergeant and an officer were assigned to protect biologists planning to remove wolves in the Sherman pack Oct. 14 in Ferry County.

The operation was called off when a King County judge issued a temporary restraining order. While everyone was still in the field, the department received a report of another

wolf attack on cattle.

The biologist allegedly told the sergeant he wouldn't go to the call. At a meeting Oct. 18, the biologist allegedly said he refused to go because he had a "long history" with the sergeant and didn't trust him.

A captain at the meeting called the biologist's comments "inappropriate and unacceptable," according to the union.

The union also alleges the biologist criticized Jeff Flood, a wildlife sheriff's deputy for Ferry and Stevens counties, at a meeting in December. The union alleges an "unchecked pattern" of derogatory comments toward enforcement officers. The comments are apparently tolerated and encouraged by wildlife division supervisors, the union alleges.

Flood said he wasn't at the meeting, but heard about the biologist's alleged derogatory comments. "I'm looking over his shoulder, so it's never a good relationship," Flood said. "I get the feeling he doesn't appreciate the sheriff's office being involved in the wolf business."

Fish and Wildlife collects evidence in the field and later decides in internal meetings whether to confirm wolf attacks. Ranchers have sometimes questioned the department's conclusions.

Scott Nielsen, who organizes the Cattle Producers of Washington range-rider program, said he hopes Fish and Wildlife enforcement officers will continue responding to depredations.

"We're hearing over and over again that they won't do it because they can't get along with the biologist side," he said.

"The enforcement side speaks with consistency and credibility to ranchers,

and we need to keep them involved in investigations," Nielsen said. "Ranchers

aren't going to report depredations if they don't think they'll get a fair shake."

The biologist did not respond to a request to comment.



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Washington State Fruit Commission appoints experienced new president

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The Washington State Fruit Commission has appointed Eric Patrick, who has decades of experience in the fresh produce industry — including a stint with the commission — as its new president.

Patrick will oversee marketing efforts for cherries and canned pears grown in the Northwest, as well the commission's industry education programs.

His official start date was March 2.

Patrick succeeds B.J. Thurlby, who retired Dec. 31 after 30 years with the commission.

Thurlby died at age 60 on Jan. 10 following surgery for cancer.

In a news release, Patrick said he always enjoyed his work at the commission and hopes to continue strengthening collaborations within the industry to serve growers.

"I really believe in Northwest cherries and want to help growers and get recognition for what I think are the best cherries in the world," he said.

"I'm looking forward to working with the team, which has seen some award-winning campaigns in recent years, and build on those successes," Patrick

added.

Patrick said the push for healthier diets worldwide presents fresh openings for marketing and sales growth.

"I know the commission has been working on those health messages, and I see opportunities to work even more closely with the retailers, who are working with their own nutritionists and dieticians," he added.

Professional background

Patrick has spent the past 20 years as marketing director for the Grant J. Hunt Co., a West Coast-based distributor and wholesaler of con-



Patrick

ventional and organic fresh produce with distribution throughout North America.

In that role, he worked closely with commission's Northwest Cherries on cherry promotions.

He also operated a marketing division that offered services ranging from print, logo and advertising design to category management.

Patrick also worked closely with Tajin seasonings, helping set up promotions, collaborations and demos throughout North America. He will continue his work in that capacity.

He previously spent two years as marketing direc-

tor for Domex Superfresh Growers, as well as seven years with the Washington State Fruit Commission.

With the commission, he first worked in sales for the commission's educational magazine, Good Fruit Grower, and then he served as the marketing director for North America for Northwest Cherries and the Washington State Fruit Commission.

In part-time roles, Patrick has served as the tourism director for the city of Union Gap, Wash., and as an instructor in the advertising and marketing programs at Yakima Valley College. He continues to be a regular speaker at the college.

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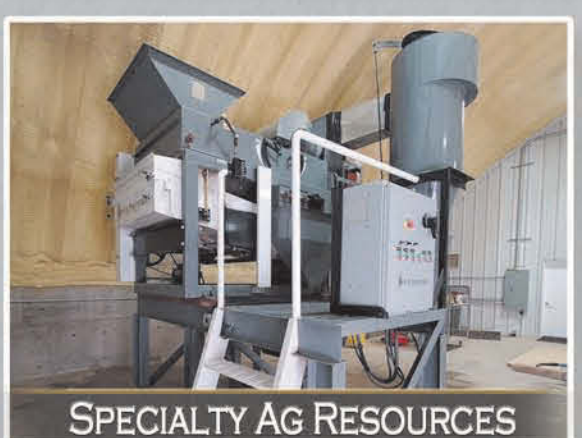
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'19 **CASE IH 580Q**, 5130 Hours, Powershift, Deluxe Cab, LED Cab Roof Work Light Package, Single Beacon Light, RH Window Bar Display, Guidance Ready, Telematics, Cold Weather Starting Aid, Engine Compression Brake, True Ground Speed Sensor, Back-up Warning Alarm, High Capacity Draw Bar, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, 6 Electric Remotes, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Hi Capacity Bar w/ Diff Lock, Undercarriage Scrapers, 36" CAMSO, 650 AG Tracks, Front Bumper Weights.....**\$234,900**

'18 **CASE IH 580Q**, 4398 Hours, PowerShift, Deluxe Cab, LED Cab Roof Work Light Package, Single Beacon Light, RH Window Bar Display Ready, Telematics, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Sensor, High-Capacity Draw Bar, High-Capacity Hydraulic Pump, 6 Electric Remotes, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Hi Capacity Bar w/Diff Lock, Drive Wheel Scrapers, 36" CAMSO Tracks, Front Bumper Weights.....**\$224,900**

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CaseIH Magnum 315, 2745 Hrs, Cab, Manual Mirrors, Front and Rear HID Work Lamps, Dlx Positive Response Seat, 18F Speed, High Cap Drawbar, 3PT w/Quick Coupler, Top Link High Cap Hyd Pump, 4 Remotes, Power Beyond, 1000PTO, Wide Front Fenders, Front Weights, Rear Wheel Weights, 480/70R34 Fronts, 520/85R46 Rear Duals.....**\$155,000**

'98 **CASE IH 9370Q**, 9711 Hours, Powershift, 4 Remotes, Trimble EZ-Steer, FM750, 2000 hours on reman Engine, Good Tracks, Consigned.....**\$65,000**

CASEIH 9380Q, 13,000 Hour, 36" Tracks, 4 Remotes**\$29,900**



'20 **JD 9520RX**, 3511 Hrs, 36" Tracks, PTO, High Flow Hydraulics, 5 Valves, Premium Cab, Premium Lighting w/Front and Rear HID Lights, AutoTrac Ready w/4600 Processor, AutoTrac Premium Activation.....**\$379,000**

'08 **JD 9430**, 6250 Hrs, 710/70R42 Tires, Hyd Flow 44 GPM, 4 Hyd Outlets, AutoTrac Ready, 1000 PTO, 3PT**\$149,900**

'08 **JD 8530**, 8200 Hrs, 420/85R34 Fronts, 480/80R50 Rear Duals, MFWD, 4 Hyd Outlets, 1000 PTO, 3PT**\$129,900**

'11 **NH T8.360**, 6150 Hrs, 4WD, Duals, Front Weights, Deluxe Cab, Consigned**\$115,000**

'23 **CASE IH STEIGER 470 AFS CONNECT**, 981 hrs Luxury Performance Cab, PowerDrive, Engine Brake, Cold eather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest, AFS Pro 1200, High-Capacity Pump, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cap Roof Work Lights, 710/70R42 R1 Duals, Wheel Weights, Ballast Package, Rear Weight Support, Tow Cable**\$358,000**

'23 **CASE IH STEIGER 500 AFS CONNECT**, PowerShift Heavy Duty Version, Engine Brake, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest AFS Pro 1200, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cab Roof Work Lights, Luxury Performance Cab, PTO, Hitch Drawbar, 4 Rear Remotes, Parallel Flow Hydraulic, AutoGuidance, Connectivity, Front Ballast, Rear Ballast, Wheel Weights, Rear Weight Support, Tow Cable, 710/70R42 Duals**\$399,500**

'22 **CASE IH 500W**, 1352 Hours, Luxury Cab, Power Drive, HHP, Engine Brake, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest AFS Pro 1200, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, Power Beyond Supply and Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cab Roof Work Lights, Luxury Performance Cab**\$379,900**

'22 **CASE IH PUMA 150**, 668 HRS, Mechanical Cab Suspension, Bluetooth Radio, 2 Tele/Heat/Rem Adjustable Mirrors, ISOBUS Class 3 Speed Control, 200 Amp Alternator, 3 Electronic Rear Remotes,**\$171,900**

'12 **CASE IH 450W**, 4654 Hrs, Luxury Cab, 16 Speed Powershift, 1000 RPM PTO, High Capacity Hydro Pump, 4 Hydraulic Remotes, 710/70R38 Tires, Wheel Weights**\$199,900**

UNDER 150-HP

'14 **KUBOTA M59TL**, BT 1200 Backhoe, 84" Bucket, 3 Range Hydro- Shuttle, Consigned**\$44,900**

'17 **NH BOOMER 24**, 107 Hrs, 24HP, ROPS, 23x.850 R4 Fronts, 6.5 R4 Rears**\$14,900**

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'12 **CaseIH PH 800**, 50", 12" Centers, 5" Pneumatic Packer Wheels, Precision Opener Mud Scrapers, Bourgault Opener & Points, Cons.....

'08 **GP 35-4000HD**, 500 Gal Liquid Starter, 7.5" Spacing, 3x13 Packer Wheels, 3 Section Electric Clutch, Cons.....**\$55,000**

'08 **JD 455**, 35" Box Drills, 7.5" Spacing, 2.13 Press Wheels, 12.5" Discs, Clean Boxes, No Rust, Good Lids.....**\$33,900**

BALERS

'18 **NH RB460**, 4x6, Silage, Endless Belt, Deluxe Wrap, Net and Twine, 540 RPM w/ Cut Out Clutch, 21.5Lx16.1 Tires, HD Density System, Bale Ramp, 1.8m Pickup, 4.8/4.0-8 No Tool Dual Wheels, Manual

Hyd Pick-up Lift, 5 Bar Pickup Reel, 1.8m Roller Windguard, Clevis Hitch, PTO SPRT Locking Pin.....Call NP

'19 **NH RB450**, 4x5 18M Silage, Endless Belt, Net and Twine, DLX Wrap, 18L16 Tires, Dual Wheels, Manual Hyd Pickup Lift, 5 Bar Reel, Roller Windguard, Clevis Hitch.....**\$39,900**

'10 **NH BB9080**, Big Baler, Tandem Axle, Roller Chute, Cons**\$30,000**

'03 **NH 580**, 16x18 Bale, Hydraulic Pick-up, Bale Extension, 1/4 Turn Chute, Newer Knotters , Consigned**\$13,900**

JD 468, Mega Wide Plus Round Baler, 215L-161 SL Tires, 540 PTO, Twine Only, Wid Picku-up, Monitor.....**\$12,900**

'16 **NH BC5060**, Small Square Baler Twin, Quarter Turn Chute, Less than 2500 Acres**\$15,900**

'13 **NH BC5080**, 16x18 Chute, Hydraulic Swing, Hydraulic Pickup, Light Kit, Bale Extension**\$15,900**

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JD 630, 1000 PTO, Rotary Disc Mower, Flail Conditioner, 6 Discs, 10' Cutter Bar.....**\$18,900**

JD 946, Mower Conditioner, 13' Cutter Bar, Center Pivot, Flail Conditioner, Hydraulic Angle Adjust, Regular Maintenance, Consigned**\$18,500**

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'16 **JCB 525-60**, 4691 Hrs, 5000LB Lift Capacity, Quick Attach Forks, Airless Tires, New Paint**\$34,900**

SKID STEERS

'14 **BOBCAT T590**, 3251 Hrs, Open Cab, Good Tracks, STD Hydro, Foot Controls, Traction Lock Over Drive**\$30,500**

'23 **NH C345**, EH2 Aircab, 177" Tracks, 84" HD Ext Bucket w/ Smart Teeth, Block Heater, HVAC Cab, Air Ride Suspension Seat, 2 Speed E-H Controls, Steel Lights, Glass Door, High Flow PKG, Heavy Duty Rear Door, Eco Disc Mulcher Attachment, Great Condition, Consigned**\$135,000**

