

Agritourism
With **Sunflowers**



**New fruit
thinner, 4**

**Farmland
values, 10**

**Grasshopper
infestation, 14**



Being a force for good

One of the earliest lessons I learned from my dad was to see value in the things around me. Whether it be the value of a hard day's work on the farm, the value of contributing to the community or the value of friends and family.

When we appreciate what we value most, we gain a better understanding of who we are. At Farm Bureau, I have found countless ways to put my values into action as we work to ensure a bright future for agriculture while

also giving back to our communities.

Farm Bureau's member families see value in service, innovation and hard work to provide a safe and sustainable source of food, fiber and renewable fuel for families both at home and across the globe.

We also work to ensure decisions by our elected leaders and others ensure a bright future for agriculture. And we serve our communities in a multitude of ways that range

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**
President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Governor's summit addresses a lot of Idaho water issues

Agriculture is the lifeblood of Idaho's economy and way of life, and water is the lifeblood of agriculture.

Idaho is a major player in U.S. agriculture and leads the nation in the production of five ag commodities: potatoes, barley, food trout, alfalfa hay and peppermint oil.

We rank in the top five in the United States

in many other ag commodities, including milk, sugar beets, hops, dry onions, wheat, lentils, dry edible beans, corn silage and dry edible peas.

Cattle also play an important role in Idaho's agricultural landscape and ranks No. 2 among Idaho ag commodities in terms of total

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**
CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Be more like bacon

I am proud and grateful to be from Idaho. California, in contrast, is on my list of places I'd rather not live in.

Although I've visited that state many times and met friendly people there, I hope I won't have to move there anytime soon.

I am picking on California here because of a state proposition that California voters passed in November 2018. Despite an elongated legal challenge that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, it is now being enacted in California.

The voters are getting what they asked for, as they clearly stated in the voting booth, when they approved Proposition 12 on the ballot that began with the following:

TITLE: Prevention of Cruelty to Farm Animals Act.

So far, so good. I have never supported cruelty to farm animals.

Now onto the ballot summary: **Establishes new standards for confinement of specified**

See **MILLER**, page 7

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are planted in a field near Firth this spring.

Farmers facing more headwinds in 2023

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Last year, many farmers and ranchers received record or near-record prices for the agricultural commodities they produced. This year is shaping up to be a different story.

Last year was marked by high farm-level commodity prices but also record farm production costs.

In 2023, farm-level prices for most ag commodities are trending downward while input costs are holding steady and even increasing in some cases.

“Our input costs are all the same basically but prices are way down this year,” said Downey hay farmer Fred Burmester. “We’re going to try to stay profitable, maybe, but it’s going to be tight and it will be hard.”

Rupert farmer Mike Wilkins said he likely will make more money from his barley crop this year but it’s a far different story with his hay crop.

“We’re lucky we got a little more money this year for our barley but our hay is way off,” he said, adding that his overall farm production costs will be up a little in 2023 compared with 2022.

Wilkins said his hay crop looks good, “but the prices, man! We’re off \$60-70 a ton. That’s \$420 an acre. That’s a big hit and that cuts pretty deep.”

Shelley potato farmer Bryan Searle said 2023 certainly won’t be any less challenging than last year financially and he expects his overall input costs this year to be a little higher than they were in 2022.

See **OUTLOOK**, page 26

Newly available fruit thinner shows promise in Idaho trials

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

CALDWELL – Field trials in commercial orchards in southwestern Idaho are proving the effectiveness of a newly available plant growth regulator.

Accede is a product that can be used to thin stone fruit, reducing the amount of labor needed for hand thinning, and can also be used to extend the thinning window in apples and other pome fruit.

The chemical contains ACC, a natural compound responsible for the ripening or maturing of fruit.

Fruit scientist Essie Fallahi pioneered research into the use of blossom thinners for many years while overseeing the University of Idaho's pomology program in Parma. That initial work was supplemented or completed in other universities.

One of the results of that work – Accede – became commercially registered last year.

Fallahi recently oversaw about 20 test plots for Accede in commercial fruit orchards in the Treasure Valley area of Idaho.

"The results are fantastic," he told orchardists June 22 during the Idaho State Horticultural Society's summer field tour. "It is a huge development in the fruit world."



Photos by Sean Ellis

Essie Fallahi, a fruit researcher based in southwestern Idaho, shows the effects of a newly available plant growth regulator June 22 during the Idaho State Horticultural Society's summer field tour.

The orchardists were taken to several of the trial plots.

"This is exciting," Fallahi said. "With Accede, we are getting rid of inferior fruit and getting more uniformity on the remaining fruit."

Pretty much all commercial orchards need to use hand thinning but Accede can significantly reduce the amount of labor needed to accomplish that, Fallahi said.

"This is called success," Fallahi said after pointing out one test plot with significantly less fruit on the branches compared with a nearby plot where Accede was not used. "In here, there is definitely less labor needed."

Fallahi, president of the American Society for Horticulture Science, told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation that hand thinning is very labor intensive and expensive for orchardists and Accede has shown great promise in helping to reduce that cost.

"Hand thinning is amazingly expensive," he said. "That is why growers are so excited by this development."

As an example, Fallahi said it is com-

"We wanted to also do trials with commercial growers so they have their own confidence in the chemical and understand how it works."

- Essie Fallahi, fruit scientist

mon for commercial orchardists to pay about \$1,500 per acre for hand thinning of peaches.

"With the use of this fruit thinner, I can't give you an exact number for what the cost will be because that should be determined by each grower, but I can assure you it will be significantly less," he said.

For peaches, apricots and nectarines,



Fruit researcher Essie Fallahi demonstrates the effects of a newly available plant growth regulator June 22 during the Idaho State Horticultural Society's summer field tour.

Accede is used to get rid of blossoms at the bloom stage after pollination or before pollination. With apples, it works as a post-bloom thinner.

Last year was the first year Accede, which is registered for all stone fruit, was tested in commercial orchards in Idaho. The tests were repeated this year.

"The results 90 percent of the time have been fantastic," Fallahi said. "It is reducing the number of flowers. As a result, it is reducing the number of fruits. And then the remaining fruits on the trees are more uniform and they are larger."

The results of the active ingredient used in Accede have been published in papers for a number of years based on trials in university plots.

"We wanted to also do trials with commercial growers so they have their own

confidence in the chemical and understand how it works," Fallahi said.

The commercial growers that donated test plots for the commercial trial overseen by Fallahi also helped with labor and material costs.

When it comes to commercial fruit, orchardists want fewer fruits per branch because that results in larger sized fruit and more uniformity, which is what the market wants, Fallahi said.

If a branch has too many fruits, they will receive fewer carbohydrates from the leaves and remain smaller, he said. That is why orchardists need to thin a good portion of their crop, in order for the remaining fruit to be larger.

"The less fruit you have, the larger they get," Fallahi said. "There is a certain leaf-to-fruit ratio that we need in order to have

the optimum fruit size."

One of the test plots for Accede this year was in the Henggeler fruit orchards in Fruitland

In the commercial fruit world, the market pays more for larger fruit, said field manager Chad Henggeler.

"I'd rather have two large peaches than five small ones," he told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. "In an over-supplied market, small peaches are very difficult to sell."

Another test plot was conducted at Symms Fruit Ranch in the Sunny Slope area of Caldwell.

"Conservatively, I'd say (Accede) took off at least a third of the fruit," co-owner Jamie Hertz told fellow orchardists while reviewing one of the test plots. ■

Continued from page 2

from alleviating hunger to sponsoring local sports teams.

Our shared values help showcase who we are and demonstrate how we are better together, not just in Farm Bureau and agriculture but across our communities.

So, how do we help others see that value?

Countless organizations are currently at a standstill, struggling to grow membership, often because they cannot articulate how their values translate to stronger communities and improved lives.

We can't take our values for granted when they are an important part of growing our membership. Highlighting our values isn't about showing off all the good we are doing but rather explaining the "why" that drives us.

Farm Bureau is well known and respected for our advocacy work to advance smart policies at every level, from county boards to Congress. But that's not all we do.

We are helping our members become better leaders – sometimes elected leaders – and more effective liaisons with a public that has little understanding of agriculture and lots of questions.

The heartbeat of Farm Bureau is our

'We truly are having an amazing impact when we work together, and we're getting better at communicating about it and the values behind it.'

grassroots members who are committed to identifying how we can best serve and strengthen our communities.

They also look out for one another, which is sometimes as simple as helping out on the farm if another member is ill and as intense as jumping into action when natural disasters or severe weather strike with vengeance.

Talking about our commitment to strengthening communities and improving lives will naturally draw in new members.

A great example of what can happen when we align our values and work toward something bigger is Harvest for All. Together, our amazing Young Farmers and Ranchers program collaborated with county and state Farm Bureaus across the country to bring over 25 million pounds of food and \$1 million to local food banks in 2022.

Recently, this awesome effort was honored with the Power of Associations Summit Award from the American Society of Association Executives.

We truly are having an amazing impact when we work together, and we're getting better at communicating about it and the values behind it.

Farm Bureau truly is a family. I say that a lot because I have personally experienced the love and support of this family in good times, and in hard times.

We come together, supporting and celebrating one another and working together to strengthen our farms and rural communities.

Talking about the good work we're doing is a simple recipe for attracting new members. The more members we welcome to the family, the more impact we'll be able to have as a force for good. ■

Continued from page 2

farm-gate revenue. By the way, there are about 2.5 million cattle in Idaho, which means there are more cows than people in the state.

This has happened despite our comparatively tiny population due to Idaho's vast system of reservoirs and thousands of miles of canals and irrigation ditches.

Much of Idaho's agricultural production occurs in the southern part of the state, which is largely a desert. Those reservoirs and irrigation infrastructure have allowed our farmers and ranchers to make the desert bloom with an abundant food supply.

However, the secret is out about Idaho being a great place to live and raise a family. Everyone and their brother apparently has received that message and our state is now among the fastest-growing in the nation percentage-wise.

