

Q The Agriculture QUARTERLY

ISSUE 353

THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SPRING 2004



More than 23,000 dairy cows—like these in Eastern Oregon—were inventoried over a five-day period as state and federal officials attempted to track down potential connections to a BSE-positive cow discovered in Washington.

Performance under pressure: ODA responds to BSE

Perhaps the most infamous cow in America since Mrs. O’Leary’s bovine kicked over the lantern well over a century ago was a Canadian import that took up residence in Eastern Washington’s Yakima Valley. The dairy in which it resided put the small community of Mabton on the map. The animal itself put an international spotlight on the Pacific Northwest as the first U.S. case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy—better known as mad cow disease—was reported on the eve of the eve of Christmas 2003. The case of the afflicted cow cut a wide swath that reached into Oregon and preoccupied both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Agriculture for many weeks.

“It could have happened anywhere in the U.S., but it just so happened to take place in our corner of the country,” says ODA Director Katy Coba. “The resulting flurry of activity tested our people and I’m proud to say they measured up well.”

In the weeks that followed the initial identification of a BSE-positive animal, ODA responded as best it could despite a series of challenges that included information shortages, communication lapses, and the great unknown associated with a first-time experience dealing with a dreaded disease.

Wake-up call

December 23, 2003 promised to be a typical pre-holiday work experience at the Oregon Department of Agriculture as well as state departments of agriculture throughout the U.S. This is the time of year when news slows down, or at least transitions from hard to soft. ODA Communications Director Bruce Pokarney received a phone call at 2:15 p.m. On the other end of the line was a reporter from Reuters.

“He asked for my reaction to the news that an animal diagnosed with mad cow disease had been reported in our neighboring state to the north,” recalls Pokarney. “I thought he was badly mistaken since such news would have prompted a heads up to many of us.”

Pokarney checked with State Veterinarian Brad LeaMaster as well as his public affairs counterparts at the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Nothing had been reported to

them. However, a 2:30 p.m. news conference was being called by USDA Secretary Ann Veneman, topic unknown.

“We were gathered around the TV and learned for the first time as the rest of the world learned—the first case of BSE had hit the United States.

ODA officials heard more. The confirmed animal had been previously slaughtered with its carcass further processed into ground beef. Some of that ground beef had been sent to two Oregon meat distributors. By this time, it was apparent that an unknown portion of product had made its way into the retail channels.

Within minutes, the telephones at ODA were ringing incessantly. Reporters from around the country were seeking as much information as they could from as many sources as possible. That included whatever ODA happened to know, which, at that point, was very little.

“On Christmas Eve, I set a personal one-day record for the most phone calls returned and the most phone calls not returned,” says Pokarney, who lost count at somewhere around 65 phone messages.

The volume of calls and interest was so great that ODA’s Dalton Hobbs, a former information officer but now administrator of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Division, was called in to handle media.

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The Agriculture Quarterly

Spring 2004
Issue 353

The Agriculture Quarterly (ISSN 0897-7143) is published quarterly and distributed free of charge by the Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street NE,
Salem, OR 97301-2532.

Periodical postage is paid at Salem, OR

Postmaster

Send address changes to

The Agriculture Quarterly
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem OR 97301-2532

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Board of Agriculture tackles sustainability and its own future

Two areas of activity have been placed on the front burner for the State Board of Agriculture this spring—the issue of sustainability and a new structure of the board itself. Both concepts are being shopped around the ag industry and will continue to be topics of discussion at June’s quarterly board meeting.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has developed and submitted a report to the State Sustainability Board. In the report, ODA has outlined long-term goals that speak to the department’s mission:

- **Economic**—Oregon agriculture achieves sustainable profitability in growing and processing sectors, continuing to provide for the state a meaningful and well-recognized economic base.
- **Environmental**—Oregon growers, ranchers and fishers demonstrate good stewardship practices that are globally recognized, achieving in Oregon a healthy environment for soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources.

- **Social/Community**—Agriculture has a secure place in the community, with recognition and support of local and regional consumers; consumers also benefit from a strong program ensuring a safe and secure food supply.

In March, the Board of Agriculture approved a draft report required by the Sustainability Board examining voluntary certification opportunities in sustainable agriculture. The report highlights a number of certification programs currently available and lays the foundation for future discussions of how ODA can help producers who may consider certification to gain new markets.

Meanwhile, the Board of Agriculture continues to pursue a more active role for itself by becoming a policy-making board that is recognized as being more of a “voice of agriculture” for Oregon. Currently, the board operates in an advisory role to the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Members have asked ODA to develop a legislative concept that would give the Board of Agriculture clear direction as a policy-making entity for ODA and the industry.

Among the potential specifics to be presented would be a requirement of the board to produce a biennial report on the state of agriculture to the governor and legislature. Another potential change would be to rename the two current “consumer representatives” on the board to “public members”—indicating a more broadly defined role for those board members not a part of production agriculture.

Legislation to change the structure and focus of the Board of Agriculture is expected to be introduced in the 2005 session. ☒



Director’s Column

Note: The following appeared as a guest editorial in The Oregonian newspaper on February 22, 2004.

It’s an industry that equates to more than \$8 billion in economic activity when you consider all the directly related goods and activities. One in twelve jobs with a payroll exceeding \$2.8 billion is connected to this industry. It’s an industry that plays an important role in the economy of all 36 Oregon counties. Yet somehow, agriculture was not even mentioned in The Oregonian’s 2004 Economic Forecast (Sunday, January 18) featuring the analyses of five top economists. Far too often—and mistakenly so—urban discussions of Oregon’s economic present and future seem to forget about the state’s second largest traded sector, the production and value-added processing of agricultural commodities. Under valid and consistent definitions of economic activity, only the electronics industry ranks higher. It is time that all Oregonians keep agriculture on the economic radar screen and insist that agriculture be at the table when decisions are made about what kind of Oregon we want in the future.