HARROWS

(6) **STOESS 4000**, 10 1/2' Rodweeders, No Hitch, Consigned **\$2,000 EA**

PLOWS

IH 800, 10-bottom plow, walking beam in center, good moldboards, good landsides and pads**\$5,600**

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'15 **MacDon FD75****\$55,900**

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'25 **Sitrex RP3**, 3 Wheel Windrow Turner !!NEW!!**\$1,530**

SPRAYERS/APPLICATORS

'08 **CaseIH SRX160**, 160 Gallon Poly Tank, 100' Booms, Adj Axles, Norac AutoBoom Heights, 5 Sections, Cons.....**\$18,000**

'24 **JD 616R**, 574 Hrs, Signature Edition, 1600 Gal Tank, 120' Boom, Exact Apply, Command Drive, Boom Trac Pro 2, 15" Nozzle Spacing, Integrated Star Fire 7500 Receiver, G5 Plus Command Center Display, LSW 800/55R46 Floats, Row Crop 420/95R50 Tires and Matching Fenders Included.....**\$569,000**

'17 **CASE IH 4440**, 3200 Hrs, 120' Boom, 7 Section, 20" Spacing, Luxury Surveyor Cab, Active Suspension, 280/90R46 Wheels, Manual Adj Mirrors, 3" Front Fill, SS Tank, CR 11 Single Nozzle Body, Boom Flush Valve, AFS Pro700, AIM Command Flex, AutoBoom Height Control, Combo Rate Dual Body Shut-Off**\$184,900**

'16 **CASE IH 4440**, 4100 Hours, 120' Boom, AccuBoom Section Control, AutoBoom Height Control, Pro 700, AIM Command, Foam Marker, Alliance 650/65R38 Turf Tread.....**\$154,900**

JD 4940, 3892 Hrs, 120' Boms, 1200 Gallon Tank, GS3 Display, Starfire ITC Receiver, Boom Trac Pro, 11 Sections, Air Suspension.....**\$84,900**

'19 **CASEIH 4440**, 2882 Hrs, Luxury Surveyor Cab, Active Suspension, 380/90R46 Tires, 120' 7 Section 20" Spacing, AFS Pro 700, AutoBoom, Control, Combo Rate Dual Body Shutoff, Nav II Controller, Intake.....**\$249,900**

SCHABAU SF.8500, 90' Boom, 1500 Gallon Tank, 100 Gallon Rinse Tank, Tripple Nozzle, 5 Section Control, 380/90R46 Tires, AutoBoom Height**\$16,900**

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'20 **JD R4045**, 120' Carbon Fiber Booms, Dual Monitor Display, Starfire 6000 Receiver, G4 OS, 120 Gal Tank, Front Load Valve, Stainless Induction, Air Suspension, 620/70R46 Tires, 20" Nozzle Spacing, Backup Camera, LED Light Pkg, Fenders, Premium Command View, AutoTrac Guidance, Rowsense, Section Control, Exact Apply Nozzle Control System**\$284,900**

HILLSIDE COMBINES

'12 **CaseIH 8230**, 3345 Rotor Hours, Hillco Hillside Leveler, 24.5R32 R3 Duals, 23.1R26 R3 Rears, Small Grain Specs, 40' Unload Auger, Independent Cross Auger Control, Magna Cut Fine Cut Chopper, Diff Lock, Auto-Guide Ready, Well Maintained.....**\$145,900**

'23 **CaseIH 8250**, Harvest Command Automation w/Camera, In-Cab Adj Cage Vane Control, Luxury Cab, Pro700 Large Color Touch Screen, Auto-Guidance Nav Controller, LED Light Pkg, Block Heater, Upper Cross Auger Control, GPS Antenna/Receiver, Diff Lock, Grain Tank Cover, Strawhood Attach/Residue Management.....**\$674,000**

'04 **JD 9760STS**, 3607 Sep Hours, 635F Flex Header 914 Pick-up Header, 2970S Hillco Sidehill Leveling System, Beaterless Feeder House Transition, Cons.....**\$55,000**

'06 **JD 9760STS**, 3704 Sep Hrs, 635F Flex Header, 914 Pick-up Header, 2970S Hillco Sidehill Leveling System, Beaterless Feederhouse Transition, Cons.....**\$55,000**

(2) '23 **Case IH 8250**, Luxury Cab w/Leather Seat, Harvest Command, w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Pro 700 Nav Controller 737 Hrs**\$591,500**

'14 **CASE IH 8230**, 1924 Sep Hours, 520/85R42 Duals, 600/65RS8 Rears, Chopper, GPS**\$129,900**

'05 **CASE IH 8010**, 3554 Engine Hours, 4WD, Leveler, '12 CIH 3020 35' Header Included, Cons**\$70,000**

CASE IH 1680, 6900 Engine Hours, Hillco 2000 Leveler, Rear Weights, Great Condition, Consigned.....**\$12,000**

'02 **GLEANER R72**, Duals, 2WD, 30' Header Included, Consigned**\$29,900**

'13 **CaseIH 8230**, 096 Hrs, PowerPlus CVT Drive, Ext Wear Rotor, Cross

Auger Control, Fine Cut Chopper, Spreader, Weather Bank Radio, Diff Lock, 600/65R28 Steering Tires, Yield & Moisture Logging**\$145,900**

'25 **Case IH 8260**, 249 Sep Hrs, Hillco Leveler, Harvest Command Automation w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Lux Cab w/ Leather Seat, Pro 1200 Large Color Touch Screen, Telematics, Ext Wear Rotor w/Spikes, 50' Unloading Auger**\$708,500**

'25 **CaseIH 9260**, Harvest Command Automation w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Luxury Cab w/Leather Seat, Pro1200 Large Color Touch Screen, Independent Cross Auger Control**\$729,500**

234 Sep Hrs**\$729,500**

353 Sep Hrs**\$714,500**

'21 **CaseIH 9250**, 1573 HRS Sep Hrs, Luxury Cab, AM/FM/BT Radio, Pro 700, Large Color Touch Screen, Autoguidance Nav Controller, Hillco Lvlr, Command Automation, Power+ CVT Drive w/Feedrate, Yield Monitor, Harvest Command w/Cameras, Auto Cleaning Fan, Block Heater, Independent Cross Auger Control, Diff Lock.....**\$439,900**

'21 **CaseIH 8250**, 1209 Sep Hrs, Hillside, Lux Cab, Autoguidance, Yield Monitor, HVSTC w/Camera, PowerPlus CVT Drive w/Feedrate, 40' Auger w/ Pivoting Spout, Upper Cross Auger Control, Large Color Touch Screen, Diff Lock, 650/65R38 Duals.....**\$524,900**

LEVEL LAND

'17 **CASE IH 8240**, 1484 Sep Hrs, Level Land, Duals, 4WD, Chopper, Guidance, Folding Auger.....**\$169,900**

'15 **CASE IH 9240**, 2297 Rotor Hours, Level Land**\$149,900**

'02 **CASE IH 2388**, 3458-Sep-hrs, level land, feeder reverser, single spd hydro, 2WD, 208x42 duals, 184x26 rears, new rub bars, Field Tracker.....**\$19,900**

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Purdue ag barometer rebounds slightly in February

By **KYLE ODEGARD**
Capital Press

Farmer sentiment improved in February but worries about the future continued, according to the Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer Index.

The ag barometer edged higher to 116 points, up from 113 points in January.

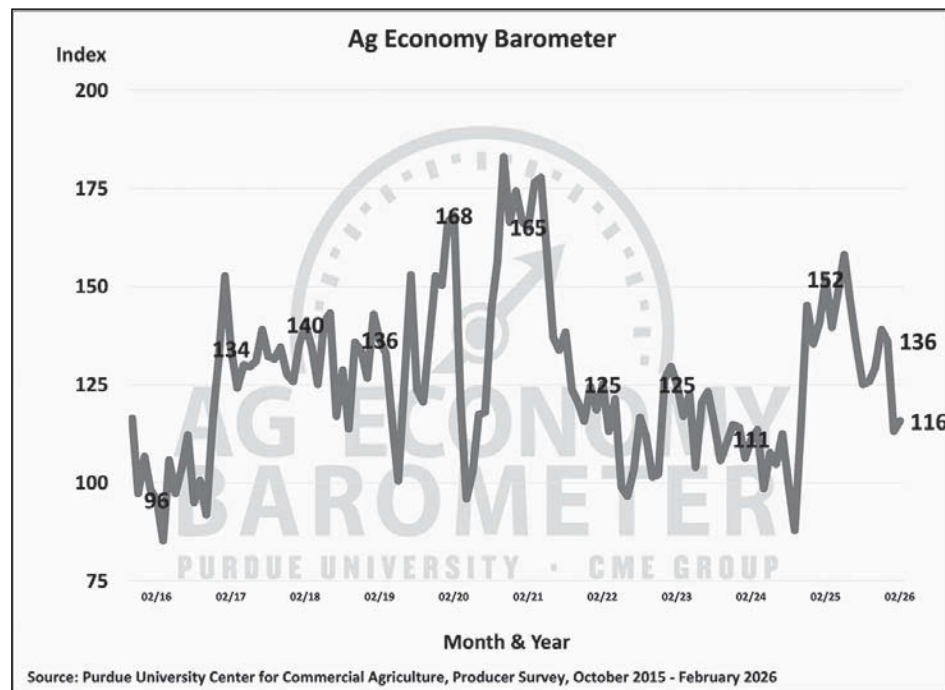
However, producers are far more pessimistic than a year ago or even a few months prior. The barometer soared after President Donald Trump's election.

In February 2025 the score was 152 and the barometer was 136 in December before plummeting.

"Overall, the February results suggest that while producers report improved current conditions, confidence in the longer-term outlook continues to weaken," stated a report written by Michael Langemeier and Joana Colussi of the Purdue Center for Commercial Agriculture.

"Although many operations are planning to expand, persistent concerns about input costs, commodity prices, and the broader direction of the U.S. economy appear to be limiting optimism in the years ahead," the report added.

The percentage of producers who



expected bad times ahead in February was 48%, double the share reported a year earlier.

But the barometer once again highlighted the bifurcated nature of the ag economy.

Roughly 63% of respondents anticipated bad times for crop producers, while only 17% expected tough times for livestock producers.

Expansion plans for farms

Despite a relatively bleak outlook, 51% of producers said they planned to expand their operations in the next five

years.

Of those, 14% plan to increase their farm size by 10% or more.

About 36% of producers said they planned on bringing in another family member into the business within the next five years.

Roughly 15% of respondents said they planned to reduce the size of their operation, and another 34% said they don't plan to grow.

How farmers will use Bridge payments

Producers also were asked about the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program

announced in late December.

About 47% of producers indicated these payments would be used to pay down debt and another 27% said they would use Bridge payments to improve working capital.

Approximately 14% said they would invest in farm machinery, while 12% said they use Bridge payments for family living.

Export concerns, country's direction

Although concerns about agricultural exports became somewhat less intense, those are still elevated compared to December.

Responding to a broad question about the future of agricultural exports, 14% of farmers and ranchers surveyed said they expected exports to decline over the next five years, down from 16% in January — but up from 5% in December.

The percentage of respondents who think the U.S. is headed in the "right direction" also declined for the second month in a row despite the Bridge payments, dropping to 59% in February. In December, that figure was 75%, with only 25% believing the U.S. was on the "wrong track."

The February barometer survey took place from Feb. 2-6 and included corn, soybean, wheat and cotton growers, and producers of beef cattle, hogs and dairy.

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Sklarczyk new National Potato Council president

Capital Press

National Potato Council voting delegates elected Ben Sklarczyk president during the group's annual Washington Summit Feb. 23

Sklarczyk, of Johannesburg, Mich., will serve for the next year. He succeeds Ted Tschirky, of Pasco, Wash. Tschirky remains on the executive committee as immediate past president.

The executive committee includes Dean Gibson, Paul, Idaho, first vice president, and vice president of legislative



Ben Sklarczyk, National Potato Council president for 2026. (Courtesy NPC)

affairs; environmental affairs vice president Chris Olsen of Othello, Wash.; finance vice president Greg Harris of

Boardman, Ore.; grower outreach and industry research vice president T.J. Hall of Hoople, N.D.; and trade affairs vice

president Brett Jensen of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

The grower-led National Potato Council is managed by an executive committee and board of directors. Board members are appointed based on recommendations submitted by state potato grower organizations. The council addresses issues that affect the industry, from policy debated in Congress to regulations proposed by federal agencies.