As our population soars, that will place more strain on our ex-

'Water was, is and will continue to be our state's most precious natural resource.'

isting water supply and infrastructure. How we handle those new water challenges will play a major role in determining our state's future.

Since the vast majority of our water is used by farmers and ranchers, our state's agricultural producers should be particularly interested in this issue.

Thanks to those who attended or watched the Governor's Water Summit that was held in our Capitol building Aug. 7.

The summit was recorded and is available for anyone to review.

Watching it would be a great way for someone to become better educated about our state's current water issues and challenges.

The agenda, meeting materials and video of the summit are available online at <https://idwr.idaho.gov/iwrw/meetings/board-meeting-materials/>.

The event was held in a mostly packed Lincoln Auditorium and an estimated 250 people showed up for the all-day summit, which covered a wide array of water issues that are being faced throughout the state.

Topics ranged from declining groundwater levels in the vast Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, to cloud seeding, to the current water situation in the very fast growing Treasure Valley area of southwestern Idaho, to water supply challenges faced in North Idaho and the Wood River and Mountain Home areas.

Because of the critical role that water plays in Idaho and the increasing challenges surrounding that precious resource, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation held a first-ever Joint Water Seminar during our organization's annual meeting last December.

That seminar, which was held by Idaho Grain Producers Association, Idaho Water Users Association and IFBF, was also well attended.

We held that meeting to help foster public discussion about

some of the state's biggest water issues.

Gov. Brad Little's recent water summit did the same thing and the governor said it's likely similar regional water summits will be held in the near future.

We encourage that because there can never be too many meetings held to discuss Idaho's water resources.

When we become better educated about Idaho's water issues and work toward a common goal, we will continue to be able to produce the food and fiber needed by the nation and world, which will in turn ensure a strong economy for Idaho.

I cannot stress enough how important water has been and continues to be to our state. Without it, much of our state is a vast desert with sagebrush as the dominant feature.

Water was, is and will continue to be our state's most precious natural resource. The more public discussion there is about preserving it, the more likely it is that resource will continue to be the lifeblood of Idaho.

The water challenges that face our state are difficult and I encourage everyone to take the approach of, "How can we figure out ways to continue to provide water to each acre that is currently being irrigated?" ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

farm animals; bans sale of noncomplying products.

It is tough to know exactly what this means, but it changes the way some animals can be housed.

This is the initiative statute: **Establishes minimum requirements for confining certain farm animals. Prohibits sales of meat and egg products from animals confined in a noncomplying manner.**

Hold on! The citizens of California are determining what is appropriate housing for farm animals, and they require other states that raise these animals to do it according to California's rules.

This raises two big questions for me:

1. Does the general citizen of California know more than the farmers, veterinarians, professionals, and professors that study and raise these animals?
2. How can California tell my state what to do?

The voters in California did not see my concerns because they approved Prop 12, with 63% in favor and only 37% against.

California's Prop 12 could significantly impact the market, as major food companies can't ignore such a large customer base. It's concerning that citizens of one state can dictate the rights and choices of citizens in another state.

Now that it is 2023 and the lawsuits have been settled, Prop 12 can go into effect.

Due to California-approved pork scarcity, especially bacon, Californian citizens are paying premium prices for California-approved pork, which is in high demand but has a low supply.

What take-home lessons can we learn from California's crazy Prop 12? Quite a few actually:

1. When people aren't paying attention, they can be easily tricked. Extreme animal rights groups created Prop 12, aiming to make animal products unaffordable and eliminate their consumption.
2. Read the fine print. If voters had taken the time to understand that a yes vote could raise the price of pork dramatically, perhaps they would have voted differently.
3. Ballot initiatives can be misleading.

While state and national representatives follow strict rules when drafting bills, ballot initiatives can have flashy titles that don't accurately reflect their contents.

4. Be more like bacon! Since bacon is a keyword in this discussion, consider bacon for a moment. Bacon is rarely the entrée on a menu; however, every dish with bacon sure is more exciting. As we consider the laws we enact and regulations we accept, whether from our elected representatives or the people in the form of ballot initiatives, will the results make our lives better or worse? Will the results be like bacon and make our lives better?

I feel sympathy for everyone affected by California's self-imposed pain.

Undercooked bacon is dangerous, and so are candidates and initiatives at the ballot box when voters don't take the time to properly consider, or cook, the decision.

Bad legislation – this goes for ballot propositions also – is like bad bacon, a complete disappointment that should be avoided at all costs. ■

Inaugural sunflower festival includes 75 varieties

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

MOUNTAIN HOME – When Bethany Gotts first planted a small patch of sunflowers off of Highway 78 near the Bruneau Sand Dunes in 2020, it was done as a hobby.

The young, fourth-generation Owyhee County farmer loved flowers and wanted to do something she could call her own on the family's 500-acre farm.

But people kept stopping by the side of the road to take photos of the sunflowers or offered to pay to be able to pick some.

The unplanned popularity of that initial small sunflower patch has turned into the 2023 Quey's Maze Sunflower Festival, which attracted about 1,250 people during its inaugural year.

It turns out the low-maintenance, heat-tolerant flowers are not only attractive to pollinators and birds. People also love to be around sunflowers, those giant, bright, cheery flowers with daisy-like faces.

The festival was held on Aug. 5 and Aug. 12, both Saturdays, and the entry fee to the 3-acre sunflower patch was \$5. People could also pay \$15 for a mason jar to fill with flowers they cut themselves.

One-hour photo shoots during the week were offered for \$60.

"The response from people has been great," Gotts said. "Overall, it's been a great first year. It's a lot of work and a lot of good people came together to make this happen."

The Gotts grow corn, wheat, oats, barley and alfalfa on just under 500 acres and also rent out land for other crops, including dry beans and mint. They also grow "small" crops such as melons and sweet corn for farmers markets.

The farm has operated a Quey's Maze corn maze and pumpkin patch in October since 2007 and added the sunflower festival this year.

The festival, which had 10 vendors, included 75 different sunflower varieties. Sunflowers are native to North and South America and are a popular ornamental because of their spectacular size and flower heads.

Gotts planted the sunflowers in 60-inch rows and left gaps in-between the rows to make it easier for people to walk through.

The sunflower patch was not actually a maze, at least not intentionally. "But you do have to kind of wander around to find the openings through the patch," Gotts said.

She did four different plantings and timed it so all the varieties would bloom at the same time. The result was a bright, cheery field with all types, sizes and colors of sunflowers greeting festival attendees.

"It's a botanical experience that (is hard to) get," Gotts said. "You have red ones and white ones, yellow ones, big ones, small ones, all different types. So just seeing them is an experience."

Trina Flowers, whose family owns a farm nearby and



Photo by Sean Ellis

People walk through a sunflower field Aug. 12 during the inaugural Quey's Maze Sunflower Festival near Bruneau. The festival attracted about 1,250 people.

served as the festival's marketing and special events manager, said the main goal of the festival "is to spread joy, first of all. We wanted to have a family event where people can come out to, pick flowers and spend time together at."

Gotts said one of her main goals with the sunflower festival and corn maze and pumpkin patch is to help educate people about agriculture and the fact that farmers and ranchers try hard to be good stewards of their land.

"One of the fun things about this is that we get to teach people about agriculture because the public has no idea where food comes from," she said. "We do so much to take care of the soil with cover crops and nutrients and crop rotation and that's something we like to tell people about."

With the sunflower patch and corn maze right in the heart of farm country, there is plenty of opportunity to teach people about the basics of farming, Gotts said.

"The majority of people are so interested in farming and so enthralled about what farming is and how much goes into it," she said. "You can see all the crops around here – the corn, the beans, the mint. We love educating people about how these crops grow."

Flowers said Gotts "is trying to make people aware of what agriculture is and answer questions and inform people about farming. I think a lot of times people take it for granted that all their food is just there. We want to help them see a little of the behind-the-scenes part of how that comes to be."

Gotts said she didn't do any major advertising for the festival this year and most of the festival visitors were from Mountain Home, Grand View or Glens Ferry, which are from 10 to 20 minutes away.

"Next year, if we actually advertise, I'm sure we'll draw a bigger crowd from Boise and Twin Falls," she said.

But Gotts said she doesn't necessarily want the festival to grow into a major event.

"I want it to be manageable and for people to still feel like they're out in the country enjoying nature," she said. "It's definitely not the money maker here on the farm. Farming is the money maker and this is my fun thing to do."

Gotts said sunflowers are not a major challenge to grow.

"To me, they're pretty easy to grow," she said. "They don't need any nutrient inputs with fertilizer. You just basically have to put them in the ground and make sure it's warm and wet so that they can germinate. Then just make sure the weeds don't overtake them."

"Once they get about a foot tall, man, the sunflowers just take off and grow like crazy," she added. "But up until then, the weeds can shade them and that will stunt their growth a whole lot, so weeding is the biggest thing."

Planting took place at the end of April and beginning of May.

"I grew them, Mother Nature took care of the blooms and Trina took care of letting people know about this," Gotts said.

Flowers said the response from festival attendees was very positive.

"We have been overwhelmed with positive responses," she said. "People are just loving getting out in nature and seeing all the different sunflower varieties. For a first year, I think it's gone amazing." ■



A potato field near American Falls is irrigated in July.

Photo by Sean Ellis

U.S. ag land values and cropland cash rents reach new highs

By Daniel Munch

American Farm Bureau Federation Economist

Agricultural land values increased by \$280 an acre over 2022, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. The Land Values 2023 Summary report, released on August 4, shows a 7.4% increase following 2022's record-breaking numeric increase of \$420 per acre (12%) over 2021. Cash rent values for cropland were up 4.7% to a record \$155 per acre and up 7.1% to \$15 per acre for pastureland. This annual report provides one of many indicators of the overall health of the agricultural economy and

illustrates yet another heightened production cost and barrier to profitability faced by farmers and ranchers.

Farm Real Estate Value

The U.S. average farm real estate value, a measurement that includes the value of all land and buildings on farms, clocked in at a record \$4,080 per acre. This 7.4% increase over last year is less than the 12% bump between 2021 and 2022, which was the largest change since 2006, when values increased 14% over 2005. Excluding last year, 2023 farm real estate values had the largest percentage increase since 2014. Looking at the dollar value of the change, the \$280 per acre increase over 2022 is the second-highest increase since the USDA began the survey in 1997.