I found it interesting that the cover picture of the Oregonian’s 2004 economic forecast showed cargo ostensibly being loaded or unloaded at a Port of Portland

facility. By volume, agriculture and food products are Oregon’s largest export. By value, they rank second only to electronics at nearly \$2 billion a year. A majority of the Port of Portland’s total tonnage of exports—about 60%—is agriculture. In the story, the picture is there but the words are missing.

Here are some other reasons why agriculture needs to be part of the equation of Oregon’s economic solution. The state’s value of agricultural production—what it’s worth before it leaves the farm or ranch—has increased 15 of the past 17 years. Name another industry sector with that kind of steady, reliable growth over a similar time frame. Food processing, an important component of Oregon’s manufacturing capacity, adds another \$2 billion in economic activity each year. Oregon has more than 40,000 farms that manage 17 million acres of private land. Those farms produce the raw agricultural products that fuel some 1,800 companies, which process many of these products into something of value to consumers.

While production is important, agriculture is more than on-farm activity, just as tourism is more than someone looking at the coastal vistas and high tech being more than just microchips. The agriculture industry includes the economic stimulus created by agricultural purchases—machinery and equipment, seeds, feed, fertilizers, veterinary services, irrigation and pumping services, warehouse and storage, transportation, food processing and wholesale marketing. These economic activities and associated jobs are directly related to and a product of agriculture. Economists outside the industry have a narrow view of defining agriculture yet seem to have no problem with a broad definition of tourism, high tech, manufacturing, and other sectors.

I strongly believe agriculture is one of the cornerstones to a brighter economic future for Oregon. Agriculture is not an industry of the past. It is a key player on a team that keeps Oregon’s economic engine running. It is time for all Oregonians, including economists, to value its contribution to our way of life.

Katy Coba, Director

Continued from page 1

Where's the beef?

ODA's Food Safety Division has an overall responsibility to make sure unsafe food is not in the marketplace. With word that meat from the BSE-positive animal had come into Oregon, administrator Ron McKay and his staff had to work quickly to get information so that consumers could know if there was a risk. (BSE can spread to humans who consume infectious material, which includes central nervous tissue, but not the meat of the animal or any associated milk products).

"The likelihood of any spinal material being in this ground beef was extremely low or non-existent," says McKay. "Still, the public was very concerned because the BSE issue was new. We needed to know where the product might have gone in Oregon."

A class-two USDA recall of the product was underway. However, specific information as to which stores might have received the ground beef was not made available to the public by the federal agency. ODA tried to obtain the information but was refused access, first by USDA and then by the two Oregon distributors themselves.

"There was a lot of media interest and the public wanted to know," says McKay. "From that standpoint alone, we should have had the information. This is part of our job and we couldn't effectively do it."

ODA phones kept ringing for several days after Christmas. Typical questions came from worried family members who wanted assurance that the ground beef they consumed was not tainted with BSE.

"It wasn't acceptable to them to hear that they had a greater chance of being struck by lightning than they did of contracting the disease," says McKay.

By week two, the recall issue was pretty much done. The frustration lingered.

How does the BSE incident rank with other events in McKay's 30-year career in food safety?

"As far as a public health threat, it was fairly low. As far as public perception, it is probably right at the top of those things I've ever dealt with."

Following the cow tracks into Oregon

Meanwhile, ODA's Animal Health and Identification Division also found itself right in the middle of the issue as USDA continued its epidemiological investigation to determine other potentially affected cows. It had been determined that the original animal was born in Alberta, Canada and most likely had consumed feed that contained mammalian protein—a common way for BSE to spread from animal to animal. (A ruminant feed ban has been in place since 1997.) The search was on to find cohorts of the positive animal, identify them, destroy them, and test them for the presence of BSE.

"With the case originating in neighboring Washington, there was a decent probability of us getting involved, especially in light of the fact that it was found in a dairy animal," says Dr. Andrew Clark, field veterinarian who coordinated ODA's animal inventory efforts in Eastern Oregon. "It took just a few days for us to officially learn that we were involved because of potentially associated animals being purchased by Oregon dairies."

The trail led to four Oregon dairies, three of which were east of the Cascades. The mammoth task of going through records and checking 23,000 individual dairy cows for identification was underway. ODA provided more than a dozen personnel, including brand inspectors and veterinarians, to take part in an inventory of animals. A federal task force of 21 people also arrived to do the job. Most of them came from Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia.

"The conditions included snow, sleet, fog, rain, and lots of mud," says Clark. "It was not pleasant working conditions. Many of these people had never seen insulated coveralls, for example. It was quite an adventure for them."

It was hard, brutal work, too. Documents, including various veterinary certificates that might have singled out suspect animals, either did not exist or were not always reliable. That meant looking at each animal for information contained in ear tags. In five days, the crew checked all 23,000 cows—an average of more than 4,000 a day. State Brand Inspector Jack Noble acted as a foreman in the process, organizing the work teams. After each cow was inventoried, its forehead was marked with fluorescent pink paint.

"We took the job seriously," says Clark. "After the fifth day, people were very tired but pleased with themselves. There was lots of satisfaction to go along with the chill and the fatigue."

During the course of the inventory, one cow definitely associated with the original BSE-animal was identified in Oregon. USDA characterized 19 others as "animals of interest," meaning they could not be ruled out as associated

animals. They were just a handful of dairy cattle among the many others identified throughout the Pacific Northwest as being somehow connected to the original cow. All were destroyed with samples taken for testing. All results came back negative for BSE.

"We've had a chance to respond to a BSE incident," says Clark. "We've learned a bunch and can be more efficient next time should it happen again."

Critical review

Throughout the several weeks in which BSE was a newspaper headline, ODA's collaboration encircled several industry groups, other government agencies, and, of course, the Governor's Office. A major priority for Governor Kulongoski was protecting the state's dairy industry. After all, there has never been any evidence that milk and dairy products are at risk of BSE. The governor made several personal calls to industry folks as well as federal officials, including Secretary Veneman. His interest and support for ODA's efforts were well received.