At the annual summit in Washington, D.C. Feb. 23-26, growers and other industry members met with members of Congress and the presidential administration to advocate for issues such as keeping potatoes in federal nutrition programs, promoting free and fair trade agreements, and investing in research to support the long-term health of the U.S. potato industry, according to a council news release.

Meet new president

Sklarczyk is a third-generation grower and owner of Sklarczyk Seed Farm, a hydroponic seed potato operation based in his hometown of Johannesburg, Mich.

He assumed full ownership of the family business 10 years ago. He purchased the business from his father, Don Sklarczyk, who served as Potato Council president in 2007.

Ben Sklarczyk's path to the family business was not immediate, according to the council. Although he grew up working on the farm's row crop side, he initially pursued a degree

in mechanical engineering at Western Michigan University. A realization during his first semester led him to transfer to Michigan State University, where he graduated in December 2003 with a degree focused on agriculture.

A longtime advocate for the industry, he has been involved with the Potato Council since the early 2000s and joined its board of directors in 2010. Before being elected president for 2026, he served nearly a decade on the executive committee in leadership roles including as first vice president and terms as vice president of grower outreach and industry research, environmental affairs, and finance.

As president, Sklarczyk is committed to bringing strength and resilience to the potato industry, according to the release.

"Our 2026 agenda will focus on capitalizing on new federal dietary guidelines to promote potatoes as a staple of good health, ensuring fair trade practices for U.S. potatoes globally, and removing non-tariff trade barriers," he said. "I also want to emphasize the importance of grower engagement with state and federal representatives to ensure the industry's voice is heard in policymaking."

Sklarczyk and his wife, Allison – who serves on the Potatoes USA Board of Directors – reside in Michigan with their two children, Morgan and Dane.

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Regulators issue payment demands to Bailey Seed

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

As Oregon farm regulators demand that seed dealer Bailey Seed and Grain make delinquent crop payments, the company is vowing to square up its accounts with farmers.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture recently validated five “slow pay/no pay” complaints against Bailey and issued “notice of payment demands” for the company to compensate those growers.

Troy Ralston, vice president of Bailey Seed and Grain, said the company is seeking to increase its operating line of credit to settle those debts and resolve most complaints within roughly a month.

The company is also trying to sell one of its facilities in Albany, Ore., which would “get us all cash flush and back up and running” as the grass seed industry hopefully recovers from a recent downturn, he said.

“The last two years, commodity prices have gone down, and it’s just been extremely hard to retain margins. We’re working through high priced inventory. We feel like we’re six months or a year away from being back on the right side

of everything,” Ralston said.

\$840,000 owed

In the payment order involving the largest amount, the ODA has demanded that Bailey pay more than \$840,000 owed to Creekside Valley Farms of Lafayette, Ore., for perennial ryegrass seed and radish seed.

Creekside produced nearly 890,000 pounds of the “Fireball” cultivar of perennial ryegrass seed and more than 12,000 pounds of green stem radish seed for Bailey in 2023 and 2024, according to ODA records.

Though Bailey made several partial payments for the perennial ryegrass seed totaling about \$130,000, the company still owes \$842,000 to Creekside, according to the agency’s “notice of payment demand.”

The ODA has ordered Bailey to pay the delinquent amount, plus 1% monthly interest, by March 21 but the company can challenge the findings as part of a “contested case” hearing within two months.

In addition to the payment demand issued on behalf of Creekside, the ODA has ordered Bailey to pay four other Oregon farms for peas, radish, collards and oats based on complaints filed last

year, according to public records:

- A delinquent amount of more than \$143,700 is owed to McKee River Farms of Monmouth, Ore., for radish and pea crops.

- A delinquent amount of about \$37,000 is owed to Hazel Valley Farms of Dayton, Ore., for oats.

- A delinquent amount of roughly \$82,500 is owed to Sayer Farms of Brownsville, Ore., for radish, buckwheat and mustard seed.

- An undetermined delinquent amount is owed to Steven Oneil of Corvallis, Ore., for collard seed after some partial payments were made.

Ralston said that representatives of Bailey Seed and Grain have recently met with ODA to discuss “the best strategy on how to handle this.”

Though the company may challenge some of the agency’s findings due to “issues with the product,” it generally expects to comply with the payment demands, he said.

“Most of them, we know that we owe the growers money and we 100% plan on getting them paid,” Ralston said.

Since last year, 12 agricultural liens have also been filed against Bailey alleging farmers are owed payments for peas, buckwheat, kale seed, mus-

tard seed, radish seed and crimson clover seed.

The amounts claimed under the liens total nearly \$400,000, though one of the filings does not specify a contracted amount owed by the company.

Some of those liens appear to have been filed by the same farms that have made “slow pay/no pay” complaints with the ODA.

Agricultural liens allow farmers to establish themselves as secured creditors with collateral in a debtor’s assets, typically with a higher priority for repayment than other creditors in the event of a bankruptcy.

The seed cleaning facility owned by Bailey along Highway 34 in Albany, Ore., is currently being offered for sale for \$9.5 million, according to a real estate listing.

According to the real estate listing, the “light industrial” property includes “eight functional buildings,” including a warehouse and office, on nearly 12 acres.

Several interested parties have already inquired about the property along Highway 34, and if it is sold, Bailey’s operations would be consolidated at another existing location in Albany, Ralston said.

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Oregon's 'terrible' snowpack could lead to early irrigation season

By **KYLE ODEGARD**
Capital Press

Oregon's snowpack looked "terrible" roughly one month from when it should hit its peak, and that could contribute to drought and wildfires and cause irrigation problems, said Larry O'Neill, Oregon state climatologist.

The state's snow-water equivalent was 32% of the median from 1991-2020 as of March 2, according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

That's Oregon's second-lowest mark on record, with only the 29% from 2015 being worse, said O'Neill, an Oregon State University associate professor.

"Right now, there's no reasonable prospect that the snowpack will recover to normal. The hope is that we get a little bit, because every drop of water will be crucial," he added.

O'Neill said restoring Oregon's snowpack to even 50% of normal by April 1 was unrealistic with warmer showers in the forecast.



Mount Hood stands in the distance near the White River West Sno Park on Feb. 28. Oregon's snowpack was at 32% of normal on March 2, which was its second-lowest mark on record for the date. (Kyle Odegard, Capital Press)

"A lot of places, we're starting to lose snowpack," he said.

While Idaho and Washington didn't have particularly strong snowpacks, they weren't as meager as Oregon.

"We're the worst of every state in the West. We're the epicenter of the snow drought here," O'Neill said.

Idaho's snowpack was 74% of normal, while Washington's was at 53%.

Increased drought, wildfire potential

O'Neill worried about

the increased potential for drought and wildfires.

"This will be a drought-filled summer for a lot of Oregon without a really wet spring," O'Neill said.

Heavy spring rains could help prevent high elevation forests from becoming as dry as kindling.

O'Neill said the state could see an earlier start to the irrigation season. There possibly won't be enough water to meet those needs in regions such as Central

Oregon, the Klamath Basin and Southwest Oregon, where many reservoirs are snowmelt dominated.

Still, it was difficult to predict summer water conditions in early March.

"Within another month, we'll have a lot more clarity," O'Neill said.

In some areas, reservoirs have ample carry-over because of strong previous years.

"Most reservoirs now are starting to draft and going into storage operations. We need as much water going into those reservoirs as possible," O'Neill said.

Oregon, by basin

Eleven of Oregon's 12 major basins had a snowpack less than 40% of normal.

The Grande Ronde-Burnt Powder-Imnaha region was 46% of normal.

Here's a look at the snowpack for other Oregon basins.

- Umatilla-Walla Walla-Wilow — 37%
- Malheur — 35%
- Hood-Sandy-Lower

- Deschutes — 34%
- Lake County-Goose Lake — 34%
- John Day — 33%
- Harney — 30%
- Upper Deschutes-Crooked — 30%
- Rogue-Umpqua — 27%
- Willamette — 27%
- Klamath — 24%
- Owyhee — 20%

Washington and Idaho snowpacks

Idaho had three of 21 basins above 100%, led by the Big Lost region at 131%, while another was at 96%.

Seven regions were between 71% and 87% and seven were between 50% and 67%.

Three Idaho basins were below 50%, including the Owyhee, which the state shares with Oregon.

Washington had eight of 14 major basins above 50% of normal, led by the Upper Columbia region, at 84%, and the North Puget Sound area, at 73%.

Of Washington six basins lower than 50% of normal, the Yakima region's snowpack was the lightest at 35%.



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


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Consultant translates tech so Oregon small operators can use drones, AI

By **KYLE ODEGARD**
Capital Press

Farmers and foresters don't always communicate well with engineers, and that's where Jonathan Buswell steps in.

His business, Buswell Drone Services of Yamhill, Ore., functions as a sort of interpreter to help small-scale growers and woodland owners use emerging technology.

Drones and artificial intelligence can be daunting and manufacturers often don't understand how machinery will be used in fields.

With tight margins, many ag producers don't have the resources to purchase their own equipment or the time to develop expertise, Buswell said.

"Folks that have small acreage typically don't have access or maybe even

know about this technology," he added.

He partners with DroneDeploy of San Francisco to build programs tailored for Willamette Valley clients including nurseries, hazelnut growers, wineries, Christmas tree farms, small woodlands owners and construction firms.

"Right now I'm trying to take a model that looks at health and try to find hazelnut blight while there are no leaves on branches," Buswell said.

Buswell, a certified drone pilot and trainer, also helps businesses develop plans so their own employees can handle technology confidently.

He can connect farmers and foresters with service providers and parts to keep things moving, as well.

"I'm out there to basically be an operator who's opening the doors,"

Buswell said.

Providing data faster, more efficiently

Many growers and foresters are hands-on and don't see the need for the emerging technology. "They're in the field every day," Buswell said.

But he can provide them data faster and more efficiently with new technology, and earlier insights lead to healthier crops, resilient forests and better harvests, Buswell said.

He can also provide views that can't be seen with the naked eye.

"It always gets people excited. Right now, it's just so new," Buswell said.

Working with forestry clients

Buswell grew up in West Salem and built custom homes after graduating high school. He began to specialize in information technology at the company



Jonathan Buswell, owner of Buswell Drone Services of Yamhill, Ore., helps small scale growers and woodland owners use drones and artificial intelligence. "Folks that have small acreage typically don't have access or maybe even know about this technology," he said. (Courtesy Jonathan Buswell)

he worked for, and then focused on drones.

Because his family's background is in forestry, many of his clients are small woodland owners.

"Everything we focus

on is post-harvest at this point," Buswell said.

He can map out seedlings, monitor inventory, and identify pests and weeds for targeted applications using drones and AI programs.

Those practices save a lot of money and time instead of having crews scout around the landscape.

Buswell said that drones and AI can find multiple returns of value for agricultural users.

Farmers and foresters can start small, see a return on their investment, and continue to expand data gathering and insights.

"I'm just trying to remove that fear factor," Buswell said.

For more information about Buswell Drone Services, go to <https://www.buswelldrone.com/>.

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Regulators kill Eastern Oregon breeding male wolf

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

An Oregon wildlife biologist on Feb. 19, shot and killed the breeding male wolf from a pack that killed or injured cattle several times in the Keating Valley east of Baker City last fall and this winter.

Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office, said he shot the wolf from a helicopter about 7:15 a.m. in the Keating area, about 15 miles east of Baker City.

The breeding male is the fourth wolf from the Black Pines Pack that officials have killed in the Keating area over the past three weeks.

The three other wolves, all pups born to the pack in the spring of 2025, were trapped and killed in late January or early February.

Ratliff said ODFW had authorized killing up to four wolves from the pack. Officials will monitor the three remaining wolves, and if they continue to attack livestock "we will act accordingly," Rat-



Wolves of the Minam Pack roam Northeastern Oregon. The Minam Pack is one of the more aggressive packs in Wallowa County when it comes to livestock and wildlife kills. The Hurricane Creek Grange at its meeting Feb. 10, 2026, hosted a presentation on the county wolf policy that the Grange will seek statewide support for. (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife)

liff said.