These levels vary significantly throughout the country, with the highest real estate values concentrated in areas with larger volumes of high-value crops (think wine grapes and tree nuts in California), as well as areas experiencing upward pressure due to proximity to urban areas with little remaining developable land, like the small states of the Northeast. Much of the Midwest had higher real estate values, followed by the South and Pacific Northwest, and finally the Plains and Mountain states. Part of this increase can be linked to high 2021/2022 commodity prices that have translated to a higher farming value for land in row crop-heavy heartland states like Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas and Indiana. New government program incentives that provide financial compensation to landowners who voluntarily enroll and retire highly erodible and environmentally sensitive lands, such as those added in 2021 to the Conservation Reserve Program, also contributed to increased competition for active cropland, increas-

ing land prices. Other factors contributing to rising land values are competing land-use interests, which includes urban and suburban sprawl, and increased investments into hard assets, like land, for a safer return on investment during an extended period of inflation. On a state-by-state basis, (excluding Northeast states with urban pressure), Kansas experienced the largest percent increase (+16%), followed by Indiana (+14%) and Nebraska (+13%). Nine states experienced double digit-percentage increases in 2023 farm real estate values, five of which are in the Midwest.

Like overall agricultural real estate values, average U.S. cropland values increased in 2023, rising to \$5,460 per acre. This increase came in as an 8.1% jump over 2022, which is marginally higher than the 7.8% increase in cropland values in 2021 but is below double-digit percentage increases between 2005-2007, 2011-2013 and in 2022. In dollar values, this year-over-year increase was \$410 per acre, the third highest behind 2022 and 2013. The distribution across the country follows a similar pattern as overall farmland value, with California and Northeastern states claiming the highest average cropland values. Following that top category is much of the Midwest, Florida and Arizona, the latter of which are both areas of high specialty crop value and residential development pressures. The top three states in terms of percentage growth are Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas, posting gains of 17%, 14% and 13%, respectively.

Pastureland Value

Similar to overall agricultural real estate values and cropland values, pastureland values posted strong gains from the previous year, coming in at \$1,760 per acre on average for the U.S. This is

TOTAL AG LAND VALUE BY STATE

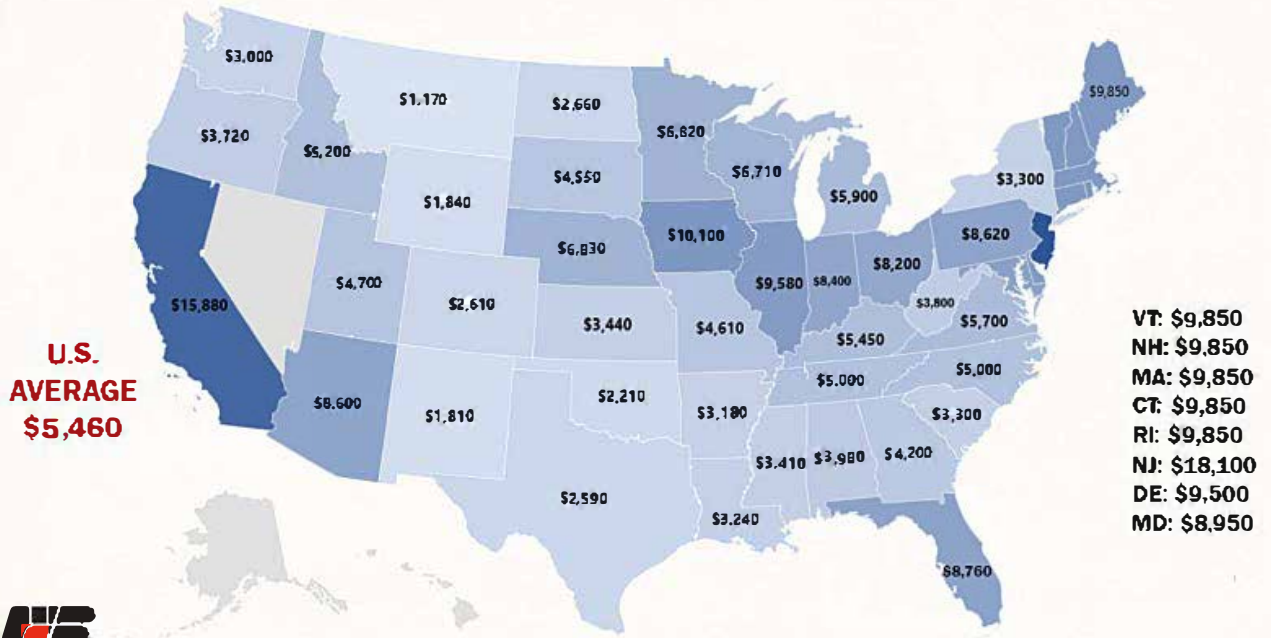
U.S. | Dollars Per Acre



Source: USDA NASS

TOTAL CROPLAND VALUE BY STATE

U.S. | Dollars Per Acre



U.S. AVERAGE
\$5,460

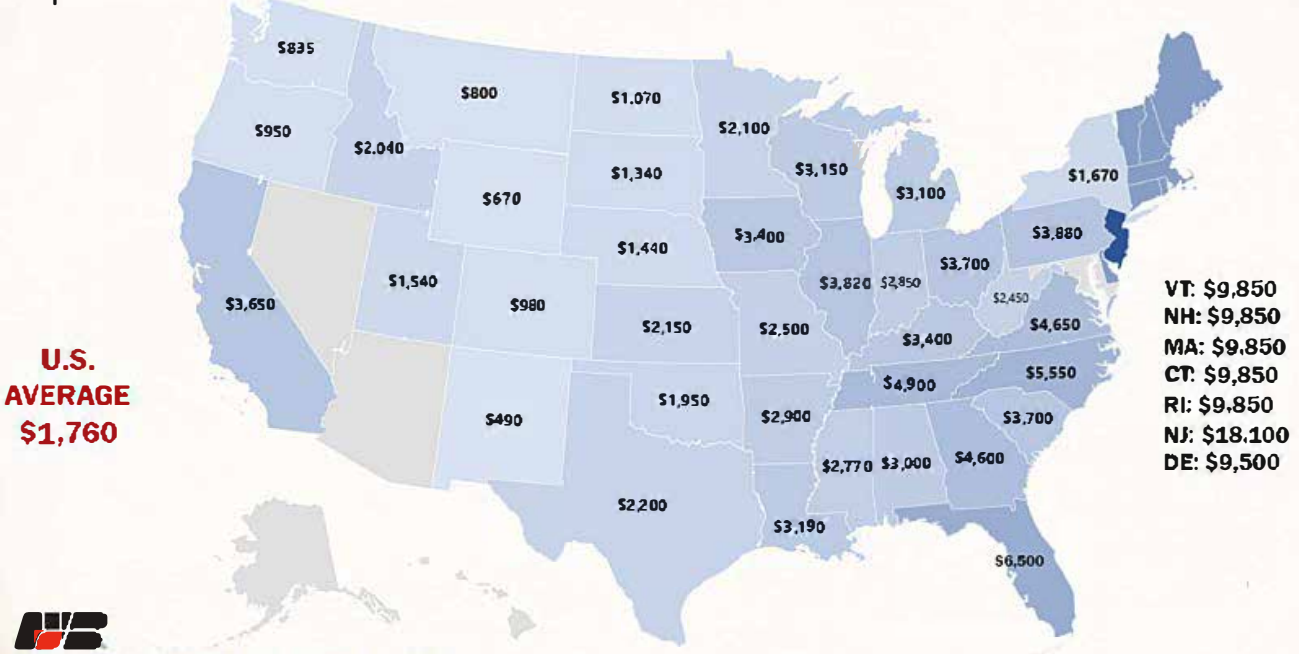
VT: \$9,850
NH: \$9,850
MA: \$9,850
CT: \$9,850
RI: \$9,850
NJ: \$18,100
DE: \$9,500
MD: \$8,950



Source: USDA NASS

TOTAL PASTURELAND VALUE BY STATE

U.S. | Dollars Per Acre



U.S. AVERAGE
\$1,760

VT: \$9,850
NH: \$9,850
MA: \$9,850
CT: \$9,850
RI: \$9,850
NJ: \$18,100
DE: \$9,500



Source: USDA NASS

an increase of 6.7% over 2022, a drop from 2022's 11.5% increase from 2021 after seven years of little to no increases in value. However, the distribution of pastureland values across the country differs from cropland values and real estate values. Instead of the Midwest and California, some of the more valuable pastureland state averages are concentrated along the East Coast and in the mid-South, with the Midwest and the Plains toward the bottom of pastureland values. A very high percentage of grazeable land in the West is owned by the federal government, a portion of which is leased to ranchers using grazing permits. These dynamics limit the role of real estate competition for pastureland in many Western states. States with higher pastureland values tend to be those with higher competition for open land. As has been the case historically, the East Coast states are the most densely populated parts of the country and have correspondingly faced development pressures resulting in the slicing and dicing of properties at a higher magnitude than the rest of the country. This results in competition for a small number of plots that can provide adequate grazing features at a much higher cost.

Cash Rent Increases

On August 4, NASS also released data on cash rents, with the increases in land values translating to increases in cash rent. Cash rent tends to be more of a lagging indicator, and likely will be reflected in future producer-landlord negotiations. Average U.S. cropland rent increased to \$155 per acre this year, a 4.7% rise over 2022. Irrigated cropland rents increased 4.4% to \$237 per acre, while non-irrigated cropland rents increased 5.2% to \$142 per acre. Cash rents for pastureland increased 7.7% this year, reaching \$15 per acre. As pressures on open land intensify across the nation for residential and energy development, leasing cropland becomes less profitable. These trends have been strengthened by the preference of office-based workers to work at home or away from a central urbanized office location, which provides people flexibility to work from rural communities and buy properties that compete with agricultural land use. Periods of heightened commodity prices also lead to higher leasing rates set by landowners.