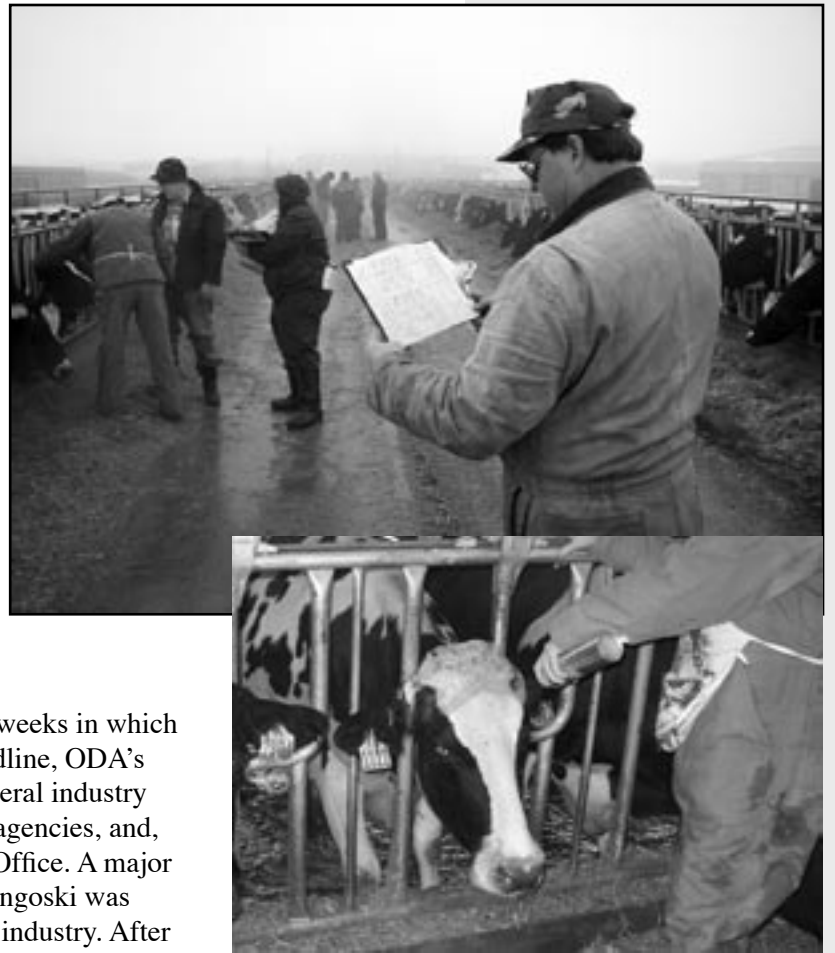
"Having a governor recognize what potentially is at stake when something like this happens is a tremendous asset for our livestock industries," says Director Coba.

The governor sent a letter to USDA urging that improvements be made in the area of notification and communication. While there were many positives associated with the way USDA handled the BSE outbreak, the letter pointed to areas of concern—especially with the ground beef recall. Hopefully, both state and federal officials have learned from the experience and will be even better tooled to deal with the next BSE crisis, should one occur.

In the meantime, Governor Kulongoski invited the ODA team that dealt with the BSE incident to his ceremonial office in April to present a plaque and a thank you for what he called an extraordinary response during a challenging time.

With mad cow disease, it may be a case of "perception is reality." The actual risk to the public often did not match the fear and concern.

It was part of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's job to keep public hysteria from causing damage to the state's dairy farmers and beef ranchers. By most accounts, the challenge was met successfully—an experience not easily forgotten by the industry or the government agencies involved. 📷



Top: ODA State Brand Inspector Jack Noble crosschecks specific animals with the paperwork as dairy cows are inventoried in the BSE investigation.

Middle: Once an individual cow had been inventoried, it was identified by pink fluorescent paint on the forehead.

Below: A number of ODA employees, including administrative staff, worked long hours and holidays in response to the BSE incident. They were all thanked and duly recognized at a special ceremony in the office of Governor Kulongoski.



Hansen named new State Veterinarian

Oregon Department of Agriculture Director Katy Coba appointed Dr. Don Hansen as State Veterinarian, effective May 1. Hansen succeeds Dr. Brad LeaMaster, who has accepted a position with the U.S. Department of Agriculture after serving as State Veterinarian for the past year.

Hansen received his degree in veterinary medicine from University of California at Davis as well as a master's degree in preventive veterinary medicine. Hansen has been the extension veterinarian at Oregon State University since 1984. Prior to OSU, Hansen was a private practice veterinarian in California for 12 years.

Hansen currently resides in Philomath.

The State Veterinarian's Office monitors infectious animal diseases in Oregon and maintains disease control plans throughout the state. 📷




ODA gears up for gypsy moth eradication in Eugene

The Oregon Department of Agriculture is returning to Eugene this spring to do battle with the invasive gypsy moth. It was nearly 20 years ago that ODA launched what is still considered the largest gypsy moth eradication project ever on the west coast—also in Lane County and Eugene. This time around, ODA will treat a 183-acre spray area that includes residential properties. Sixteen gypsy moths were detected in the area last summer. In addition, egg masses and other life stages were located—strong evidence that a breeding population of gypsy moths exists in the area.

By mid-May, ODA will have completed three aerial applications of the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (B.t.k.), which has been used routinely in other gypsy moth eradication projects throughout the West, including Oregon, since 1984. If all goes according to plan, the eradication project this spring should conclude by mid-May. At that time, ODA's annual gypsy moth detection program will commence with traps placed throughout the state to see if any new infestations can be located.

This year's eradication project is small in comparison to what occurred in the mid-1980s in Lane County when some 19,000 gypsy moths were trapped and approximately 225,000 acres were treated.