He said the remnants of the pack include the breeding female and two pups from the 2025 litter.

Ratliff attached a tracking collar to one of the pups, a female, earlier this winter.

He said he doesn't know whether the other surviving pup is a male or female. Ratliff said the pup is the "runt of the litter," and if it's a male he doubts it will ever be a breeding male because it wouldn't be able to compete with larger males.

Ratliff said it's possible that the breeding female from the Black Pines Pack is pregnant. So long as the collared pup stays with the breeding female, Ratliff said he should be able to determine, based on the pup's movements, whether the breeding female is pregnant and moves to a den to give birth this spring.

Breeding females tend to follow a predictable pattern when they move to a den, Ratliff said.

If the Black Pines breeding female isn't pregnant, it's con-

ceivable that the wolf could find another male soon and have a litter later this year, Ratliff said. It's also possible that the female won't have pups this year.

Black Pines Pack history

The breeding male that Ratliff killed Friday had been part of the pack for several years, including in 2023 when the pack attacked livestock in the Keating and Medical Springs areas at least 10 times.

Ratliff estimated the wolf was about 7 years old.

Officials killed six wolves from the pack in late November and early December 2023 after the repeated attacks on cattle.

The last wolf killed in 2023 was the pack's breeding female. Ratliff said that after that wolf was killed the remaining pack dispersed almost immediately and stayed away from the Keating Valley.

He hopes that will happen again now that the breeding male is dead.

The pack was reconstituted, after the six wolves were killed

in 2023, when the breeding male found another breeding female. After agents from the U.S. Wildlife Services trapped and killed three pups from the pack earlier in late January and early February, the pack moved northwest to the High Valley area around Cove.

Christopher Porter, a Keating Valley rancher who had three steers killed by wolves and another injured in January, said on Wednesday, Feb. 18, that the wolves had returned to the valley a few days earlier.

Ratliff said the wolves had resumed their previous pattern, moving from the forest north of Keating Valley into the valley overnight, then returning to the forest around daylight.

He said he saw the wolves while flying in a helicopter Friday morning, and targeted the breeding male. That wolf was also fitted with a tracking collar, in March 2023, but its batteries failed soon after, Ratliff said. That was due in part to ODFW setting the collar to report its position more often than usual, to help biologists track its movements.

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Idaho Fish and Game kills three wolves in far north

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Idaho Fish and Game Feb. 21-22 killed three wolves in the state's far north to support elk recovery.

Helicopter-borne staff shot the wolves.

The first-ever effort in the department's Panhandle elk management zone, and recent success by local trappers, substantially reduced the size of a single wolf pack in a key part of Game Management Unit 4 east of Coeur d'Alene, according to a department news release.

Recent data indicate elk numbers in the unit have declined, with predation on elk calves a contributing factor.

Fish and Game offers expanded opportunities to harvest wolves, black bears and mountain lions in Unit 4, through extended seasons and additional tag availability, promote elk population growth. The department also works with the U.S. Forest Service to improve elk habitat.

Fish and Game takes targeted control actions to address specific conflicts and where hunting and trapping have not been sufficient to meet management goals.

A 2024 federal court injunction



A gray wolf. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has killed three wolves in Northern Idaho to aid Elk recovery. (Courtesy Idaho Fish and Game)

closed wolf trapping season part of the year to help protect grizzly bear populations during the bears' non-denning period. Wolf harvest by trappers has declined statewide, including in Unit 4, "affecting progress toward the state's wolf population goal and the ability to reduce wolf predation on elk," according to the release.

The primary goal of the recent action — conducted under the department's 2024-2030 Idaho Elk Management Plan and Fish and Game Commission-approved 2023-2028 Idaho Gray

Wolf Management Plan — was to reduce predation and improve elk survival in a population that is underperforming.

In addition to the three wolves shot by Fish and Game staff in a helicopter, trappers took four from the area as tracked by the department, public information supervisor Roger Phillips told Capital Press.

"We believe we reduced some pressure from that wolf pack on the elk herd up there, and we are going to go into denning this spring and that pack probably is not going to

produce pups," he said.

"This is a very targeted thing," Phillips said. "This is what we do in an attempt to balance predators and prey. This is one way we do it, and it's not one size fits all. We look at each situation and figure out what can be done most efficiently, and in this case it was helicopter removal of some wolves."

Similar management efforts have been conducted annually in the Lolo elk zone, in the state's north-central region, according to the release.

The Idaho wolf management plan aims to reduce the population to around 500 — the 2009 U.S. Fish and Wildlife threshold for delisting under the Endangered Species Act, above which the state is allowed to manage wolves. Fish and Game in July 2025 said the May 2024 population was estimated at 1,235, down 7.35% from a year earlier.

Fish and Game in recent years focused on reducing the wolf population where livestock depredation was chronic and where elk populations were below management objectives. The legislature in 2021 substantially increased allowed wolf take and methods that can be used.

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Washington high court sets hearing on Horse Heavens energy project

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Washington Supreme Court will hear oral arguments June 11 on whether to stop the massive wind and solar installation taking shape on the Horse Heaven Hills overlooking the Tri-Cities.

The Yakama Nation, Benton County and Tri-Cities CARES claim former Gov. Jay Inslee strong-armed the project through, ignoring other interests besides green energy.

Inslee authorized Scout Clean Energy in 2024 to install up to 222 windmills, solar panels and batteries on farmland. The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council originally recommended allowing only 115 windmills to lessen impacts to views, wildlife and tribal culture.

Inslee ordered EFSEC to restore the windmills. EFSEC, whose voting members are drawn from state agencies, complied and sent a second recommendation to Inslee.

The plaintiffs allege Inslee's demand broke the state's Energy Facilities Site Location Act. The act requires balancing the need for energy with other public values, such as wildlife, recreation and aesthetics.



The Washington Supreme Court will hear oral arguments June 11 on whether former Gov. Jay Inslee violated the state's energy-siting law by insisting the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council recommend the Horse Heavens wind and solar project as proposed by Scout Clean Energy. (File photo)

In a brief filed with the Supreme Court, the tribe argued EFSEC originally balanced those interests. Inslee's order, however, toppled it. "The governor has no authority to issue such a directive," the brief states.

Inslee discarded EFSEC's careful analysis of the project's impact on views, according to Tri-Cities CARES. Windmills will stretch for 25 miles along a ridge visible to 300,000 people, according to the citizens group. Inslee said visual impacts would be limited and subjective.

Inslee called the project "vital," but Tri-Cities CARES complained it was barred at hearings from questioning the project's actual contribution to the electric grid.

The windmills and solar panels would have a capac-

ity of 1,150 megawatts, making it the largest renewable project in the state. The actual energy output would depend on the wind and sun.

The county alleges the project runs afoul of the Growth Management Act. The act requires counties to preserve farmland. The windmills, solar panels and batteries will take 6,869 acres of farmland out of production, according to the county.

During hearings on the project, a wheat farmer testified lease payments from Scout will stabilize the farm's finances and brighten the future of farming on the hills.

The plaintiffs raise other procedural issues. The plaintiffs complain a final environmental impact statement was unfinished when EFSEC held formal hearings on the project.

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Oregon wine industry's economic impact growing, but pace slows

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The Oregon wine industry's economic impact keeps growing, though at a slower pace due to headwinds, according to a new Oregon Wine Board analysis.

The 2024 Oregon Wine Economic Impact Report, released Feb. 26, also detailed the industry's substantial contribution to tourism.

The report showed Oregon wine and grape industries generated an estimated \$8.49 billion economic impact in 2024, a 3.8% increase from the previous report in 2022.

However, from 2019 to 2022 the industry's economic impact increased nearly 13%.

"From the jobs it provides Oregonians across vineyards, wineries and related businesses, to the tourism dollars flowing into communities statewide, the industry touches every corner of Oregon," said Gina Bianco, Oregon Wine Board executive director.



Despite industry problems, wine grapes were Oregon's most valuable fruit in 2024 with a value of \$329 million. Pinot noir, Chardonnay and Pinot gris were the most harvested wine grapes in the state. (Courtesy Carolyn Wells-Kramer, Oregon Wine Board)

"Even as the challenges faced by the global wine market continue to impact our growers and producers, the contributions of Oregon wine to the state are tangible, growing and distinctly positive," Bianco added, in a news release.

Industry challenges include a decline in demand and uncertainty about tariffs and immigration enforcement, which have increased costs for business and households.

The pandemic and wildfires also have cast a lingering shadow on the industry, and travel has shifted to lower frequency and spending levels.

Despite those issues, wine grapes were Oregon's most valuable fruit in 2024 with a value of \$329 million.

Wine-supported wages and salaries increased 2.8% to \$1.75 billion in 2024, but the number of jobs supported by the industry dropped 3.4% to roughly 38,100.

Oregon as wine destination

The report highlighted the important link between wine and tourism in Oregon.

"The tourism industry has become a larger external component of wine industry success, serving as a channel for tasting room and wine club sales, winery events and additional marketing based on visitors' experiences at the winery," said Robert Eylar of Economic Forensics and Analytics, who conducted the report.

"Getting younger, mobile customers to see wine as part of their lives and Oregon as a place to visit must remain a focus of winery and destination marketing strategies," he wrote, in the report.

In 2024, wine-supported tourism accounted for nearly \$861 million in statewide revenues through lodging, dining and other activities (not including tasting room sales), a 13.5% jump from 2022.

Wine-related tourism supported more than 9,100 jobs and \$329 million in wages in Oregon.

Data from Travel Oregon showed 18.8% of out-of-state travelers visited wineries in 2024, up from 14.3% in 2022.

However, average Oregon tasting room visitation decreased 5%.

More Oregon wine data

Planted acreage increased to roughly 47,350 acres in 2024, up 6.4%.

Only about 37,200 acres were harvested, nearly 1,600 less than in 2022, as some growers left grapes on the vine.

Approximately 129,740 tons of grapes were produced, down 5.3%.

The median price for Oregon wine grapes was \$2,465 per ton, up nearly 4.8%.

Pinot noir, Chardonnay and Pinot gris were the most harvested grapes, with red varieties selling for higher prices.

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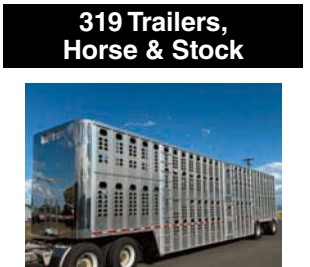


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Bankruptcy order sets 'soft deadline' for Anderson payments

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

A major Northwest hay exporter has won final approval to pay growers on equal terms for forage products while it restructures its business during bankruptcy proceedings.

Anderson Hay, of Ellensburg, Wash., has struck a final agreement with its main creditors under which all farmers will be paid by May 1 for hay and straw grown for the company before it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year.

Up until now, Anderson has paid pre-bankruptcy debts to growers on an interim basis, as lender AgWest

Farm Credit has complained there's insufficient data about the payments for them to receive "blanket" approval.

During a recent hearing, however, an attorney for AgWest said the lender does not object to the bankruptcy court authorizing a final order allowing Anderson to pay farmers for such pre-petition debts.

"AgWest's position is to ensure the vendors get paid," said Daniel Hagen, the lender's attorney. "We will support ensuring the growers get paid in whatever form the court deems appropriate."

The question of grower payments

has loomed over Anderson's case, since pre-bankruptcy debts must typically be repaid only once a company has won approval for a reorganization plan, which is intended to prevent more favorable treatment for some creditors than others.

In this case, though, Anderson has argued that it would have trouble persuading farmers to continue supplying it with hay and straw in the future unless it compensates them for past forage crops.

How such pre-petition debts should be treated has further complicated the matter.

A bankruptcy court can allow

a company to assume "executory" contracts, in which the parties haven't yet fulfilled significant obligations.

If growers hadn't yet delivered the hay and straw to Anderson, those could be approved as "executory" contracts under which the farms could be paid for past debts during bankruptcy proceedings.

But those growers who had already delivered their crops would have "non-executory contracts" — to be repaid for past debts, they would have to be treated as "critical vendors," which is disfavored

See **ANDERSON**, Page B14

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ANDERSON

continued from B13

under a legal precedent in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

During the recent hearing, an attorney representing Anderson Hay's unsecured creditors said that it would be unfair to "pick and choose" among which growers will be paid for past crops.