Washington and Georgia led the country in highest percent increases in cropland cash rental rates in 2023 at of 10% each followed by Florida (9%). Decreases in cropland cash rental rates occurred in Oklahoma (-8%) and parts of the West like Wyoming (-5%) and Nevada (-5%). By value, the highest cropland rental rates were in California (\$344/acre), Arizona (\$347/acre) and Hawaii (\$295/acre), all states with high-value orchard and specialty crops often linked to the existence of water rights that contribute to more valuable contracts. Washington and heartland states of Iowa, Illinois and Indiana made up the next highest cropland rental rate category, linked to higher value specialty crops for the former and a high density of high-value commodity crops in the latter. Correspondingly, irrigated cropland rent explains the bulk of cropland rental rates in California, Arizona, Washington and other Western states primarily reliant on surface water irrigation, while non-irrigated cropland rent explains that of Midwest states that rely heavily on dryland farming. The access to and cost of water play a large role in regional operating expenses as well as

land value costs.

Margins for many producers who rely on rented land are jeopardized by even minimal changes in rental rates. This can threaten annual production output. More broadly, those who lack equity from land ownership have reduced access to operating lines of credit needed to fund annual equipment and input purchases; and rising land prices and rents often take away the benefits of high crop prices.

Conclusion

USDA's land value report shows continued increases across the board in agricultural real estate values, cropland values and pastureland values. The average U.S. farm real estate value increased by \$280 per acre, or 7.4% over 2022, while the cropland value and pastureland value increased by 8.1% and 6.7%, respectively. Cash rents have also jumped, ranging from 4.4% to 7.1% increases across cropland, irrigated and non-irrigated, and pastureland. In a continued period of heightened input costs across the board further exacerbated by inflationary pressures, high rent and land costs are yet another hurdle for farmers and ranchers working to produce more crops and raise more livestock. Fortunately for producers who own land, their equity has increased, but for those just starting out or reliant on the acres they rent to make ends meet, these increases can become an unbreachable barrier to entry. ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



“You seem to have a chip on your shoulder.”

World's oldest hops grower turns 100

By Bill Schaefer
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

The world's oldest hops grower recently celebrated his 100th birthday in Parma, Idaho.

Ray Obendorf was born on June 24, 1923, in Caldwell, Idaho, and an estimated 200 family and friends came together June 24 at the Obendorf Farm to celebrate this milestone.

Way back in 1923, when Obendorf was born, President Warren G. Harding was traveling across the United States on a trans-continental railroad tour called the "Voyage of Understanding" and Charles Moore was governor of Idaho.

During Obendorf's lifetime, Idaho's population has grown from about 432,000 to more than 1.9 million today.

He attributes his longevity to genetics.

"My family, I had two aunts that were over 100 and my sister lived to be 99.5 or 6 or something. So good genes," he said with a laugh.

Growing up wasn't a cakewalk for Ray Obendorf.

In the midst of the Great Depression, his father died of a heart attack in 1933 when Ray was 10 years old. Four years later, when he was a sophomore in high school, he began his career as a farmer when he planted his first crop, a plot of onions.

"I started farming when I was 14," he said. "My mother had a renter, Orien Nugent was his name, and he was running everything. He gave me some ground that I could run on my own. He was really, really helpful."

He was a young man of 25 when his neighbor, J.R. Gooding, first approached him with a proposal to grow hops.

"He said, 'Ray why don't you plant some hops and I'll dry them for you,'" Obendorf recalled on a recent June morning sitting in a chair in his living room.

At the time when Gooding approached him, Obendorf was growing onions, carrots and an assortment of vegetables.

"I planted some hops and he dried them for me and at that time the buyers were Williams and Hart from Salem (Oregon)," he said. "Then soon after that Steiner Company was in Yakima (Wash.) and they moved down to Caldwell and hired a guy named Howard Eisenmann. He was the broker. He made the deals, contracts with us and it just grew from there."



Photos by Bill Schaefer

Four generations of Obendorfs: great-grandson, Mason, 5; grandson, Brock, left; Ray, sitting; and his son, Greg.

From 20 acres of hops in 1948, Obendorf Hops has grown into the largest hops grower in Idaho with 3,200 acres of hops planted annually.

The majority of hops in the United States are grown in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. Idaho ranks No. 2 in the U.S. in total hop production, behind Washington.

Obendorf attributes part of his family's agricultural success to the canals and dams of the Snake River and Boise River.

"We have plenty of water because we have the dams along the Boise River and that supplies us with irrigation water," he said. "We can grow a good crop here."

Obendorf cited drip irrigation as one of the most important innovations he has witnessed during the past 75 years of growing hops.

"Back then it was all furrow irrigated," Obendorf said. "Now, it's all drip irrigation so it takes a lot less water and does a better job."

Ray's son Greg said that he started farming full-time with his



Rows of first-year hops at the Obendorf farm.

“Our handshake is our contract. It’s golden whether we win or lose, make money or lose money, you make the deal you stay with the deal and a lot of that doesn’t happen today in this world.”

- Greg Obendorf, hops farmer

father upon graduating from the College of Idaho with a business degree in 1977.

Greg said that he learned everything about farming from his father and that he has passed that knowledge on to his sons.

“I talk to my dad every day,” Greg said. “If I have a question, if it’s too hot or too cold or too many bugs, I talk to my dad once a day, always.”

According to Greg, it wasn’t just agronomy that his father instilled in him but a work ethic.

“My dad taught me that when you make a deal with someone, your word is gold,” Greg said. “You shake someone’s hand, that’s a contract and you should always abide by that. You don’t lie, you don’t cheat or steal and I also instill that in my sons. Our handshake is our contract. It’s golden whether we win or lose, make money or lose money,

you make the deal you stay with the deal and a lot of that doesn’t happen today in this world.”

Ray is retired now and Greg is semi-retired, but Greg’s sons, Brock, Phil and Christian, are continuing the Obendorf legacy of growing hops, onions, sugar beets, corn and seed corn in southwest Idaho’s Canyon County in the area surrounding the city of Parma.

Brock oversees the hops operation while Phil is in charge of the row crops and Christian helps run the packing sheds for the row crops.

Ray takes great satisfaction in the hard work and resulting expansion of the farm by his grandsons.

“I’m proud of them; my grandsons are super guys,” said Ray. “The grandsons have just increased it (the farm) tremendously.” ■

Grasshoppers causing widespread damage throughout Southern Idaho

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

Most of the grain has vanished from Terrell Sorensen's 50-acre barley field in southern Bannock County's Swan Lake area, but the hordes of grasshoppers that moved in during late June remain.

"It's amazing. When you go there in the evenings, those stalks will be totally lined with grasshoppers," said Sorensen, a recently retired University of Idaho Extension educator who served in Power County. "They'll eat the kernels right off the head. I don't think there will be anything to harvest – there won't be anything to graze either."

Sorensen's former UI Extension colleagues throughout southern Idaho are available to offer guidance on coping with pests and have been fielding daily calls from the public about this summer's extreme, widespread grasshopper infestations.

The Extension educators steer farmers and property owners with larger land holdings to an Idaho State Department of Agriculture program that provides pest management information and insecticide to private landowners with 5 acres or more of pasture, crops or rangeland.

Landowners are responsible for applying the insecticide themselves, following product labels and rules. To qualify for the assistance, landowners must have an infestation of at least eight grasshoppers or three Mormon crickets per square meter.

That was an easy bar for Sorensen to clear. He's had grasshopper infestations in patches of fields before, but he's never had a field become completely overrun by them prior to this season.

TOP: A grasshopper rests on a milkweed leaf in west Pocatello.
Photo by John O'Connell

LEFT: Grasshoppers cling to barley in Terrell Sorensen's field in southern Bannock County. Sorensen doubts he'll have anything left to harvest due to the grasshopper infestation.
Photo by Terrell Sorensen



“A man from ISDA drove up and looked and he said, ‘I don’t need to get out of my truck. My windshield is covered with grasshoppers now,’” Sorensen said.

Following the visit, ISDA provided Sorensen the insecticide to treat his entire field, resulting in about a 99% kill.

Within two weeks, however, the grasshoppers had returned. Sorensen tried treating the edges of the field, but it was ineffective. His neighbor’s fields were equally infested.

Canyon County Extension Educator Brad Stokes, who specializes in horticulture and entomology, noted grasshoppers have even necessitated responses by ISDA in northern Idaho this season, which is unusual.

“This year seems especially harsh in my opinion because of the number of calls and the amount of treatments ISDA has put out,” Stokes said.

Mormon cricket numbers are also up in certain pockets of southern Idaho, especially south of Riggins, this year. The crickets are voracious eaters and can’t fly. “They will be a road hazard if they get thick enough,” Stokes said of Mormon crickets.

Statewide, the ISDA Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Control Program received more than 300 requests for assistance from private property owners through Aug. 3.

ISDA has directly distributed more than 154,000 pounds of carbaryl bait to Idaho property owners to control the pests.

The agency has also reimbursed more than \$800,000 to farmers who had to buy alternative insecticides because carbaryl bait isn’t labeled for use in the crops they’re raising.

Owyhee, Oneida, Elmore and Washington counties have been hit especially hard.

“We’ve had years where we’ve given out more bait, but we’ve never had a year where we’ve had as many landowner reimbursements,” said ISDA Deputy Director Lloyd Knight. “I’m not going to say it’s the worst year ever, but it sure has been a bad one.”

In July 2020, UI Extension educators Jason Thomas, Carmen Willmore and

“The grasshoppers are a challenge because they’re so mobile. You spray and new ones will move in.”

- Bracken Henderson, University of Idaho Extension Educator

Steven Hines published an Extension bulletin offering scouting tips and advice on grasshopper control.

The bulletin explains female grasshoppers lay their eggs in the top 2 inches of soil during the fall, and hatching occurs from April through May. Management targeting newly emerged grasshoppers, or nymphs, is most effective.

Thomas, an entomologist based in Minidoka County, believes wet weather is largely responsible for this season’s grasshopper population explosion. Vegetation throughout the region grew lush following a wet winter and spring, improving nymph survival.