Early detection and eradication of gypsy moth infestations are goals of ODA to prevent economic and environmental losses. 

Oregon agriculture: We love dreamers, too!

A new advertising slogan for the state of Oregon has been the subject of talk radio discussions and letters to the editor the past several months. But it's the imagery associated with the tagline, "Oregon: We Love Dreamers" that could help brand the state's agriculture industry in a positive fashion.

"We certainly hope the end result of the brand campaign will be the sale of more Oregon agricultural products," says Katy Coba, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. "But it will be helpful in simply raising the profile of agriculture in Oregon. We want to get agriculture into the minds of business people who wouldn't otherwise think of ag."

It's all part of an initial implementation of a Brand Oregon program. At this time, three main targets for the new slogan and campaign include tourism, business recruitment, and the marketing of Oregon agricultural products. It's the latter focus that will be of most interest to the state's farmers, ranchers, and food processors.

"The slogan is an easy fit for tourism, in my opinion, but we need to find how it connects with agriculture," says Coba.

The well-known advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy of Portland has developed the basic campaign, hoping to have "We Love Dreamers" do for Oregon what "Just Do It" did for Nike. At the heart of the slogan is the concept of applied idealism—that Oregon is a place of innovation and people acting on their dreams. It is also a campaign designed to get Oregonians to feel good about the state once again.

Whether that is successfully translated into product sales remains to be seen.

Several of Oregon's seafood commodity commissions expect it to successfully increase product sales and have committed \$15,000 per product. Brand Oregon has leveraged the commissions' money to deliver a media campaign worth at least \$200,000. In Portland and Salem, there will be billboards and radio spots that tie into special events and retail promotions. At the "Let's Get Cooking" show at the Oregon Convention Center in mid-April, people can taste "Oregon Wild Seafood."

"Oregon Wild" is the theme describing the bounty harvested from the sea. The overall campaign rollout begins this spring

ODA takes action to protect Oregon from sudden oak death

The recent discovery of sudden oak death (SOD) in Southern California nurseries has prompted the Oregon Department of Agriculture to take strong measures to protect the state from the disease. ODA has issued an emergency quarantine of California nursery stock known to be susceptible to *Phytophthora ramorum*, the fungus that causes sudden oak death. The action follows confirmation of infected plant material shipped from California to nurseries in Oregon and many other states.

Among the growing list of plants that can be affected by SOD are such popular landscape species as camellia, rhododendron, *Viburnum*, *Pieris* (Andromeda), and evergreen huckleberry. Not only is Oregon's important nursery industry at risk, the state's natural environment is threatened by the disease. ODA's regulatory actions aim to protect both.

The emergency quarantine prohibits shipment of susceptible plant material unless the nursery or area from which it is grown has been inspected, tested, and found free of SOD. Each shipment itself must also be inspected and found free of SOD before being allowed into Oregon.

**OREGON WILD
CAUGHT SALMON:**
A tasty way to support
local fishermen.




when 33 Portland and Salem area billboards and five radio stations will promote Oregon Wild Caught Salmon. A month later, Oregon Wild Pink Shrimp is in the spotlight. Later in the year, the focus is on Oregon Wild Sole and Oregon Wild Dungeness Crab. The Oregon Albacore Tuna Commission is also involved.

"We are working closely with the Brand Oregon team to explore how best to use this concept to sell Oregon agricultural products," says Dalton Hobbs, administrator of ODA's Agricultural Development and Marketing Division. "Initially we will work with Oregon seafood, then hopefully roll other products up into our marketing efforts."

While most of the publicity of Brand Oregon so far has centered on the "dreamers" tagline, there is much more thought and substance to the effort, according to Debby Kennedy, marketing director for the Port of Portland. Kennedy is temporarily heading the Brand Oregon project out of Governor Kulongoski's office.

"Judging a campaign by its tagline is like judging a symphony by the last three notes," says Kennedy, quoting PR guru Dan Wieden.

Currently, the plans call for a very targeted advertising and promotion effort involving tourism, business recruitment, and Oregon products aimed at California. Any expansion of the campaign will depend on funding.


Kennedy worked with ODA, the Oregon Nursery Association, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, and individual growers and processors in trying to see how the campaign best suits agriculture. Other catch phrases that can be specific to ag include "Oregon Born" and "Oregon Raised." Just how extensively those phrases and other aspects of the Brand Oregon campaign will be used will depend on a number of factors, including funding. But the tools and assistance are there for individual companies, commodity commissions, and others to utilize in promoting products and the state as a place of quality. 

ODA's Lisa Rehms confirms the presence of the organism that causes sudden oak death in samples taken from California-shipped nursery stock.



Meanwhile, ODA will continue its requirement for notification of all imported nursery stock into Oregon. Since last August, all recipients of tree and shrub nursery stock coming from any out-of-state source are required to notify ODA for possible inspection of the plants. That requirement is designed to locate any introductions of sudden oak death before infected plants can reach consumers or other nurseries. ODA has also accelerated its annual survey of all Oregon nurseries for any signs of sudden oak death. This is the third year of the survey program.

ODA has been successful at looking for sudden oak death the past few years, finding only one established infestation—an 11-square mile area of Curry County along the southern Oregon Coast, which has been quarantined since 2001. An active eradication program has resulted in trees and shrubs in the quarantined area being cut, stacked, and burned as part of an effective method for keeping the disease in check.

Through quick and thorough sampling, surveying, and laboratory analysis—along with excellent cooperation from individual nurseries, the Oregon Association of Nurseries, and Oregon State University—ODA has been able to keep sudden oak death from establishing in the state outside of the small area of Curry County. So far, it has been enough to keep an unwanted invasive disease from taking hold in Oregon. 

New Oregon wool product finds a home in stormwater basins

Wool filter inserts, coming soon to a stormwater catch basin near you. In a seemingly perfect marriage of an under utilized Oregon agricultural product and the need to deal with surface water runoff following heavy rainfall, a small, newly formed company of local sheepgrowers is offering a line of products that will capture pollutants before they head into streams and rivers.