"It's critical to treat everyone the same," said Tim Conway, attorney for the committee representing unsecured creditors, who lack collateral for loans to

the company.

Conway said he appreciated that Anderson Hay has committed to timely compensating farmers but urged the court to enter a final order approving such payments because of the upcoming growing season.

"Growers have to make big business decisions regarding the next harvest," he said.

Chief Bankruptcy Judge Whitman Holt of the Eastern District of Washington said he agreed with this "equality principle" and said he would approve a final order allowing payments to grow-

ers without distinguishing whether they have executory contracts or not.

Since no parties involved in Anderson Hay's bankruptcy process have objected to farmers being paid for past crops, the judge said he would "punt" making an official decision regarding executory contracts and critical vendor payments until "the point it ever becomes necessary."

"It's a little squishy, for lack of a better word, but sometimes having that little bit of indeterminacy helps move the process forward, and the court understands



In a court filing, Anderson Hay has asked permission to pay growers who provided the company hay before it filed for bankruptcy. (Capital Press file photo)

why we need to do that here," the judge said.

Deadline for payment

Under the terms of that order, farmers must be paid for past crops by May 1, though Anderson Hay can apply for an extension if it becomes necessary.

James Day, attorney for Anderson Hay, said the company is on track to submit a bankruptcy plan for restructuring the business by April 30.

Requiring growers to be paid by May 1 is likely to be a "very doable timeline" but should be considered a "soft deadline" because the company must

first obtain "debtor in possession financing" to have the necessary funds available, he said.

Debtor in possession financing allows companies in bankruptcy proceedings to borrow more money while retaining control over their assets.

Anderson Hay's debtor in possession financing is still being negotiated and will be contingent on the company's reorganization plan, which is currently being vetted, Day said.

"The company is making significant internal structural changes that will be the basis for our plan for going forward in one form or another," he said.

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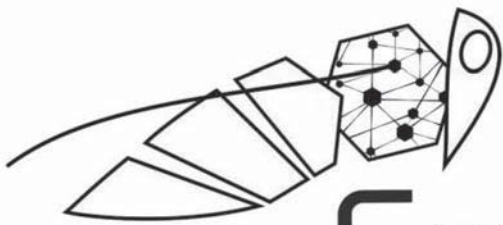


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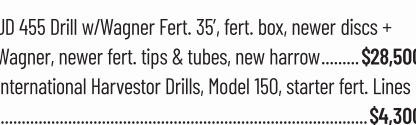
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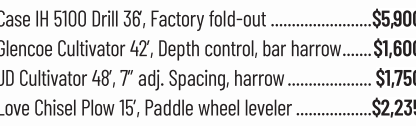
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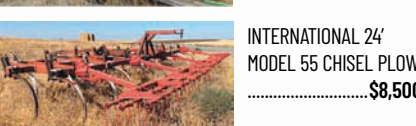
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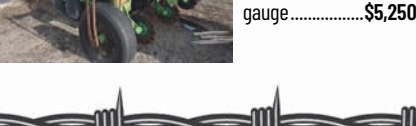
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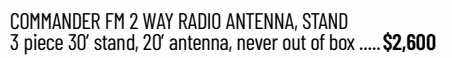
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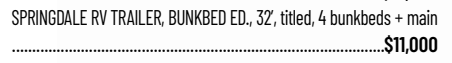


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JD 7520, 6 REMOTES,\$8,500

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Southern Oregon rancher seeks license for livestock auction

By **KYLE ODEGARD**
Capital Press

A Southern Oregon rancher has applied for a license to create a new livestock auction.

D&B Land and Livestock, doing business as Southern Oregon Livestock Auction, anticipates it would sell 50 head of cattle and 50 head of sheep and goats each month, with occasional swine and equines.

Owner Dan Boyajian said most animals will be sourced from Jackson and Josephine counties, which are relatively underserved and isolated geographically.

“There’s no livestock auction in near proximity to our local region,” he added.

Oregon currently has seven licensed livestock auctions,

but the closest to the Grants Pass or Medford areas would be in Klamath Falls, a drive of roughly 1.5-2 hours.

Boyajian said Southern Oregon Livestock Auction may also be tailored more toward rural residents with small numbers of livestock, rather than larger, fully commercial ranches.

“There’s a lot of small producers in our area,” he said.

The proposed livestock auction would operate at 734B Powell Creek Road near Williams, Ore.

Public hearing details

The Oregon Department of Agriculture will hold a public hearing with in-person and virtual options on March 13 from noon to 1 p.m.



A livestock auction takes place in this file photo. A new livestock auction proposed in Southern Oregon could help small producers in the region. A public hearing on the matter is set for March 13. (Courtesy USDA)

The meeting starts with an informational hearing followed by public comment.

In reviewing the application, ODA will consider factors including:

- Whether the applicant is able to comply with the federal

Packers and Stockyards Act.

- Whether livestock auction services are already available in the proposed trade area, and whether issuing a license would help or harm the livestock industry and local economy. This includes considering whether a new license would affect the ability of existing licensed livestock auctions to continue providing service to the area.

- The applicant’s past experience operating a livestock auction market and their ability to provide ongoing, reliable service to the trade area.

For those attending in person, the meeting will be held in meeting room D at 635 Capitol St. N.E. in Salem.

To join the meeting virtually, go to <https://tinyurl.com/46xjn2cw>.

The meeting ID is 296 471 744 287 83 and the passcode is 3ip7xa9h.

To call into the meeting, dial 503-446-4951, 952396223#.

About D&B Land and Livestock

D&B Land and Livestock is a first generation ranch.

“I started working for a neighboring producer when I was in high school, doing farm and ranch work. That was my initial introduction to some form of commercial agriculture,” Boyajian said.

While working at the diversified organic farm, he discovered that he enjoyed cattle and sheep production and ranching.

After graduating from South Medford High School in 2008, he leased his first pasture and started raising cattle. Boyajian marketed beef directly to consumers for the first time in 2009.

As the business grew, Boyajian earned a degree in business administration from Southern Oregon University.

D&B has expanded into commercial sales and brokerage of livestock.

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Conservation groups sue BLM over sage grouse plans

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press



A greater sage grouse at Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge, Wyo. (Tom Koerner / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Conservation groups on March 2 sued the U.S. Bureau of Land Management over new plans for greater sage grouse management across 71 million acres of federal public land.

The lawsuit covers sage grouse habitat in Montana, Idaho, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nevada, California, Utah and Wyoming. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Great Falls, Mont.

BLM finalized plans in December, stripping protections approved in 2015 by Western states and federal officials to prevent the need to list greater sage grouse as endangered, according to a news release from the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the plaintiffs. Other plaintiffs are Gallatin Wildlife Association, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Rocky Mountain Wild, Sierra Club, Western Watersheds Project and Wildearth Guardians.

“The Trump Administration’s destructive, illegal plans could nail the coffin shut on our country’s incredible dancing birds unless the courts intervene,” Center for Biological Diversity public lands policy director Randi Spivak said. “There’s no scientific support for claims that these plans will save sage grouse and no public support for them, either.” The sage

grouse’s fate is tied to hundreds of other animals that rely on sagebrush habitat, and “we’ve got to preserve these Western landscapes for future generations.”

“After a decade of tepid sage grouse protections, now the Bureau of Land Management is completely abandoning its responsibility to manage commercial activities in sage grouse habitats to allow the birds to survive,” Western Watersheds executive director Erik Molvar, a wildlife biologist, said in the release. “The limitations on livestock grazing, oil and gas development, and mining in the original plans are now being cast aside in a rush to accelerate industrial and commercial activities.”

Changes to the sage grouse plans will worsen habitat conditions, according to the Center for Biological Diversity release, which cited U.S. Geological Survey findings that most breeding sites have a 50% chance of disappearing over the next 60 years if conditions remain unchanged.

The new plans “fall short of conservation measures scientists say are needed to recover this species, opening

millions of acres of public lands to expanded industrial development,” said Sarah Stellberg, an Advocates for the West attorney representing conservation groups. “For a species already in decline, we are out of time for half-measures.”

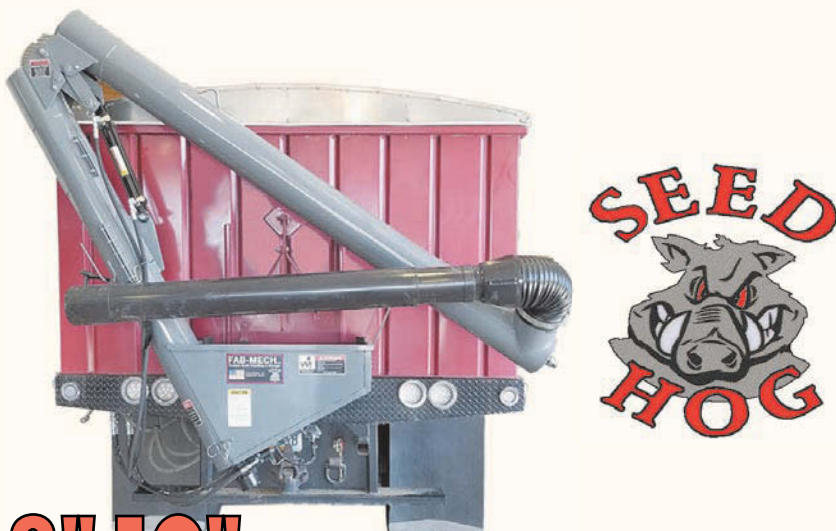
BLM in announcing the plans said goals include enhancing habitat conservation, and balancing access to public lands for responsible energy and mineral development. The plans, which support the Unleashing American Energy executive order

(14154) and Interior secretary orders that advance energy independence, aim to make more acres available for development while continuing to protect habitat across 65 million acres.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 established that public lands are to be managed to protect the quality of their ecological and environmental values and to provide food and habitat for wildlife, according to the complaint. FLMPLA also directs that lands are managed for sustained yield and multiple use — which takes into account future generations’ long-term need for resources including wildlife without permanently impairing productivity of the land and quality of the environment.

The 2025 plans significantly weaken sage grouse protections adopted in the 2015 plans “in ways unsupported by the best available science,” the complaint says. And the plans violate the Administrative Procedure Act as “arbitrary and capricious” in that BLM “failed to articulate a rational explanation for their decisions, offered justifications that run counter to the evidence before the agency, and disregarded material facts and evidence including the best available science.”

Conservation groups also contend Congress has not authorized the Interior secretary or BLM to delegate authority over federal public lands or resources to the states.



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CIH Sweep, #1547098C2, Size 9	\$23 ⁴⁰	Twisted Chisel, #594545R or #594546R1	\$29 ⁷⁷
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Derek McCroskey

U.S. farm groups seek to inform justices about glyphosate

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

U.S. farm groups are swamping the U.S. Supreme Court with briefs, hoping to ensure justices know how much agriculture needs glyphosate.

The court will hear arguments on April 27 on whether the chemical maker formally known as Monsanto had a duty to warn customers that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup products, could cause cancer.

The Trump administration supports the company. The Environmental Protection Agency concluded glyphosate doesn't cause cancer. A warning on Roundup products to the contrary would violate the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, according to the Justice Department.

Numerous agricultural and legal organizations filed friend-of-the-court briefs March 2 supporting the company. The Oregon Farm Bureau joined 10 other state Farm Bureau chapters, the Indiana Agricultural Law Foundation and the North Carolina Chamber Legal Institute in a brief.

The brief argues that if

the company loses, farmers may be forced to get glyphosate from China and India.

"Given the critical importance of glyphosate to agricultural production, this shift in market power would give China and India enormous leverage over the American food supply," the farm groups stated.

German company Bayer AG acquired Monsanto in 2018 and eliminated the brand name. The name lives on in the case before the Supreme Court, Monsanto Company v. John L. Durnell.

According to court records, more than 100,000 plaintiffs seek to hold the company liable for not warning consumers that glyphosate causes cancer.

One of the plaintiffs, St. Louis resident John Durnell, belonged to a citizens group formed to beautify the neighborhood. Durnell sprayed Roundup to kill weeds in parks from the late 1990s until he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2018, according to court records.