“They’ve been able to move from rangeland to ag land and people’s yards,” Thomas said. “I’ve gotten more calls than usual on grasshoppers, that’s for sure.”

Most grasshoppers have already reached adulthood. Grasshoppers are considered adults once they’ve developed wings, which enables them to travel further and

target more ground, though adults of certain species eat much less than nymphs or juveniles.

About five species of grasshoppers cause most of the state’s damage.

Thomas believes the main benefit of applying insecticide now is that it could prevent grasshoppers from mating and limit populations next season.

Scouting should begin in the spring, about 100 days after the first 50-degree daytime temperature occurs. A commercially available fungus, commonly called Nolo Bait, provides effective biological control for long-term management of highly infested areas.

Insecticides such as diflubenzuron, carbaryl and malathion can also be effective.

Crops bordering rangeland or pastures are at high risk of grasshopper damage during mid-summer, when rangeland grasses go dormant, causing grasshopper to move in search of other food sources.

Cereals, alfalfa and grasses are especially susceptible to grasshopper damage.

“The grasshoppers are a challenge because they’re so mobile,” said University of Idaho Extension Educator Bracken Henderson, who is based in Franklin County. “You spray and new ones will move in.”

Henderson has averaged about two calls per day from people seeking guidance since grasshopper populations began to climb earlier this summer. He advises people with the most significant infestations to use long-lasting herbicides for continued control.

He also recommends that callers contact a local crop advisor or chemical supplier for additional assistance. ■



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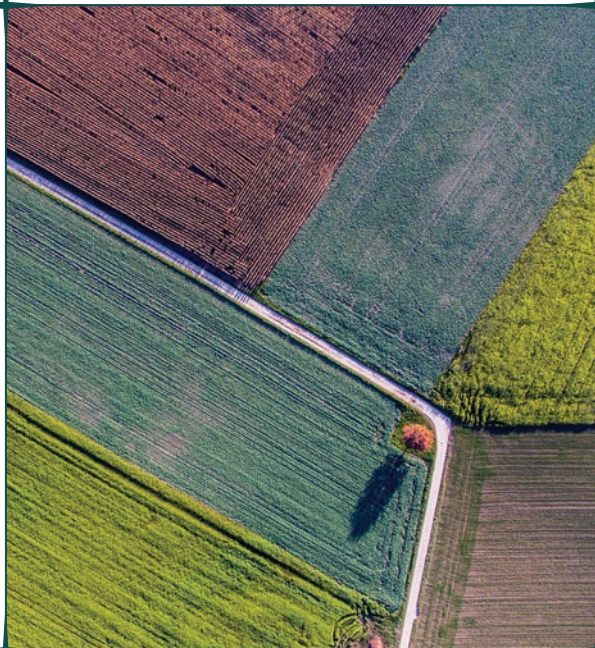
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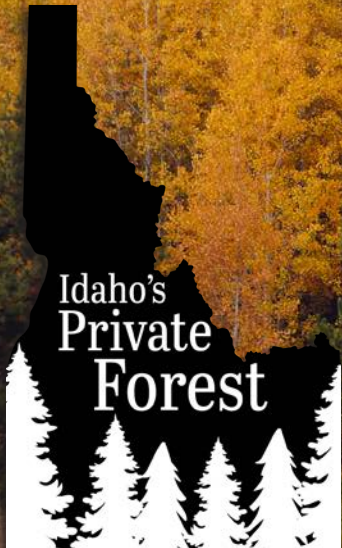
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Improving ruffed grouse habitat

By Chris Schnepf
University of Idaho

Photos by Chris Schnepf

Aspen buds can be an important food source for grouse.

It is sneaking up on fall as I write this. For many of us, that means grouse hunting is just around the corner.

Perhaps no game bird is as commonly associated with U.S. forests as much as grouse. Even people with no interest in hunting enjoy seeing this bird in forests or hearing their drumming reverberate through the woods.

Idaho is blessed with several species of grouse, including blue grouse and spruce grouse, but ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) are the most common grouse species in Idaho family forests.

Many of us enjoy hunting, photographing or just having ruffed grouse around. Although grouse populations may go boom or bust from year to year, you can increase their average numbers by providing better habitat on your property.

Much of the ruffed grouse habitat re-

search was developed in the eastern states; however, basic principles should apply to Idaho birds as well.

Ruffed grouse are omnivorous and have been known to eat over 600 different food items, including buds, leaves, berries, nuts, some grain and insects. Buds, especially those of shrubs and trees above the snow, are particularly vital.

Quality habitat for grouse reflects their varied feeding habits. Grouse thrive in the habitat provided in a very young forest – a complex variety in the species, size and distribution of trees and shrubs.

Generally, the more diverse your forest's vegetation, the better for ruffed grouse. If you want to grow more grouse, try to increase the variety of shrubs in your forest by:

- Creating small openings throughout

the forest (1/4 to 1 acre and at least 600 feet apart).

- Widening areas along forest roads to 30 feet or more.
- Creating shrub borders between forests and fields.
- Thinning the stand to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor.

If your property has aspen, try to maintain a wide distribution of size classes. Many authorities cite aspen buds, catkins, etc., as important winter and spring food sources for grouse.

Winter cover (pockets of heavy conifers) is also important for protection from the weather, but only if there isn't cold ("dry") snow in the winter. If there is, the grouse will bury themselves in it, relying on the snow to insulate them.

On many northern Idaho family forests,

cold dry snow is not the norm, so conifer cover is more important. Winter cover is also important for roosting and hiding from predators. Such cover is particularly valuable near streams.

Individual grouse range over relatively small areas (10-40 acres) so the wider variety of habitat you can include in small tracts, the better for grouse. Increased “edge” (area between timber and brush or grass) throughout your property, is good for grouse and many other species of wildlife (though not all) as well.

You can also directly help grouse reproduction. Many of us have heard male grouse “drumming” in the spring to advertise their availability for mating.

Grouse make this sound by beating their wings against the air and the performance is usually delivered from the top of a fallen log or stump.

If you harvest timber and there are not any large diameter logs lying around, consider leaving butt logs from wolf trees for grouse drumming sites.

Leaving these logs also benefits a variety of other wildlife (especially if they are hollow) and provides long-term benefits to forest soils (see “Managing forest Organic Debris and Slash” at <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/publications/publication-detail?id=pnw0609>).

Before making improvements, evaluate the habitat currently available. This may be done informally, by simply walking through the place, or more formally



Ruffed grouse are fun to see and hear, but they are also delicious to eat.

through a wildlife habitat inventory (similar to a timber inventory).

Try to map out the locations of various kinds of wildlife habitat.

Once you understand the current status of the property’s habitat, integrate development of grouse habitat with that for other benefits through your forest management plan.

Wildlife can usually be accommodated with management for other values, such as timber. If you harvest timber from your property, consider improving ruffed grouse habitat at the same time.

For example, you might leave fewer stems per acre when you thin, to favor brush development.

Ruffed grouse are just one of many benefits from an actively managed forest property. If you have further questions on grouse or other wildlife habitat, contact the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or your local University of Idaho Extension office.

There is also a handy brief publication titled, “Managing Small Woodlands For Grouse,” available at (<https://woodlandfishandwildlife.com/publications/birds/managing-small-woodlands-for-grouse>).

The publication also provides guidance on improving habitat for blue grouse and spruce grouse. This site (“Woodland Fish and Wildlife”) also features dozens of downloadable publications featuring wildlife habitat recommendations to help family forest owners improve habitat for a whole variety of wildlife species found in Pacific Northwest forests. ■

Chris Schnepf is an area extension educator in forestry for the University of Idaho in Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Benewah counties. He can be reached at cschnepf@uidaho.edu.



LEFT: Leaving logs on the ground benefits grouse, other wildlife and long-term forest soil health.

OUTLOOK

Continued from page 3

According to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists, the state's agricultural producers had a record \$8.9 billion in total production expenses last year. They also estimate Idaho producers brought in a record \$11 billion in farm-gate revenue in 2022.

With farm-level prices for many ag commodities on the decline, total farm revenue in Idaho will almost surely be down in 2023. With production costs holding steady, at record levels, this year is shaping up to be much more financially challenging for the state's farmers and ranchers.

"I think it will be more challenging this year," Searle said in late July. But, he added, potato yields and quality will be big factors in how the state's spud farmers fare financially in 2023 and both those factors are unknown right now.

"The verdict is still out," said Searle, president of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. "We have a long way to go from now until harvest."

A recent Market Snapshot report by AgWest Farm Credit predicts a mixed bag for Idaho's top ag commodities over the next 12 months when it comes to profitability.

AgWest is part of the 107-year-old Farm Credit system, a financial cooperative with \$30 billion in total assets that provides financing and related services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses, rural homeowners and crop insurance customers primarily in seven Western states.

AgWest's 12-month profitability outlook for dairy, Idaho's No. 1 ag commodity in terms of total revenue, is not good.

According to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists, Idaho's 360 dairy operations brought in a combined \$4.2 billion in farm-gate revenue last year.

The Market Snapshot report suggests slightly unprofitable returns for the state's dairy operations. According to the report, "dairies face headwinds from weakening milk prices and elevated feed costs."

"Dairy margins have been squeezed throughout 2023 with lower milk prices and persistently high production costs," the report adds ... "Dairy margins will remain tight for the foreseeable future."

Weakening export demand is not a great development for the U.S. dairy industry, according to the report.

"This is a concern for the dairy industry, as milk production is growing faster than demand," it states.

The Market Snapshot report forecasts a different situation for the Northwest beef cattle industry. It suggests profitable returns for cow-calf producers and slightly profitable returns for cattle feeders.

Beef cattle is Idaho's No. 2 agricultural commodity in terms of total farm-gate revenue and the state's ranchers brought in an estimated \$1.9 billion in farm-gate revenue last year.

"Cow-calf producers will benefit from record cattle prices and



Photo by Sean Ellis

Sugar beets are planted in a field near Firth this spring.

improving pasture conditions," the report states. "Cattle feeders will benefit from higher cattle prices, but profits will be challenged by elevated feed costs and inflation."