“It’s exciting to see a product that comes from agriculture but addresses an urban problem like runoff,” says Margaret Magruder, of Clatskanie, who has helped form Oregon Shepherd, the company that is manufacturing the custom-fit wool inserts that are placed into the stormwater drain catch basin.

Before launching into commercial production, Magruder, fellow sheepgrower Joel Pynch of Halsey, and agricultural technology consultant Wes Deuel of Full Circle Ag tested their product in storm drains located at the Port of Portland, Freightliner Corporation in Portland, and Clackamas County. The successful trial run has encouraged the fledgling company to begin marketing the wool inserts.

“Through our research, we have found that the wool filters sediment and pollutants like hydrocarbons from the stormwater that runs off the streets and parking lots,” says Magruder. “We are now at the stage of commercializing it.”

The majority of catch basin filtration products currently being used are constructed of polypropylene—very durable, but non-biodegradable. The wool catch basin insert is made of natural fibers that not only capture and remove environmental pollutants, but can be composted after use—normally about eight months to a year. The wool inserts are also relatively inexpensive—expected to be much less than \$100 each.

“The polypropylene inserts have to be put in the landfill, whereas our inserts do not create another source of pollution,” says Magruder.

The idea of developing the wool catch basin inserts was born from a desire to find an alternative use for low-grade wool that has not been marketable in the recent past. Oregon produces about 1.6 million pounds of wool each year, but not all of it is clothing-grade. Oregon sheepgrowers stand to benefit from the production of the filters as it could clear the way for higher-grade wool.

“One of our objectives is to clean up the wool in Western Oregon, remove the coarser, dirtier wool that often discredits the value of our best wools,” says Pynch.

The project would never have gotten off the ground if it weren’t for a Specialty Crop Grant award of \$90,000 approved by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the State Board of Agriculture in 2002. That money allowed the earlier efforts to find an alternative use for wool to proceed. With help from ODA, American Wool Council, Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Services Agency, and private industry, things fell in place.

Wool is not the only Oregon agricultural product to benefit from the project. The filtration inserts require crop biomass to strengthen and help capture the pollutants entering the catch



basin. Agricultural fiber—either from the waste straw of grass seed or an alternative crop like flax—can be utilized in the product to increase strength and enhance their effectiveness at capturing pollutants.

“We are currently looking at other crops for their absorbent properties in dealing with compounds like pesticides, nutrients, and heavy metals created by industry that typically make it past the traditional means of treating stormwater,” says Deuel. “This will address such important issues as salmon habitat and drinking water aquifers.”

It is not known how much wool might be needed to meet the demand of a successful product. But Deuel estimates that the City of Portland is responsible for approximately 70,000 catch basins alone. Even a smaller city like Albany has more than 3,000 such basins. He points out that the majority of cities with populations exceeding 10,000 are now required to implement a search for provisions to manage sediment, hydrocarbons, and other pollutants in surface water run-off.

Like the other members of Oregon Shepherd, Pynch is fascinated with a new use for an agricultural product that dates to pre-biblical times.

“That very fine wool strand has unique qualities that cannot be duplicated by artificial means,” says Pynch. “We are just now beginning to really understand its structure, and how it is that sheep stay so warm in the winter and so cool in the summer wearing a wool coat. Wool certainly is long lasting and is best known for its designer desires for clothing and carpeting. But we think it also has a tremendous value in helping to clean up the environment.”

Perhaps soon, if you ever gaze down past the grate of a stormwater catch basin, you just might see something wet and woolly, a product of Oregon sheep. 🐑

Top right: Special inserts made of Oregon wool are inserted into stormwater drains where they filter sediment and pollutants from the runoff.

Bottom left: The wool filter inserts have been successfully tested in the Portland area and are ready for commercial production.



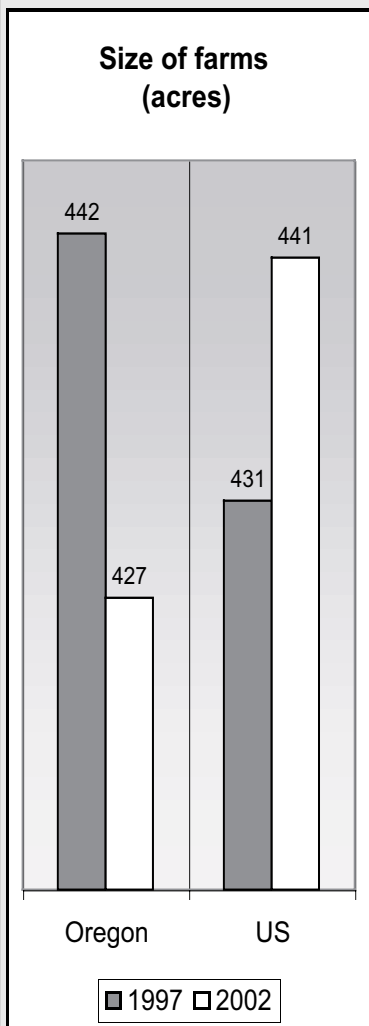
CAFO Program welcomes new faces, new permit

Livestock operators around the state will see some fresh faces come inspection time. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has hired three new livestock water quality inspectors to assist in its Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Program. (Pictured at right, top to bottom) Melissa Fery, Kathryn Higgs, Sarah Cook are new to ODA, but all have extensive agricultural backgrounds in animal production. In addition, a new CAFO team leader has been named as Wym Matthews (at right) was promoted from an inspector position.