A 12-member jury found the company violated Missouri law by not warning

See GLYPHOSATE, Page C5



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The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments April 27 on whether the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act pre-empts state laws requiring additional warnings on pesticide labels. (File photo)

GLYPHOSATE

continued from C4

consumers that Roundup could be “reasonably dangerous.”

At the court’s invitation, the Trump administration urged justices to hear the appeal. FIFRA preempts state laws, but if the verdict stands, jurors will be free to second-guess EPA-approved labels on pesticides, U.S. attorneys stated in a brief.

“States could drown EPA’s approved warnings in a sea of local health and environmental concerns,” the brief reads.

Durnell’s attorneys argue FIFRA didn’t prevent Monsanto from warning consumers in advertisements to wear protective gear.

The EPA first registered glyphosate for use in agriculture in 1974. From 1985 to 1986, it labeled the her-

bicide possibly carcinogenic after three mice out of 50 fed “extremely high doses” of glyphosate developed kidney tumors.

Further studies cleared the chemical, according to EPA. In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as probably carcinogenic. EPA reviewed the science and disagreed.

The Farm Bureau chapters acknowledged that the word “pesticides” summons images of skulls and cross-bones, but they point out that the million souls lost in the Irish potato famine probably could have been saved by a herbicide.

“It is no exaggeration to say that without ready access to modern pesticides like glyphosate, the availability of sufficient food to feed the plant’s 8.3 billion inhabitants would be in serious doubt,” their brief states.

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Farmer facing Ecology fine vows to farm 'as I did before'

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

DEER PARK, Wash. — Robert "Bob" Greiff, the 85-year-old farmer facing a \$112,000 fine and a lien on his farm from the Washington Department of Ecology, says he'll be farming in a month. "I'm going to farm that

property as I did before, water it the same way," Greiff told Capital Press. "Like any other year, we plant a crop and we irrigate what we can and hope nature waters the rest of it so we get a good crop."

Ecology fined the 85-year-old oat and alfalfa farmer \$100,000 in September, add-

ing to a previous \$12,000 fine. Ecology also has placed a lien on the farm. The fines were for irrigating 69 acres without a permit.

Greiff says he's done nothing wrong.

The farm is 150 acres, outside Deer Park, Wash. Greiff will turn 86 in May. He farms

with son Bobby.

The dispute centers on two parcels on the Greiff farm that are separated by a road, with 69 acres on one side and 37 acres on the other.

Robert Greiff contends his father applied for a water right for the 69-acre parcel when he bought it in 1952,

and irrigated the land for 70 years until 2019.

In 2019, Ecology told Greiff that his water rights only allowed water to be placed on the 37-acre parcel. As the dispute played out, the agency fined him for irrigating on that parcel after receiving a cease-and-desist order.

The local water board later approved a plan to expand the water rights to include the 69-acre parcel without increasing the water volume. That plan was denied by Ecology when it was sent for the agency's review, and Greiff missed the deadline for appealing its decision.

Greiff said he hasn't heard further from Ecology.

"Haven't heard a peep out of anybody," Greiff said. "I'm just sitting tight and seeing what goes on."

'Agency overreach'

Shad Sullivan, property rights chair for R-CALF USA, recently posted a video on social media discussing Greiff's situation. The video received 315 reactions and been shared 80 times as of Feb. 17.

"Washington State has a mess on their hands with state agency overreach towards agricultural producers," Sullivan told Capital Press, also citing Ecology's case against Coulee City, Wash., ranchers Wade and Teresa King, among others. "There's obviously a problem there with overreach and authority on a state level."

Sullivan first heard about Greiff's case a year ago, and called him by phone a few months ago.

"Bob was upbeat about the whole situation; maybe he understands the gravity, but his life experience doesn't let him get in a total panic," Sullivan said.

Sullivan believes attention to the King ranch "saga" may be slowing down Greiff's case.

"Either way, both of them have to be contended with," he said. "If there's others in the state, we've got to deal with that too."

Legal assistance

Sullivan recently mentioned Greiff's case to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins. Rollins has expressed

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'23 CASE IH 8250, 520 Hrs, Harvest Command, 4WD, Chopper, Duals, Lux Cab, #1010..... **\$425,000**



'21 CASE IH MAXXUM 135 ACT 8, 800 hrs, MFD, 3pt, PTO, #1342..... **\$135,000**



'23 CASE IH 9250 HILLSIDE COMBINE, 755 hrs, Harvest Command, Chopper, Duals, Lux Cab, #1055..... **\$550,000**



'22 CASE IH MAGNUM 280 AFS CONCT CVT, 1200 hrs, MFD, Susp Axle, PTO, #1383..... **\$280,000**



'08 CASE IH STEIGER 435Q, 8120 hrs, Lux Cab, 30" Tracks, 4 Remotes, #1387..... **\$150,000**

USED TRACKED TRACTORS

- '23 Case IH 580Q AFS Connect, 1300 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO pump, Lux cab#145..... **\$495,000**
- '22 Case IH 580Q AFS Connect, 2560 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux cab#1455..... **\$399,000**
- '18 Case IH 580Q, 3730 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab, Trailer Brake#1457..... **\$295,000**
- '24 CASE IH 555Q CVX, AFS CONNECT, 1180 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO pump, Lux cab#..... **\$525,000**
- '24 CASE IH 525Q AFS CONNECT, 1325 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO pump, Lux cab#1445..... **\$515,000**
- '23 CASE IH 540Q AFS CONNECT, 1300 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab, #1426..... **\$495,000**
- '23 CASE IH 500Q AFS CONNECT, 1300 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab, #1427..... **\$475,000**
- '23 CASE IH 500Q AFS CONNECT, 1800 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab, #1400..... **\$459,000**
- '23 CASE IH 500Q AFS CONNECT, 970 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab#1428..... **\$500,000**
- '20 CASE IH 500Q, 5140 hrs, PTO, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmt, HO Pump, Lux Cab#1430..... **\$250,000**
- '18 CASE IH STEIGER 620Q, 3300hrs, Lux Cab, 36" Tracks, 6 Rmts, PTO, HO Pump #1435..... **\$395,000**
- '08 CASE IH STEIGER 435Q, 8120 hrs, Lux Cab, 30" Tracks, 4 Remotes, #1387..... **\$150,000**
- '14 CHALLENGER-M1775E, 3004 hrs, PTO, 3pt hitch, 24" Tracks, 5 Remts, #1432..... **\$160,000**
- '14 CHALLENGER-M1775E, 6025 hrs., PTO, 3pt, 14" Tracks, 6 Rmts, #1313..... **\$110,000**

USED WHEEL TRACTORS

- '22 CASE IH MAGNUM 280 AFS CONCT CVT, 1300 hrs, MFD, Susp Axle, PTO, #1392..... **\$280,000**
- '22 CASE IH MAGNUM 280 AFS CONCT CVT, 1200 hrs, MFD, Susp Axle, PTO, #1383..... **\$280,000**
- '23 CASE IH MAXXUM 135 ACT 4, 250 hrs, MFD, 3pt, PTO, #1401..... **\$150,000**
- '21 CASE IH MAXXUM 135 ACT 8, 800 hrs, MFD, 3pt, PTO, #1342..... **\$135,000**
- '21 CASE IH MAXXUM 135 ACT 4, 871 hrs, MFD, 3pt, PTO, #1398..... **\$120,000**
- '78 STEIGER PANTHER 3, ST325, 4-Remotes, Duals, Cat Engine, ConsD62..... **\$10,000**

SPRAYERS

- '24 APACHE H51100 SPRAYER, 120' Booms, 4WD Hydro, Capstan system, #558..... **\$CALL**
- '24 APACHE H51100 SPRAYER, 120' Booms, 4WD Hydro, Capstan system, #561..... **\$CALL**
- '99 JD 4700 SPRAYER, 3700 hrs, 4WD, 90' Booms, 1000 Gal Tank, Raven Guidance, #552..... **\$39,500**
- '22 APACHE A51250XP, 1000 hrs, 132' Booms, Raven XRT, Capstan, Diff lock, #573..... **\$350,000**
- '22 APACHE A51250XP, 880 hrs, 132' Booms, Raven XRT, Capstan, boom height #576..... **\$350,000**

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- '24 DEMCO 1000 Bushel Grain Cart, 900-R32 Tires#..... **\$CALL**
- '24 DEMCO 1300 Bushel Grain Cart, 1200-R32 Tires#..... **\$CALL**
- '19 DEMCO 1102 Grain Cart, Roll Tarp, 1050/R32 Tires, PTO #1252..... **\$65,000**

USED COMBINES

- '24 CASE IH 9250 HILLCO, 550 HRS, HARVEST COMND, 4WD, CHOPPER, DUALS, LU CAB, #1091..... **\$635,000**
- '10 CASE IH 7088 HILLSIDE, 2400 hrs, chopper, 4WD, Duals #1069..... **\$95,000**
- '07 JD 9860 STS HILLSIDE, 3160 hrs, duals, chopper, FD70 35' Draper #1079..... **\$120,000**
- '07 JD 9860 STS SIDEHILL, 3248 hrs, duals, chopper, 630 Header #1071..... **\$70,000**
- '04 JD 9660 STS, 2540 hrs, Duals, Chopper, 630 Auger, #1066..... **\$50,000**
- '23 CASE IH 8250, 725 hrs, Harvest Command, 4wd, Chopper, Duals, Lux Cab, #1105..... **\$440,000**
- '21 CASE IH 9250 HILLCO, 818 hrs, Harvest Command, 4wd, Chopper, Duals Lux Cab #1014..... **\$500,000**
- '10 CASE IH 8120, 2850 hrs, Chopper, Duals, 2WD #1103..... **\$89,000**

USED HAY EQUIPMENT

- '22 MACDON M1240 WINDROWER, 430 hrs, 16ft Rotary Header, #CA249..... **\$175,000**
- '20 CASE IH RB465 ROUND BALER, 6000 bales, Net Wrap, Great Shape Consd87..... **\$45,000.00**

USED TILLAGE, SEEDING, GRAIN CARTS & MISC.

- '14 HORSCH ANDERSON JOKER RT370, 37', New Blades, #ConsD71#460..... **\$60,000**



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USDA announces new aid to sugar farmers

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

USDA will provide \$150 million to U.S. sugar beet and sugarcane farmers in response to temporary market disruptions as well as increased production and processing costs, agriculture secretary Brooke Rollins announced.

The department will work with sugar processors in the coming months to finalize agreements that will deliver assistance directly to farmer members, according to a news release. The one-time payments build upon the previously announced Farmer Bridge Assistance and Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers programs.

“President Trump is committed to standing by all of our great American farmers who were unjustly hurt by President Biden’s economic mismanagement that drove up the costs of inputs and dereliction of global trade that impacted commodity markets,” Rollins said in the release. USDA’s announcement of assistance “serves as a bridge to improvements President Trump and Republicans in Congress have made to the U.S. sugar program including the first meaningful increase to sugar loan rates in 40 years.”

Sugar loan rates were raised in the 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act, providing added support to producers.

USDA also said it will provide \$89.1 million in weather-related disaster assistance to sugar beet producers who suffered losses due to excessive heat in 2024. This funding, provided in the 2025 American Relief Act, will be administered through eligible beet sugar cooperatives.

Southern Idaho and parts of Oregon and Washington comprise a major sugar beet production region.

FINE

continued from C6

support for the Kings.

Sullivan is involved with the rollout of USDA’s Farmer and Rancher Freedom Framework, an initiative designed to protect farmers and ranchers from “politically motivated lawfare.”

There’s also a program at America First Policy Institute, Sullivan added.

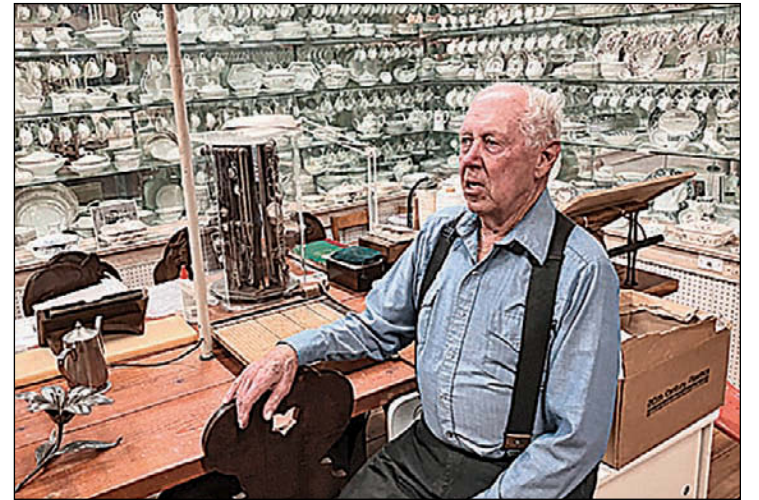
“The whole thing is, nobody can afford these attorneys, so it’s always a death by

a thousand cuts,” he said.