The report adds, "Favorable cattle prices and strong demand for beef are creating a promising year for western cattle ranchers."

The Market Snapshot report suggests profitable returns for contracted and uncontracted potatoes over the next 12 months.

Potatoes are Idaho's No. 3 ag commodity and No. 1 crop in total revenue. The state's potato farmers, who plant about 300,000 acres of spuds each year, brought in an estimated \$1.3 billion in farm-gate revenue last year.

The report said Idaho producers are concerned about yields and potato development because late planting and wet field conditions delayed potato growth.

"Despite these challenges, growers remain optimistic, especially as Idaho's irrigation supply significantly improved from 2022," the report states ... "Potato growers are optimistic about the upcoming growing season despite input cost headwinds. The weather will largely determine the quality of the 2023 Northwest crop. So far, favorable weather has potato growers expecting good yields."

The Market Outlook report suggests slightly profitable returns for alfalfa hay and break-even returns for timothy hay.

Hay is Idaho's No. 4 agricultural commodity. Idaho farmers typically harvest about 1.2 million acres of hay each year and the state's hay farmers brought in an estimated \$725 million in farm-gate revenue last year.

"Drivers include June storms dampening first-cutting hay quality, lower hay prices and decreasing cost of production," the AgWest report states. "Export quality hay faces headwinds from weak buyer demand and ongoing port challenges."

The report notes that alfalfa is a major feed component for western dairies and dairies have been purchasing less hay due to declining milk prices.

"Inventory carryovers and better growing conditions will soften hay prices from 2022 records," the Market Snapshot states. "Hay

producers should expect prices to continue a downward adjustment throughout the fall.”

According to the report, production prices for hay farmers are declining as fertilizer and fuel prices have come down from 2022 highs.

“While hay prices have softened, production cost reductions will support hay profitability,” the report states.

The Market Snapshot’s 12-month outlook suggests slightly profitable returns for small grains, which include wheat and barley.

Wheat (\$706 million in farm-gate revenue in 2022) is Idaho’s No. 5 agricultural commodity in terms of total revenue and barley (\$357 million) ranks No. 7.

Idaho farmers typically plant about 1.2 million acres of wheat and 550,000 acres of barley.

According to the Market Snapshot report, drivers in the small grains market include a smaller winter wheat crop, geopolitical tensions and forecasted record global wheat production.

The report states that global wheat production is forecast to hit a record of more than 800 million tons produced this year.

The U.S. exports the highest-quality wheat but it is also one of the most expensive, and countries are only willing to pay a premium for that wheat up to a certain point, according to the Market Snapshot.

“Strong global production will put downward pressure on global and U.S. wheat prices,” the report states. “However, weather still poses the greatest risk to global production and any significant weather challenges to major wheat exporting areas could have a bullish influence on world prices.”

The Market Snapshot suggests profitable returns for sugar beet farmers in the Northwest. Sugar beets (\$385 million in farm-gate revenue in 2022) rank No. 6 among Idaho agricultural commodities.

Idaho producers typically plant about 170,000 acres of sugar beets each year.

“Drivers include favorable growing conditions, an improving irrigation outlook and tight global inventories creating upward price pressure,” the report states. “Sugar beet growers will benefit from favorable planting and market conditions.”

Tight global supplies are supporting strong sugar prices, the report states.

“The domestic sugar price outlook is bullish as anticipated reductions in sugar beet and cane acres will limit supplies, therefore supporting higher prices,” the report states ... “Input costs are slowly coming down while prices should increase, leading to a profitable 2023 crop.” ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



Close-knit family



“Hog futures are in trouble. The bottom fell out of pork bellies.”

Widespread glyphosate resistance found in southern Idaho kochia survey

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

A University of Idaho-led farm field survey conducted last fall confirmed a troublesome annual weed, kochia, has developed resistance to glyphosate herbicide in eight of nine southern Idaho counties in which samples were taken.

Of the counties included, only Power County had no resistant kochia samples. Furthermore, laboratory testing confirmed certain kochia plants pulled from fields in Bingham, Cassia, Minidoka, Owyhee and Elmore counties possessed surprisingly strong resistance to glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in Roundup herbicide.

Amalgamated Sugar Co. contributed \$5,000 toward testing of the weeds at a Montana laboratory and has agreed to contribute another \$20,000 for a broader survey of fields this fall.

While the initial survey focused only on glyphosate resistance in kochia, the expanded survey will also test resistance to dicamba and glufosinate herbicides, including common lambsquarters, pigweed and a couple of annual grasses as additional weeds for screening.

The expanded survey will provide timely data, as Idaho farmers will soon have access to a new sugar beet variety engineered with stacked traits to resist applications of all three herbicides: glyphosate, dicamba and glufosinate.

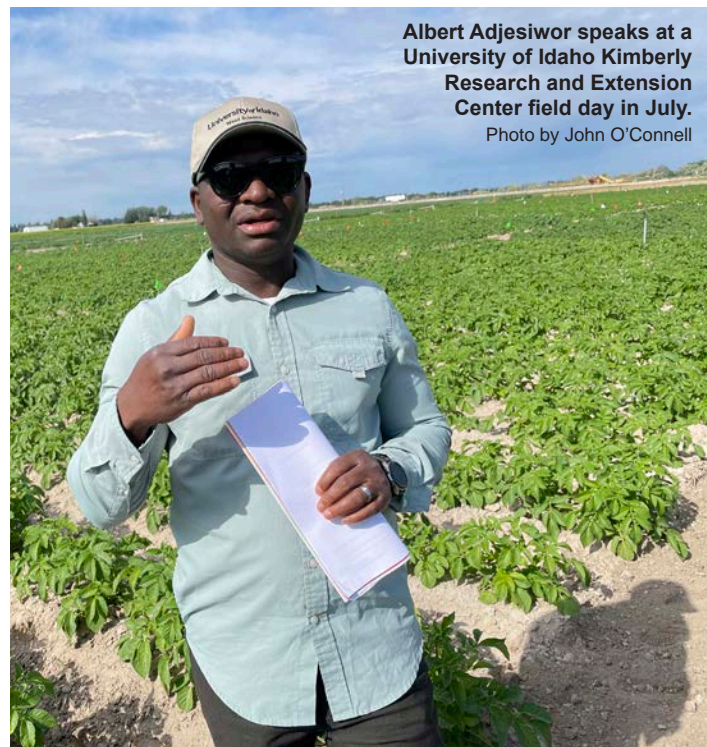
Albert Adjesiwor, a UI Extension weed scientist based at the Kimberly Research and Extension Center, and Clarke Alder, a research agronomist and weed scientist with Amalgamated Sugar, published findings of last fall's survey in the 2023 research edition of the company's magazine, "The Sugarbeet."

"Kochia is a tumbleweed. That's the difficulty – I can do everything right, and if my neighbor doesn't do everything right, I can still get resistance, and it's not my fault," Adjesiwor said.

Don Morishita, an emeritus professor of weed science at U of I, confirmed Idaho's first known glyphosate-resistant kochia plant from Canyon County in 2014. In the ensuing years, growers throughout southern Idaho have reported increasing difficulty in controlling certain weeds, including kochia.

Out of 40 kochia samples Adjesiwor sent in for laboratory testing, 18 of them – or 45% -- were glyphosate resistant.

Fields had already been sprayed with two or more glyphosate



Albert Adjesiwor speaks at a University of Idaho Kimberly Research and Extension Center field day in July.

Photo by John O'Connell

applications when the kochia plants were collected from southern Idaho sugar beet fields. Weeds that weren't found to be resistant but were present even after repeated glyphosate applications were likely present due to application error or may have simply emerged following applications.

Adjesiwor was surprised by the high level of resistance in some of the plants. Scientists measure glyphosate resistance by counting the number of copies of a specific gene associated with a plant's defense against glyphosate.

Plants with one copy or fewer of the EPSPS gene are sensitive to glyphosate. Those with multiple copies are resistant, with the level of resistance increasing with each additional copy.

One plant in Minidoka County had 24 copies of the resistance gene; another kochia plant in Canyon County had 17 copies.

"After a certain number of copies, no labeled rate or practical amount of Roundup would kill that," Adjesiwor said. "I had a grower who sent a kochia sample here and they sprayed 72 ounces of Roundup and the weeds were still standing like nothing had happened."

Crop rotation is a farmer's primary tool for controlling resistant weeds. By rotating sugar beets with small grains, for example, farmers can incorporate other herbicides that remain effective against kochia. Furthermore, small grains are harvested before kochia seeds mature.

Kochia may still produce seeds following grain harvest, however, and growers planning to follow with sugar beets should be proactive in targeting the weed.

"Immediately after grain harvest, either do tillage right away or spray something to prevent kochia from going to seed," Adjesiwor said. ■



IDAHO PREFERRED FUN FACT:

Idaho Preferred is celebrating 20 years of successfully connecting, educating, and promoting farmers and producers to help them grow their marketplaces!

IT'S IDAHO PREFERRED MONTH!

For twenty years, Idaho Preferred has successfully united several key players within Idaho's local food supply chain including farmers, consumers, retailers and more. Celebrate with us!

September marks **Idaho Preferred Month**, an annual tribute to Idaho's bountiful harvest season. Backed by the governor's official proclamation, this month emphasizes three key aspects. It highlights the period when the freshest local produce takes the stage, inviting consumers to savor the flavor of Idaho's harvest. It also recognizes the dedication of Idaho's hardworking farmers and producers, who proudly present the fruits of their labor. Importantly, Idaho Preferred Month acknowledges retail markets, both large and small, that play a pivotal role as vital conduits, enabling easy access to Idaho's finest produce directly from a variety of local producers spanning the state. That is something to celebrate!



Meet the Regehr family, owners of Bluerock Farms and Bluerock Farm Market in Twin Falls.

With a shared passion for delivering high-quality products to the residents of the

Magic Valley, Ty and Trena Regehr transitioned from cultivating commodities to specializing in produce at Bluerock Farms. They also provide their customers with like-minded local vendors at their Bluerock Farm Market located in Twin Falls.