A year ago, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency adopted new federal CAFO regulations that brought about changes in Oregon’s permit for livestock operations in the state. The required permit gives operators stronger legal protection as long as they are operating according to its conditions. Those CAFO facilities that need a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit are now required to apply for coverage under the new Oregon CAFO General Permit. ODA began issuing these new permits last October. Livestock operations complete an Application to Register for the new permit and ODA inspectors determine if permit coverage is required. The new ODA inspection team is ready to respond to operators who might need permit coverage. Questions concerning confined animal feeding operations and the new CAFO permit can be answered by contacting ODA at (503) 986-4792. 🐑



Census of Agriculture gives snapshot of Oregon's farms and ranches



Oregon is reporting a steady number of farms but a general decrease in the size of those farms, according to preliminary data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS). The 14-month process of collecting and tabulating the information from the nation's farmers and ranchers will be finalized before summer. But an early look at the figures shows that Oregon is running counter to the rest of the nation in many areas.

Generally, Oregon is seeing a slight increase in the number of farms and a slight decrease in the size of operations.

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years and is the most ambitious and important compilation of all agriculture surveys. Data from all fifty states has been gathered and is being analyzed, following a comprehensive survey of nearly every known farmer and rancher in the United States.

Among the national highlights:

- There are approximately 2.13 million farms in the U.S., a drop from the 2.21 million farms counted in the 1997 census.
- The average size of farms in the U.S. is 441 acres, up from the average size of 431 acres in 1997.
- The largest increase in farms are those reporting less than \$2,500 in annual sales, which also represents the greatest number of farm operations in the U.S.
- The average age of operator is 55.3 years, up from the average of 54.0 years, as reported in 1997.

Oregon's census data shows a state headed in a slightly different direction. Among the state highlights from the 2002 Census of Agriculture:

- The number of farms in Oregon is 40,049, nearly the same number as in 1997 when there were 39,975 farms reported.
- The average size of farms in Oregon decreased 3.5% to 427 acres in 2002.
- The amount of land in farms in Oregon fell 3.1% to 17,112,673 acres in 2002.
- Reflecting the national trend, the largest increase in farms are those reporting less than \$2,500 in annual sales, with about 47% of all Oregon farms falling into that category.
- The number and percentage of principal operators in Oregon reporting farming as their primary occupation have increased in 2002 to 21,611 (54% of all operators) from 17,346 (43% of all operators) in 1997.
- The average age of operator in Oregon is 54.9 years, up from 54.0 years in 1997 but slightly less than the U.S. average of 55.3 years old.

One of the noteworthy changes in the latest census is the inclusion of data on additional operators of a farm. In the past, only one—the principal operator—was captured by the census. Now up to three individuals per farm can be counted. The total number of operators in Oregon now reaches 65,593—far more than the 40,049 farm operations counted by the current census.

The change in the number and percentage of operators who list farming as their primary occupation is also notable. In 1997, a majority claimed something other than farming was their primary occupation. In the 2002 census, a majority are calling farming their main job. Officials speculate at least some retirees are moving back to rural areas and operating small farms. There may also be people new to agriculture involved with specialty crop production.

Continued on page 7

ODA offers detailed help on pesticide buffer ruling

A federal court decision earlier this year to mandate pesticide buffer zones for waterways that bear threatened and endangered fish species was initially met with a lot more questions than answers. Gradually, the details of the judge's ruling are being worked out, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture is doing what it can to provide those answers.

Specifically, ODA has set up a special web page that lists the pesticide products affected by the ruling, the buffer requirements, the fish species included in the court order, and county maps that show the affected streams and rivers. With forestry and agricultural activity underway this spring, the information can be a valuable tool for producers.

Still, nobody should make the mistake of thinking the judge's order pertains only to farmers and foresters. Many of the 36 active pesticide ingredients subject to the buffer requirement are also used in urban applications, including yard and garden care. If the homeowner lives near a waterway identified as bearing one of the four fish species of concern, the same restrictions will apply.

"People who live in an urban area and near a stream or river should also check our Website to see if that waterway needs to be buffered when using certain pesticide products," says Chris Kirby, administrator of ODA's Pesticides Division.

The complex court order was handed down January 22 of this year and became effective February 5. The four fish species in question include the Oregon coastal coho salmon, Chinook salmon, steelhead, and Columbia River chum. Those fish are found in a wide number of streams and rivers in Oregon. In fact, 30 of the state's 36 counties are impacted by at least one of the species. Only Baker, Deschutes, Harney, Klamath, Lake, and Malheur counties are untouched by the judge's ruling.

The court ordered injunctive relief is not permanent. It requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to consult with fellow federal agencies the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the actual impacts of certain pesticide active ingredients. As those consultations take place, the number of pesticides on the list of required buffer zones will diminish. But for now, 36 active ingredients are listed. They include some well-known herbicides such as 2,4-D, commonly found in weed and feed home lawn care products. Other common ingredients include malathion, diazinon, and chlorpyrifos. Such ingredients are sold under a variety of trade names listed on the ODA Website.


The judge's order identifies the buffer zone to be the distance between the waterway and where the pesticide active ingredient can be applied. Generally, a buffer of 20 yards is required for ground application of pesticide products on the list and a buffer of 100 yards for aerial application of those products. ODA emphasizes that not all pesticide products are subject to the buffer requirements, only those listed by the judge.

"Whether or not you will be affected by the court order depends on a number of things," says Kirby. "One is your proximity to waterways and whether those waterways are identified as supporting one of the four fish species. A second factor is what pesticide you are using and whether it is one of the 36 still on the list."

ODA is hoping answers to those questions can be quickly found on its web page: oda.state.or.us/pesticide/lawsregs/buffers.html

Maps of individual counties have been developed. Clicking on an individual county will provide a stepwise process that helps the viewer identify whether a person's activity is subject to a buffer requirement. There may be multiple maps for each county depending on whether multiple fish species are found in those counties. A more detailed EPA Website is being constructed. Meanwhile, ODA is hoping to bridge the gap by providing basic information.