Discussions are underway to bring attorneys on board for both cases, he said.

‘I just want to see it resolved’

“I just want to irrigate on the rest of the property that I own,” Greiff said. “I just want to see it resolved. Other than that, I have no problems. I’ve been farming it for all my life. I’ve done nothing wrong. We have a permit for so many gallons of water, and I’ve put the water where it needed to be, and that was it.”



Oat and alfalfa farmer and North Spokane Farm Museum curator Robert Greiff sits in the English ironstone dish room upstairs in the museum Oct. 29, 2025. Greiff faces a \$112,000 fine and a lien on his farm from the Washington Department of Ecology for allegedly irrigating his farm ground without a water right. He plans to farm the farm “as I did before, water it the same way.” (Matthew Weaver/Capital Press file photo)





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Armchair Engineer: Judge's order 'one step closer' to dam breaching

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The "emergency measures" ordered by federal Judge Michael Simon last week are "death by 1,000 papercuts," a dam advocate on social media says.

Simon on Feb. 25 ordered increased spill over dams and lower reservoir levels on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Environmental and recreation groups asked the court in October to order the emergency measures to ben-



Social media content creator Adam Ratliff, the "Armchair Engineer," takes a tour of Lower Granite Dam. Ratliff is working on behalf of the farmer non-profit Center for Sustainability and Working Rivers to educate the public about the benefits of the lower Snake River dams. (Courtesy Adam Ratliff)

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efit endangered salmon and Fisheries directed media steelhead. inquiries about the effect of

Representatives for NOAA Simon's order on fish survival

to the Department of Justice.

"We don't have a comment or information to provide," said Matthew Nies, public affairs specialist for the DOJ.

Adam Ratliff is known on social media as the Armchair Engineer, posting about dams, water and hydropower infrastructure.

He volunteers his time to the farmer-led non-profit Center for Sustainability and Working Rivers. The organization aims to increase public engagement and awareness about the services that the lower Snake River

and Columbia River dams provide.

Last year, Ratliff's videos received more than 15.5 million views. He recently posted several videos detailing his recent trip along Marine Highway 84, on the Columbia-Snake river system.

Ratliff responded to Capital Press' questions via e-mail regarding Simon's order.

Q. What did you make of the judge's ruling? What can ag take away from it?

Ratliff: The ruling is yet

See DAMS, Page C9

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DAMS

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another step down the road toward the dismantling of our dams and river systems. This ruling won't improve conditions for fish (in fact, it may harm them). But it WILL make the dams look worse on paper, getting us one step closer to the eventual goal of dam removal.

Q. What kind of messaging should ag be focusing on now?

Ratliff: Agriculture needs to understand the play being run on the American public. This is a long-term, incrementalist approach to erode public support for the infrastructure that helps put food on our tables and keeps our homes warm in the winter. The agriculture industry needs to understand that, unless a fact-based narrative about dams is put out there, the story of our working rivers will be told by those who want to tear it all down.

Q. One thing that struck me was the judge's citing of personal declarations, i.e., the emotional impacts of seeing less fish, taking several trips longer to catch a fish with the grandchildren. What did you make of this? What is the ag equivalent of these stories?

Ratliff: Agriculture is terribly outgunned in this area. The anti-dam activist community has successfully stolen the narrative on this issue, and the present-day stakeholders of the

rivers (irrigators, grain shippers) are at least a decade behind. Ag needs to tell its story persuasively and on a mass scale. If not, the narrative will continue to be controlled by bad actors.

Q. What would you tell the judge?

Ratliff: It is a scientific fact that lethal harm happens to juvenile fish above 115% total dissolved gas (TDG) levels in the rivers. What do you think will happen when we push the rivers to 125% TDG on all eight dams for six months out of the year?

Q. Did the judge get anything right?


Ratliff: The judge correctly held that it was outside his jurisdiction to mandate lower reservoir operating levels, in compliance with the federally mandated navigation channel. It's too bad he doesn't realize that mandating six months of spill is basically making it illegal for the dams to generate power.

Q. What does this mean for potential breaching?

Ratliff: We are one step closer. Death by 1,000 paper cuts.

Q. Next steps?

Ratliff: There is nothing preventing the ag community from organizing and campaigning as the anti-dam community has been doing. But unless ag is willing to step up in this regard, we will continue to lose public trust in our working rivers.




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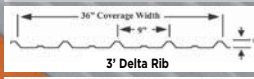
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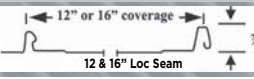
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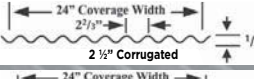
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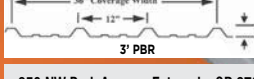
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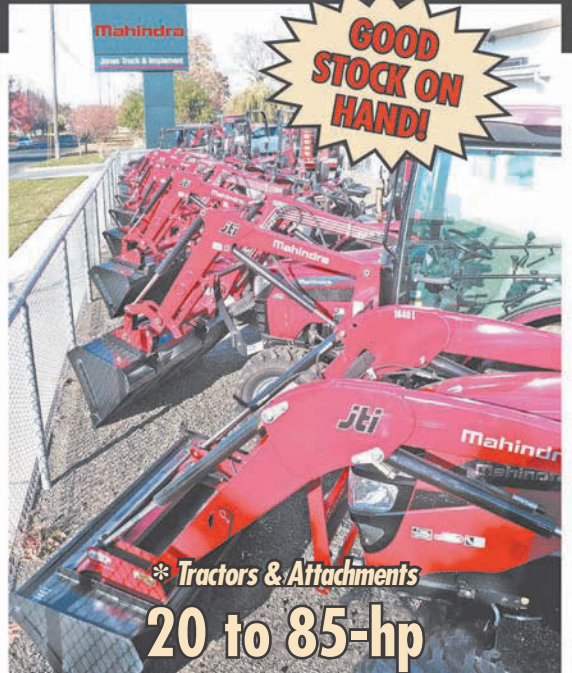
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Iran strikes nudge wheat market, analysts say

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The U.S. strikes in Iran likely won't move wheat prices much in either direction, but may push energy prices upward, grain market analysts say.

Wheat prices initially had several spikes at the beginning of the strikes Feb. 28, but fell back below where trading had begun and ended on Feb. 27, said Byron Behne, senior marketing manager for Northwest Grain Growers in Walla Walla, Wash.

"Futures ran up pretty good on the way to the war, because speculators were short wheat futures, but basically they covered all of that position by the end of last week," he said. "That took the major driver out of the market as far as the rally was concerned."

"Our overseas offices are monitoring the situation, but thus far there have not been trade disruptions," said Julia Debes, director of communi-



Analysts don't expect military action in Iran to impact wheat prices, but could cause oil prices to spike. (Courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture)

cations and stakeholder outreach for U.S. Wheat Associates, the overseas marketing arm for the industry.

Soft white wheat is \$6.05 to \$6.20 per bushel on the Portland market.

"It's not the same as the Russia-Ukraine situation where you've got two big wheat producers at war; you've just got Iran as a wheat consumer at war," Behne said. "... You'd have to have an expansion of the current conflict into something that materially affected wheat."

'An energy market deal'

"This is more of an energy market deal, a crude oil deal, than it is a wheat deal," Behne told Capital Press.

"Diesel fuel costs are skyrocketing right now," said Darin Newsom, market analyst in Omaha, Neb. "That's going to really hit when we get headed out to the field."

Energy prices more than doubled when Russia and

See WHEAT, Page C11

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WHEAT

continued from C10

Ukraine went to war, said Dan Steiner.

"This is a fairly muted response right here," Steiner said of energy prices.

Steiner retired from Morrow County Grain Growers in 2023 and now works as a market analyst in Boardman, Ore.

"That's obviously not good for farmers if fuel and fertilizer prices go up and we don't get a corresponding rise in the wheat price," Behne said.

Short and long positions

Once the strikes began, "the intensity of it and how it's being unfolded is actually calming to the market," Steiner said.

Three weeks ago, speculators were "heavily short" 415 million bushels on the Chicago market and 60 million bushels on the Kansas City market, and 360 million bushels of corn, he said.

Wheat speculators are now 86 million bushels short in Chicago.

"That means they bought 329 million bushels of futures," Steiner said.

Kansas City is now long 80 million bushels of wheat. Corn is long 70 million bushels.

The market wasn't sustained or driven by cash prices, Steiner said. Futures eventually took cash prices a little higher.

"This market is not particularly concerned about

supply or delivery, it's comfortable with the amount of grain that's available and shipping," Steiner said.

Buying is coming in across the commodity complex "from everywhere," Newsom said.

"Funds and traders are not worried about fundamentals right now, they're just buying commodities because of inflation," he said.

Newsom advises farmers to use the rally, since it's not driven by fundamentals.

"The situation in Iran, it's not going to create more demand for U.S. wheat — it's just not," he said. "We've got more supplies coming on and still rather limited demand."

Spring outlook

The U.S. winter wheat crop looks in relatively good shape heading into spring, the analysts say.

"It's a mixed bag, but that's the way it's supposed to be this time of year," Newsom said.

Up until now, there hasn't really been any reasonable opportunity for farmers to market their crop, Steiner said.

"We should have 10% to 15% of new crop bushels under contract right now, and there's hardly anything on the books," he said. "Right now there is no reason not to expect at least an average crop."

Waiting too long ends up compressing the marketing cycle, with more bushels hitting the market over a shorter, narrower time frame, he said.

"That's going to drive and throttle cash values lower," he said.

How much range for wheat prices?

"Just kind of where we sit," Behne said. "I don't

see a lot of downside right now. To really see any significant upside beyond this, I think we've got to get some weather problems going somewhere in the world."

Across the Northern

Hemisphere, there are few wheat crop problems for an early weather price rally, Behne noted.

Two good years in a row won't push prices higher, he said.



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Oregon farm groups are fighting a ballot initiative that would ban animal slaughter, hunting, fishing and many common husbandry practices. (Courtesy Oregon Department of Agriculture)

Oregon ag fights initiative to ban slaughter, husbandry practices

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Farm groups can agree on at least one thing with proponents of a ballot initiative to outlaw killing animals in Oregon: It's unlikely to pass this year.

Supporters of Initiative Petition 28 are expected to collect enough signatures to get the proposal on the ballot in November, which agriculture organizations are mobilizing to oppose.

Neither side in the looming campaign battle believes most Oregon voters will approve IP 28, which they consider more of an attempt to change public perception than state law.

"Hopefully, it will make these ideas more mainstream, more normalized, through this conversation," said David Michelson, the chief petitioner behind IP 28. "We don't know how long it will take to make something like this more mainstream, but we want to start now with the ballot initiative process."

If passed, the initiative would enact the People for the Elimination of Animal Cruelty Exemptions Act, or PEACE Act, which would eliminate exemptions to Oregon's animal abuse laws that allow animal slaugh-

ter, many common husbandry practices, hunting and fishing.

It would make slaughtering livestock a criminal offense, along with common breeding practices, such as artificial insemination.

It would also criminalize hunting, fishing and lethal vermin control.

Though the state's major agriculture groups do not think IP 28 will win, they can't afford to take the chance of simply ignoring the measure — meaning they'll have to devote a substantial amount of time and money toward defeating it.

"We feel confident Oregonians are going to read this and understand how extreme it is, but we still have to tee up a voter education campaign," said Lauren Kuenzi, government and political affairs director for the Oregon Farm Bureau. "It is safe to say the Oregon ag community is going to take it seriously with a statewide effort."

Farm organizations have a goal of raising a campaign war chest of \$250,000 by mid-year, but expect they could end up spending roughly \$2 million in the fight against IP 28, as it poses an existential threat to

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ANIMALS

continued from C12

the industry, she said.