LIVE. EAT. LOCAL. WITH THE FARM + FOOD FINDER DIRECTORY

The new **Idaho Preferred Farm + Food Finder** works in tandem with custom retail signage and gives consumers a quick, simple-to-use resource while shopping at their favorite retail location. When consumers identify Idaho-grown products with custom signage at the store, they can scan the QR Code and be taken to the retailer's directory page on the Idaho Preferred website. Here, they will discover a variety of local Idaho producers regularly in stock at that marketplace.



Visit: www.idahopreferred.com/find/retail

The Idaho Preferred website has become the go-to resource for discovering local Idaho agriculture products and experiences with over 2.1 million unique views in 2022.

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Idaho Preferred Month emphasizes collaborations with our retail partners. During this year's 20th anniversary celebration, our coordinated campaign efforts include plans for retail promotions with 11 different grocers at 43 locations throughout Idaho.

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- ✓ Social Media Collaborations
- ✓ Influencer & Media Tour (Harvest Tour)
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- ✓ Custom Produce Bins
- ✓ Producer Sampling Events
- ✓ Special Give-Aways

Visit: idahopreferred.com/idaho-preferred-month-kickoff2023/

Idaho State Department of Agriculture



Idaho supports the vital economic and environmental importance of the Snake River dams

Note: This is a joint Mountain States Policy Center op-ed with Jason Mercier and Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho

Hydropower is an important source of reliable and clean energy for everyone in the Northwest, especially Idahoans.

However, with the recent debate surrounding the Snake River dams concentrated on the benefits for and support in Washington state, we want to emphasize just how significant an effect these dams have on Idaho and why we must continue to protect them.

As a U.S. senator and the leader of an independent free-market research organization, we are unified in our effort to protect the Snake River dams and maintain their economic and environmental benefits for our region.

Beyond us, there is strong, widespread support for the dams, including from Idaho officials and trade groups.

The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation is on record, having written that the dams “produce a significant amount of affordable and environmentally friendly hydroelectric power to the region” while allowing farmers to “export their product to the world.”

Additionally, the Idaho Legislature passed a resolution in 2021 stating it “supports the international competitiveness, multi-modal transportation, and economic development benefits provided by the Port of Lewiston and the Columbia-Snake River System.”

But Scott Corbitt, general manager of the Port of Lewiston, perhaps demonstrates the importance of the dams to Idahoans best. “The culture, business, and lifestyle of Lewiston revolve around the Clearwater and Snake rivers and the slack water, or pool created by the Lower Snake River Dams,” Corbitt testified. “That Pool has developed opportunities for the Lewis Clark Valley that now serve as the lifeblood and supports an economy for around 65,000 people.”

During a congressional field hearing last month, the environmental director for the Washington Policy Center, Todd Myers, summarized the severe damage that would result from eliminating the dams: “Spending \$35 billion – or more — to destroy the four Lower Snake River dams would be counterproductive, not



Photo by Joel Benson

just for the climate, energy reliability, and the economy, but for salmon by misallocating resources that could do so much good across the region.”

We could not agree more.

But don't just take our word for it. Look at the result of the only comprehensive, scientific, and public process: the Columbia River System Operations Record of Decision.

This multi-year process, which was undertaken by both a Democrat and Republican administration, made one thing abundantly clear: dam breaching on the lower Snake River is completely unnecessary and unwarranted.

Moreover, there is one salient point that is often overlooked in the debate about the Snake River dams: Congress authorized these dams, and only Congress has the power to remove them.

Thankfully, many of the congressional members elected to the areas surrounding the Snake River dams are working to protect the economic and environmental benefits they provide.

The Northwest Energy Security Act, which I, Senator Risch, introduced with Sens. Steve Daines, R-Mont., Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, and U.S. Reps. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., and Russ Fulcher, R-Idaho, is a key part of this effort.

While the lower Snake River dams are congressionally protected, our bill goes one step further by explicitly securing the energy, transportation, agriculture, and irrigation benefits the dams provide.

Protecting the Snake River dams and other federal water infrastructure is pivotal to both Washington and Idaho. Together we'll remain dam strong for the benefit of our region. ■

(U.S. Sen. Jim Risch is currently serving his third term as Idaho's 28th senator and previously served as Idaho's 31st Governor. Jason Mercier is vice president and director of research for the Mountain States Policy Center, an independent free-market research organization based in Idaho.)

A BUSY SUMMER FOR IDAHO'S GRASSHOPPER AND MORMON CRICKET CONTROL PROGRAM



What qualifies for assistance?

- 5+ acres of private agricultural-use land
- Active infestation
- Densities meet economic threshold
 - Mormon crickets - 3 per square meter
 - Grasshoppers - 8 per square meter

This summer grasshopper and cricket populations went rampant across the state, making it an eventful summer for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Control Program. Mormon crickets are natural components of Southern Idaho's ecosystem; however, populations reaching outbreak levels across the West have left serious economic losses to rangeland forage and other agriculture-use lands.

Outbreaks this season were established in five counties across Idaho, with crops in several areas being ate down to nearly nothing. The ISDA Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Control Program mitigates damages caused by these species in order to protect Idaho's agriculture industry. The program provides pest management information and insecticide bait to control damaging infestations on private and state-owned lands. The ISDA's goal is not to eradicate these species but to suppress them to economically sustainable levels.

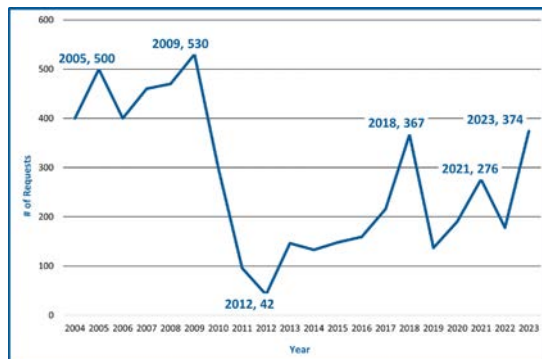
For landowners qualifying for assistance, ISDA distributes 5% Carbaryl insecticide bait, free of charge. In cases where insecticide bait is not optimal treatment, the ISDA offers a reimbursement of preapproved insecticide and any required adjuvants. Both bait and insecticide application are the responsibility of the landowners, along with the requirement to abide by the EPA approved product labels and follow principles of sound pesticide stewardship. Additionally, the ISDA conducts right-of-way treatments on state highways when Mormon cricket densities reach hazardous levels.

While this year has not been record-breaking for populations, it was still a greater than normal year as far as requests of the program. The ISDA received over 370 requests for assistance across more than 25 counties. As part of the program's response, ISDA distributed more than 178,000 pounds of insecticide bait. Along with bait distribution, the agency has approved 72 reimbursement requests totaling to over \$950,000 of chemical reimbursement.

Taking on such a large volume of requests would not have been possible without the collaboration from county weed, road and bridge, and extension programs across the state. Collaborators did a phenomenal job directing landowners to the program, helping distribute bait and working to ensure that their community members received the assistance they qualified for.

What will next summer look like for grasshoppers and Mormon crickets in Idaho? Populations are not always predictable as they are heavily dependent on weather conditions and food supply. Looking at trends from years past, it is likely that next year will be another summer of high volumes of crickets and grasshoppers.

Requests for ISDA Assistance 2004-2023



Agricultural Profile

Adams & Valley Counties



Submitted photos

Cattle is by far the No. 1 agricultural commodity in Valley and Adams counties in terms of total farm-gate revenue.

Cattle are the center of ag in Valley and Adams counties

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Cattle are by far the top agricultural commodity in Adams and Valley counties.

“For the most part, it’s cattle and calves in this area,” says Phil Davis, who ranches near Cascade in Valley County.

The climate and land in this area is not suited to growing crops, but it is well suited to growing hay and raising cattle, says Dave Veselka, who ranches in the Indian Valley area of Adams County.

“We don’t have the growing season here for row crops,” he says. “Our climate is suited to raising hay. We’re pretty much cattle and hay in this area.”

Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau President Dean Dryden says cows in the area get very good gain and that comes from the good grass that grows in the region.

“We just have good grass-growing weather,” says Dryden, who ranches in New Meadows in Adams County. “You raise good grass, you raise good cattle.”

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, \$9.2 million of



LEFT: Behind cattle, hay is the No. 2 agricultural commodity in Valley and Adams counties.

ABOVE: One of the main focuses of the Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau organization is on supporting youth and educating them about agriculture.

the \$12.6 million in total farm-gate revenue generated in Adams County in 2017 came from cattle and calves, while \$3 million of that total came from hay production.

There were 16,516 cattle and calves in the county during the 2017 ag census year.

There were 7,162 cattle and calves in Valley County in 2017 and \$9.6 million of the county's \$10.5 million in total farm-gate revenue that year came from cattle and calves.

With that many cattle comes another problem: wolves.

The region is a hot spot for wolves in Idaho and has been since they were re-introduced into the state in the 1990s, says Davis, who serves as vice president for Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau.

"For whatever reason, we seem to be a magnet for wolves," he says. "We've dealt with them since day one pretty much. The elk come here to summer and the wolves come to follow them."

"Wolves are a large concern," says Veselka. "They just have a taste for beef."

A big focus of the Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau organization is on supporting the counties' youth and making sure they have a basic understanding of agriculture.

One of the ways the organization does that is through its annual Ranchers Feeding Youth program, where ranchers go into the schools and interact with students, teaching them a little about the industry and its importance.

"We're very proud of that Ranchers Feeding Youth program," Dryden says. "We want the kids to know about agriculture and have a positive outlook and view of agriculture. They get enough

negative from other sources outside of agriculture."

He says program supporters want to show students what ranchers and farmers do to benefit the world and the people in it.

"One thing we want them to know is farmers and ranchers are stewards of our land," Dryden says. "I want them to know we care about our animals. I want them to know that we care about them."

Veselka, who serves on the Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau board of directors, says the organization does whatever it can to support the local FFA and 4-H programs and activities.