"If the map indicates you are not affected by the buffer requirement, you still need to use the pesticide product according to its label," says Kirby. "If you are using that product where a buffer zone is required, then the label requirements are in addition to the buffer requirements."

Meanwhile, additional questions are being asked about the judge's order and how it affects individual Oregonians, whether or not they are connected to agriculture. ODA is communicating with EPA to get as many answers as possible in a timely fashion. One thing is certain—the pesticide buffer requirement will have a major impact on the industry as well as many urban Oregonians. 


Continued from page 6

Oregon agricultural producers were among the very best at responding to the census. Nearly 92% of the state's farmers and ranchers completed the survey, the seventh best response rate in the country and above the national average of 88%.

Census data often forms the basis of decisions, such as where Extension Service should increase programs and services, and where research and grant dollars should be allocated. The private sector looks at the data as well. Farm implement dealers have been known to pull out of one area and into another based on a drop or a rise in the number of operators nearby. Census figures also provide help in analyzing

and developing policies on water use for irrigation and rural development.

All in all, the 2002 Census of Agriculture reaffirms the importance of the agriculture industry, not only in Oregon, but in the rest of the nation.

For state and national census data, visit the Oregon Agricultural Statistics Service Website at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/or> 

Specialty crop grants update

Editor's note:

The Agriculture Quarterly is featuring selected summaries of projects funded through the Specialty Crop Grants Program. ODA and the State Board of Agriculture have distributed \$3.2 million in federal funds to dozens of proposed projects. A complete listing and description of all 54 projects can be found online at:

oda.state.or.us/dbs/crop_grants/hitlist2.lasso

Project profile: Developing a marketing strategy for European style baby potatoes grown in Klamath County

Total grant applied toward project: \$90,000

Total provided by other entities: \$104,000

Klamath Basin Fresh Direct, LLC, is made up of a consortium of potato growers, shippers and marketing cooperatives. The group has joined forces to explore and develop profitable marketing and value-added initiatives. This particular project involves the introduction of "European Style Baby Potatoes" (ESBP) into Pacific Coast retail markets. The project involved identifying suitable varieties for production; developing a consumer targeted marketing position; test marketing in retail outlets; obtaining retailer and consumer feedback on product; and developing a full marketing and business plan.

Results: Field research plots were established in 2001, 2002, and 2003. Modified seed bedding and row width, accommodated with specialized equipment, produced yields of nearly 400 cwt per acre in less than 70 days for tubers with less than 2 inches in diameter. Staggered planting dates can be used to spread harvest throughout the summer. The short growing period helps reduce pest and disease problems and water needs for the crop. Field production in 2002 and 2003 produced potatoes for the consumer and market testing. Cooking and culinary properties of the potatoes were conducted, showing good suitability for boiling, baking, and uses in potato salads and roasting. Packaging and label design was undertaken to gain consumer attention and convey marketing information about the product. Seven retail stores in Modesto, CA were selected to conduct product market testing. KBFDD hand packaged and labeled 2,000 packages for the stores. Sales of the test product were slow and inconsistent from store to store. Demonstrations helped increase awareness and sales. Slow store movement allowed some greening of the product. Because of the results of the consumer testing, the KBFDD refocused its efforts on introducing the product to leading chefs. Results were generally positive. More than a dozen chefs in high-end restaurants are currently using the product and placing orders for more. The work with chefs throughout the Pacific Coast region will continue. Commercial production is modest (15 acres in 2004) but growing. The goal is to reach 2,000 or more acres. Organic production of this product may be possible because of the short growing period required.

Project profile: An alternative propagation method for Oregon hazelnuts to multiply Eastern filbert blight resistant trees

Total grant applied toward project: \$37,500

Total provided by other entities: \$50,000

This project has developed a method for taking Lewis and Clark cultivars from a laboratory setting through the rooting

stage and acclimatizing the trees in a greenhouse environment, potting and growing out to field-ready number one trees—reducing years off the time it normally requires through traditional propagation methods of layering & grafting. The initial goal was to produce 19,000 rooted plantlets of Lewis and Clark EFB-resistant trees for sale by the Fall of 2003. The growers were able to achieve over 32,000 plantlets.

Results: The knowledge gained through this process has lowered the plantlet production costs by 25%. The survival rate of the cultivars has been increased to 90%. The grower is now offering trees in cells at 8-14" in height and in one-gallon pots at 36" height. The growers—Robert and Sally Hilles—are continuing work on super-cell containers that will eliminate potted trees and revolutionize the planting of hazelnuts, similar to the process used with Christmas trees, allowing larger acreage planting with less cost. Details on the process and results can be found at: www.hazelnuthill.com/nursery_stock.htm.

Project profile: Bandon AgriMet weather station project

Total grant applied toward project: \$5,000

Total provided by other entities: \$1,000

The AgriMet weather program is used to promote energy and water conservation, and assists growers in pest management programs, frost protection monitoring, and other crop management activities. There are approximately 100 growers who receive weekly reports based on the AgriMet weather station. The second function of the AgriMet station is its connection with the "Golder Study," which measures interactions between ground and surface water.


Results: More than 100 growers use the data from the AgriMet stations. The evapotranspiration data helps growers estimate their crop water use more precisely. Cranberry production is a significant economic crop in several coastal communities, including Port Orford, Sixes, Langlois, and Bandon. These areas have unique microclimates and the data from the stations contributes to the viability of cranberry production.

Project profile: Marketing expansion in Hood River County

Total grant applied toward project: \$31,000

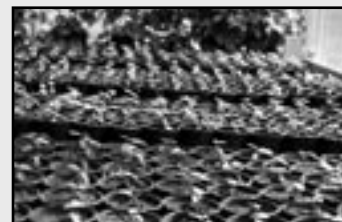
Total provided by other entities: \$125,000 cash and \$29,800 in-kind.