"It is essentially an end to animal agriculture in the state of Oregon," Kuenzi said. "We're talking from the coast to the desert in this state, it is going to impact everything."

In a sense, the proposal's far-reaching objectives are a political gift, in that the agriculture industry is likely to find plenty of allies in opposing the ballot initiative.

Hunting and fishing groups are expected to fight the proposal as well, and national advocates for agriculture will probably provide financial assistance, so the burden won't fall entirely on the backs of farmers and ranchers in Oregon, Kuenzi said.

"I expect we will be receiving support from a wide range of organizations," she said.

The downside for the agriculture industry is that all that effort could have been dedicated to more productive purposes than fending off a ballot initiative, said Tami Kerr, executive director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association. "It's really sad that funds that could go to research and conservation will now have to be directed to this campaign," she said.

The ballot initiative is already generating headlines, which raises concerns among the public, so the dairy industry must reiterate that it's already subject high animal welfare standards, Kerr said.

Oregon is considered a leader in milk quality, which supports the claim that dairy producers are keeping their cows healthy and happy, she said.

"The last thing any farmer wants to do is harm their animals," Kerr said.

Passage could take decades

The proponents of IP 28

have been trying to get similar initiatives on the ballot for about six years and appear likely to succeed on their third attempt in 2026.

David Michelson, IP 28's chief petitioner, also thinks it's unlikely a majority of Oregon voters will agree to prohibit killing animals in November, which will require "decades" of persuading, similarly to the women's suffrage movement.

The measure contains provisions that would create a transition fund to help agriculture and other industries find alternatives, Michelson said.

For example, a chicken production facility can be repurposed to growing mushrooms, or marginal forage land can be used for raising energy crops, he said.

"It would look different for every farmer," he said.

However, when Oregon voters actually approve such a ban, it's likely that meat consumption will have already decreased significantly and farmers would have turned to such strategies voluntarily, Michelson said.

"By the time this passes, we will already have begun that transition," he said.

Michelson said his proposal appears likely to make it onto the ballot on the third attempt due to "persistence," rather than Oregonians becoming more amenable to the idea.

The rate of people signing the petition has remained the same since it was first circulated in 2020, at about 10-15 signatures per hour, he said.

"It changes more because of the weather than anything else," Michelson said.

Supporters have collected 105,000 of the 117,000 signatures they need to get IP 28 on the ballot, though they want to have substantially more than the minimal threshold by the July deadline,

in case some are deemed invalid, he said.

Some hunters and even a pig farmer have signed the petition even though they plan to vote against the

actual measure, because they believe the subject is worthy of a statewide vote, Michelson said.

"They think the conversation that results would

be helpful," he said. "They are open to the conversation because most people across the board do not like the way we are treating animals."

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Idaho Bean Commission helps guide sizable industry

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

PARMA, Idaho — Bean season can't come soon enough for farmer Michael Goodson, who in late February alternately checked a tractor's specialized planter attachment and looked out his shop's open overhead door at heavy rain.

"About 25% of our operation is bean seed," the southwest Idaho farmer and Idaho Bean Commission board member said.

Bean seed "adds to diversification in the crop rotation," Goodson said. And bean production comes with lower input costs — the crop is a mid-level water user, for example — compared to some of the more intensive specialty crops.

"They take proper water management," he said. "I don't know if they're necessarily more durable."

A national leader



Michael Goodson inspects a 12-row bean planter's opening disc, which opens a uniform trench in which to plant seed, Feb. 24 near Parma, Idaho. Brad Carlson/Capital Press

"Idaho's claim to fame in the industry is as a seed production state," said Monty Hamilton, a Kimberly-based commission board member who works for a green bean seed dealer. "We can produce clean seed where most states cannot" due to strict state rules and a dry climate in the southwest and south-central regions where the industry is centered.

The commission is a key

driver of the industry's ongoing success in the state, Goodson and Hamilton said. All industry participants pay an assessment — increased last July 1 for the first time since 1992 — that funds research, marketing and promotion, and education.

"All the work we do benefits farmers," Hamilton said.

And dealers "use the com-

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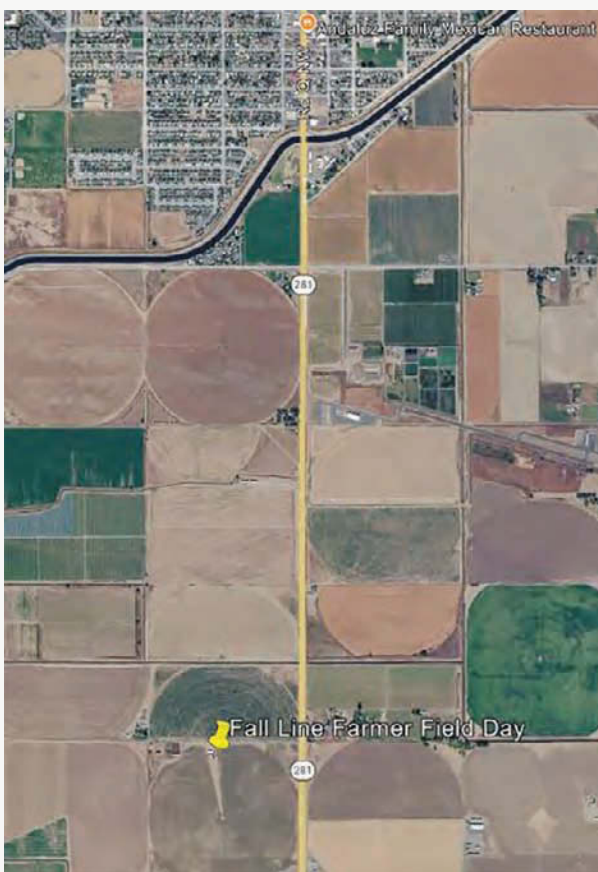
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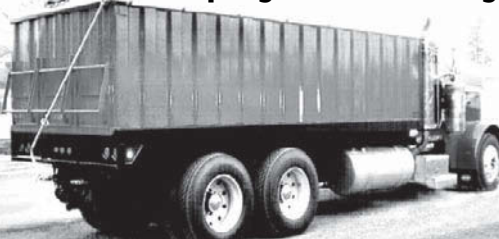
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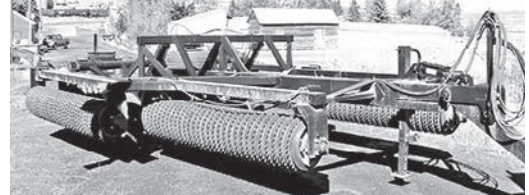


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BEANS

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mission to help unify," he said. Every company in the state was represented at annual bean schools held in the southwest and south-central regions in January, and "those bean schools are important to bring growers and the industry together."

Grower and acre totals vary because beans are a rotation crop and subject to the strict rules, but IBC estimates the state has about 500 growers who last year grew about 45,000 acres combined, commission executive director Andi Woolf-Weiby said. The number of dealers, not immediately available, also can vary on factors such as openings and consolidations.

"Our irrigated acres, hot, dry summers and volcanic soils are very good for production," she said. Idaho traditionally ranks first in the U.S. in production of certified disease-free bean seed and fifth in bean acres.

Level playing field

IBC's board is comprised equally between growers and dealers, which results in "a more complete industry buy-in and industry involvement," Woolf-Weiby said. It's a way to make sure "everyone is following the guidelines and there is an equal playing field."

The assessment is paid entirely by the state's bean industry, and the commission does not receive state general fund dollars.

The commission's organizational setup "allows us to do things like apply for grants," Woolf-Weiby said. "In the last

eight years, we have received over \$400,000 in grants" mainly for research.

The longtime assessment was 12 cents per hundredweight, paid 8 cents by growers and 4 cents by dealers. The 2025 legislature approved 16-24 cents shared equally by growers and dealers; as of last July 1, it is 16 cents. Driving factors included inflation, increased research — such as in entomology — better-yielding varieties that reduced the need to increase acreage, and participation over the previous decade in several international trade missions organized by the governor's office.

"Dealers proposed making the assessment equal," Woolf-Weiby said. "Nobody loves paying more, but I've really not heard any huge grumblings."

On-ground benefits

Commission work ranges from variety, chemical and cultural practice research to "developing new markets and continuing to educate current markets on why clean seed is important to the bean industry," Goodson said. On the seed side, a goal is to "make sure Idaho remains the top-tier class."

Some 90% of Idaho bean acres are for seed, the rest for edibles, Hamilton said.

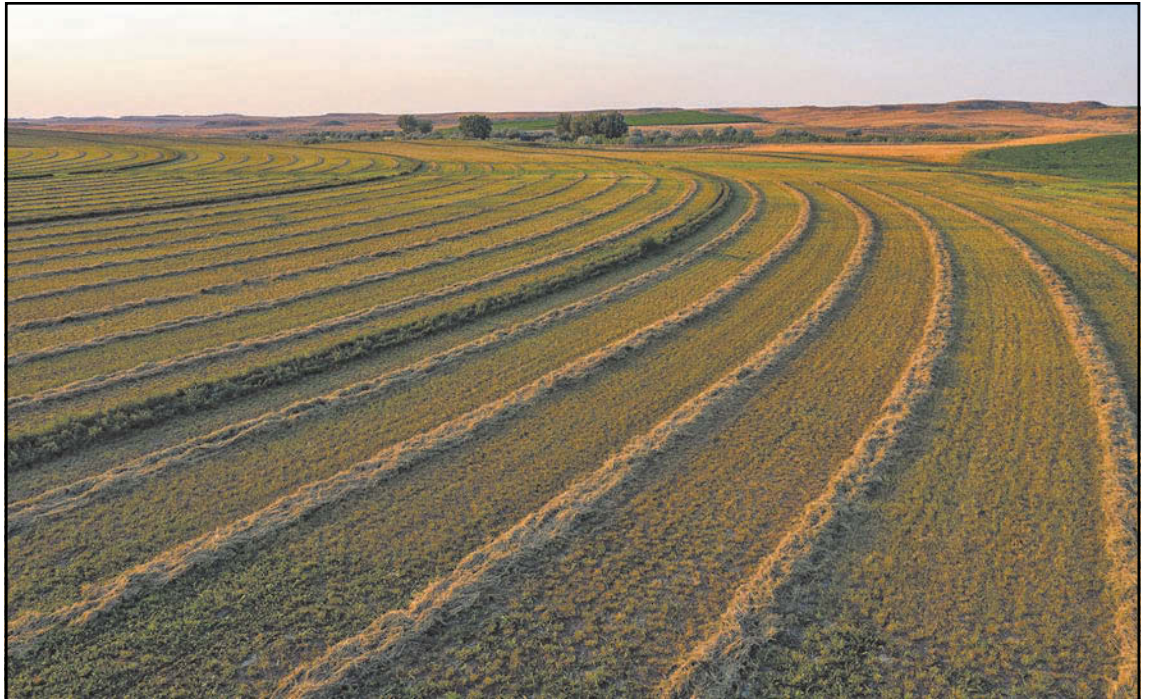
One aspect of state rules is to limit sprinkler irrigation of a field to two years before changing to gravity or drip, a way to keep foliage dry over seed generations, he said.

Goodson, who contracts with companies in the region that sell to commercial growers around the world, said one

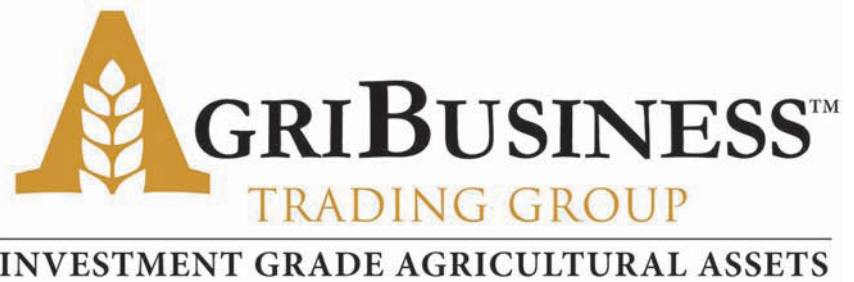
of the commission's value propositions is "an unbiased perspective for growers on

new products that are out in the marketplace, so growers can see the data." He is con-

sidering using a newly labeled product for beans to help with weed control.



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