This collaborative project coordinated by the Fruit Loop focused on new and on-going events to enhance direct sales for Hood River growers and businesses. These events included an expanded Blossom Festival, Cherry Days, Gravenstien Apple Days, Pear & Wine Festival, Heirloom Apple & Cider Festival, and supporting documents and materials such as Fall Fruit & Foliage, event posters, Website enhancement, a photo library, cookbook, and other items that were developed.

Results: Participating Fruit Loop farm sales increased 30% in 2002 from the prior year due to the efforts of the project. Sales increased another 41% in 2003, with many farms reporting a record setting weekend for the Cherry Days event. Similar increases were seen for the other events due to articles in the press from news releases, paid ads, increased marketing efforts, web announcements, and word of mouth. A national media tour and professionals from 20 tour companies and senior centers were also hosted by the Fruit Loop. The media coverage that resulted is estimated at over \$1 million. Thirty crop signs were installed to help identify the various crops along the highway tour route. Travel incentives, such as lodging discounts, tastings, and other promotions were also part of the project. The total economic impact of the 2002 marketing expansion project is estimated at \$800,000 in farm sales and regional economic activity. Five new farm jobs were created in 2002 and four in 2003. 



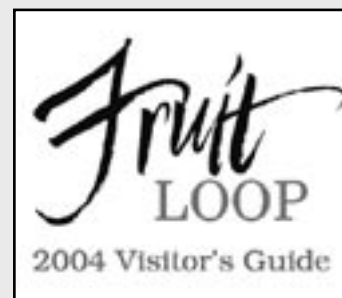
Developing a marketing strategy for European style baby potatoes grown in Klamath County



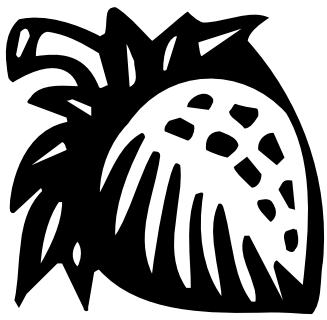
An alternative propagation method for Oregon hazelnuts to multiply Eastern filbert blight resistant trees



Bandon AgriMet weather station project



Marketing expansion in Hood River County



Commodity Commission Spotlight: Oregon Strawberry Commission

Established 1967
 Address 4845 B SW Dresden Ave.
 Corvallis, OR 97333
 Phone 541-758-4043
 Fax 541-758-4553
 E-mail reachus@oregon-strawberries.org
 Website <www.oregon-strawberries.org>
 Chair Ron Fujii
 Commissioners Seven members, appointed by the ODA director. Five seats represent the growers; two seats represent the handlers/processors, and one is a public member.
 Administrator Philip Gütt
 Assessment 1% of the gross value of the raw product.

Research

The OSC is currently funding research for evaluation of surround particle film as a tool for integrated control of pests in strawberries, evaluation of promising new weed control strategies in newly established strawberries, objective flavor comparison of Oregon strawberry and other climate conditions, factors affecting the development of gray mold fruit rot (*Botrytis cinerea*) and development of new strawberry cultivars for the Pacific Northwest.

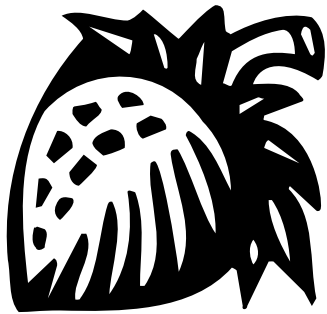
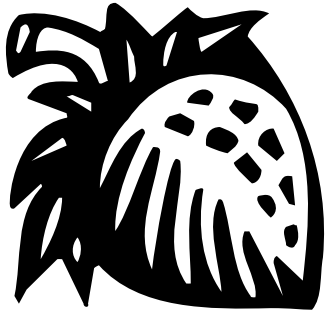
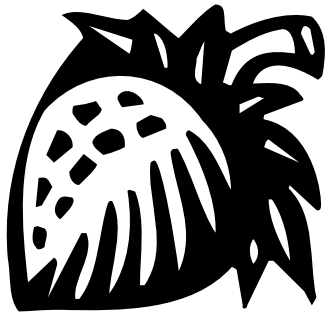
Education

This will be the third year of the “Oregon Strawberries—Sweeter, Redder, Simply Better” essay contest, open to all Oregon 1st-6th graders. Children’s essays and artwork are evaluated by a panel of judges who choose three winners for the grand prize of one year’s worth of Oregon strawberries and a gift basket packed with Oregon strawberry jam and syrup. Everyone who enters wins a coupon for one free strawberry shortcake at Burgerville. All entries are judged on content, creativity, grammar, spelling, research and artistic merit. This contest encourages kids to learn more about Oregon strawberries. 🍓

Activities and Accomplishments

Marketing

The Oregon Strawberry Commission (OSC) is promoting strawberries through a regional partnership program with Tillamook County Creamery Association to support a Northwest retail ad campaign for five major Northwest retailers for “Oregon Strawberry” ice cream. The OSC has created a special “Oregon Strawberries—Sweeter, Redder, Simply Better” product seal for food manufacturers to use. Manufacturers who create products made with Oregon strawberries are eligible to use this seal on their packaging and promotional material. The OSC website offers a variety of information including strawberry recipes, history, plant sales, product development, and contests.



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A special dinner and salute to 36 retiring ODA employees was held recently at the Oregon Garden. Most retirees have logged more than 20 years of service at ODA. Some spent as many as five decades with the agency.

Announcements

ODA Director Katy Coba to speak at the City Club of Portland’s Friday Forum

Topic: “Food Policy Issues”
 When: 12 Noon, Friday, May 7
 Where: Portland State University Native American Community Center
 710 SW Jackson
 Portland, Oregon
 Cost: Lunch: \$16 members; \$18 non-members
 Coffee/Tea: \$5.00 Members and Non-Members
 General Seating: Free for members; \$5 non-members

State Board of Agriculture quarterly meeting

When: June 2-3
 Where: Maupin, Oregon