"The youth are the adults of tomorrow," he says. "It's much easier to educate them about agriculture when they are kids than when they are adults. If we can educate them now about agriculture and why it's so important, then when they become adults, they already have that knowledge and outlook."

Veselka says farmers and ranchers in the area want local residents

to understand that the ranching industry underpins the local economy and helps stabilize it during hard times.

"When things get bad, businesses on Main Street tend to close ... but those cattle are in the pasture every year, that hay is in the field every year and our ranchers are out ranching every year," he says. "Because we do the same things year after year, ranching has a very stabilizing effect on our economy and the state's economy."

"Ag is alive and well in Valley and Adams county and it will be for a long time," Veselka says. ■

"Ag is alive and well in Valley and Adams county and it will be for a long time."

- Dave Veselka, Adams County rancher

Classifieds

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2002 Honda 4-wheeler "Rancher" - Very low miles, runs great \$1,500. Call Jeff 208-269-8355

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\$250 both ex. cond. 208-245-0204

15" Buck Steiner Western Saddle (good condition) saddlebags, breast collar, 2 bridles, 1 horse blanket, saddle stand \$300 for all. Call Jeff 208-269-8355

127 lb Anvil, 1 DS hoof nipper, 1 pair shoeing chaps, hoof rasp with leather sheath, horseshoe puller. All tools experienced. \$200 takes it all! Call Jeff 208-269-8355

Colorado Saddle. 15-inch seat, used but good condition. 208-221-2158

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Paying cash for unwanted fireworks, the older the better. I collect firecrackers, Roman candles, mortars and anything else aerial. I also collect old m-80s like fish and game used to hand out. Great way to repurpose old fireworks as they are disassembled and used

to create new ones. 208-866-2112

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Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well as other vintage and antique items. Call Randy. Payette, ID. 208-740-0178

Paying cash for German & Japanese war relics/souvenirs! Pistols, rifles, swords, daggers, flags, scopes, optical equipment, uniforms, helmets, machine guns (ATF rules apply) medals, flags, etc. 208-405-9338

Pre-1970 Idaho License Plates Wanted: Also Revere Ware and Solar-Sturges Permanent cookware, and old signs. Will pay cash. Please email, text, call, or write. Gary Peterson, 115 E D St, Moscow, ID 83843. gearlep@gmail.com. 208-285-1258

Wanted old Idaho Patches! Farm Bureau, Farming, Hunt-

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Nat's Farm Yard Care- Brush hogging, rototilling, scraping manure, and stump grinding. Servicing Bingham County, Power County, and surrounding areas. Text or leave a voicemail for Natalie 8am-5pm M-F 208-917-2726

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Non-commercial classified ads are free to Idaho Farm Bureau members. Must include membership number for free ad. Forty (40) words maximum. Non-member cost is 50 cents per word. You may advertise your own crops, livestock, used machinery, household items, vehicles, etc. Ads will not be accepted by phone, Ads run one time only and must be re-submitted in each subsequent issue. We reserve the right to refuse to run any ad. Please type or print clearly. Proofread your ad. Ads must be received by September 15 for the October Producer.

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Photos by Sean Ellis

The Lower Salmon River near Riggins. Gov. Brad Little's Water Summit Aug. 7 addressed a wide array of water challenges facing the state.

Hundreds view Idaho Governor's Water Summit

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Idaho Gov. Brad Little's first Water Summit drew about 250 people involved or interested in various water issues to the Capitol building Aug. 7.

Hundreds more watched the water summit online.

Little, a rancher and farmer from Emmett, said the summit was a success and called for similar regional water summits where the issues discussed broadly there could be looked at in more detail.

With Idaho being among the fastest-growing states in the nation percentage-wise, Little said, it's important to stay in front of the state's water issues and ensure the resource is preserved for current and future uses.

"Our policies in Idaho demonstrate that we are true conservationists," Little said later. "People are moving here because of what Idaho looks like, and how we manage water is going to be incredibly important going forward."

The governor pointed out that about \$1 billion has been approved by the Idaho Legislature for water infrastructure projects since he took office.

“Sustainability is our watchword,” said Lt. Gov. Scott Bedke, a rancher and farmer from Oakley who served as a moderator during the summit. “This is all about making sure we have adequate water supplies for Idaho’s future. Our future success is dependent on water.”

The summit was hosted by the Idaho Water Resource Board at the direction of the governor.

IWRB Chairman and St. Anthony farmer Jeff Raybould said being one of the fastest-growing states adds to Idaho’s water challenges.

“Clearly, we’ve been discovered,” he said. “That creates even more challenges for us, especially with water supply and infrastructure.”

Raybould said any solutions to Idaho’s water challenges will have to respect water rights protected under the state’s “first in time, first in right” water doctrine.

“We have to learn how to be more efficient but we cannot usurp people’s private property rights that are associated with the water rights that they hold,” he said.

The sheer magnitude of some of the stakes involved when it comes to Idaho

“In Idaho, agriculture is the backbone of our economy, but there are other interests encroaching on traditional uses, so how do we responsibly share the resource while keeping Idaho, Idaho?”

- Gov. Brad Little

water were laid out during the summit and they are large.

Take, for example, the battle between groundwater users in Eastern Idaho and surface water users in southcentral Idaho over water in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, a 10,000-square-foot aquifer that is by far the largest and most important in the state.

The surface water users claim groundwater pumping by farmers in East Idaho is causing a major reduction in Snake River flows in the Magic Valley area of southcentral Idaho.

According to a panelist representing the groundwater pumpers, under a worst-case scenario, according to the terms of a ground water call by the surface water users, the state could be faced with permanently shutting off water to 170,000 acres of farmland in East Idaho.

“What is the state’s plan for offsetting that economic impact ... because it will be a huge impact to the economy,” asked Alan

Jackson, who represented the Bingham Ground Water District at the water summit. “There would be ripples throughout the entire economy of the state with that kind of loss.”

“You ask some hard questions that require some soul searching,” said IWRB member Marc Gibbs, who moderated that panel discussion about water issues along the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

On the other hand, panelists representing surface water users say the economic harm caused to their clients by groundwater pumping is huge.

The Twin Falls Canal Co. provides water to just under 200,000 acres of some of the best farmland in the Pacific Northwest, said panelist Jay Barlogi, who represented TFCC on the panel.

Eighty percent of the water used by TFCC comes from surface water and that resource has been substantially reduced by groundwater pumping in the eastern part of the aquifer, he said.

As a result of that, he said, TFCC shareholders have endured significant reductions of up to 33 percent less water.

“That is a significant curtailment,” Barlogi said. “We wonder, how much lower can the water levels in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer get? This is a resource that is in trouble. This is a resource that deserves our attention.”

Different panels discussed several water issues during the day-long summit, including some significant water supply challenges in some areas of the state.

During a panel discussion on the Mountain Home Aquifer, Elmore County Commissioner Bud Corbus said the aquifer is facing an average groundwater pumping deficit of 40,000 acre-feet per year. In other words, 80,000 acre-feet of water is pumped



LEFT: The Snake River runs through Idaho Falls.



Crops are irrigated in southern Idaho.

out of the aquifer each year and only 40,000 acre-feet is being recharged back into it naturally.

Corbus also pointed out that “agriculture is our No. 1 economic driver” in the area.

“Wells are having to be drilled deeper all of the time,” he said. “Ultimately, you have to ask yourself, where does it stop?”

The Palouse Basin Aquifer is also facing severe challenges, said Tyler Palmer, who represented the city of Moscow on a panel.

“Since 1935, the one consistent is that the water levels have been declining in the Palouse basin,” he said.

“We have (water) problems in the Palouse basin,” said water attorney and IWRB member Al Barker, who moderated the panel discussion on the Palouse Basin Aquifer. “We can’t conserve our way to a water supply (there). We have to be fairly creative in finding a water supply.”

The Treasure Valley area of southwestern Idaho is the fastest-growing area of Idaho but, according to a panel discussion on water in that area, it appears there are no major water supply issues there, for now.

Other water summit panels and presenters discussed water challenges in the Wood River basin, the benefits of Idaho Power’s cloud seeding program, and the status of the Swan Falls Agreement, which resolved an ongoing debate over how to balance water uses for agriculture and water needs for power agreement in the Snake River basin.

Another panel discussed water issues from the perspective of cities, the Nez Perce Tribe, water utilities and developers.

Little said the summit was meant to provide a very broad overview of water in Idaho and it gave the audience a strategic look into the status of the state’s important water resources.

“This is just a starting point of many conversations we need to have around water,” he said. “We’re going to start at 40,000 feet and we will be lowering our conversations more in the weeds.”

He also said the summit discussions weren’t meant to develop policy but designed to help people grasp the complexity of the state’s water situation.

“Today, we are building a foundation that allows us to have that discussion,” Little said at the beginning of the summit. “If I have a goal for today, it is to help us understand the health of water in Idaho.”

The vast majority of water withdrawn in Idaho is used by agriculture, a fact that was recognized at the summit.

“In Idaho, agriculture is the backbone of our economy,” Little said. “But there are other interests encroaching on traditional uses, so how do we responsibly share the resource while keeping Idaho, Idaho?”

One of the main goals of Idaho water policy, the governor said, is to protect water quality, water quantity and the state’s water sovereignty.

“To pass down our family farms, we need to make sure we have water to sustain crops,” he said.

Little said it is important for the state’s water laws and rules, and the people enforcing them, to all be on the same page.

If not, “we risk creating a vacuum for out-of-state interests,” he said.

The governor said most western states have other states, federal courts, federal regulatory agencies and Congress meddling with their water rights.

“If we don’t control our own destiny, one of those entities will,” he said.

The basis for the water summit, Little said, was to lay out Idaho’s major water issues and make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to resolving them.

“I think it’s fair to say we’ve learned a lot,” he said while wrapping up the summit. “We acknowledged some significant challenges ... Let’s take advantage of what we learned today.”

“This has been a good forum today to get all the issues out on the table,” Raybould said.

Little said it’s important to protect the state’s important agricultural sector, which, according to a University of Idaho study, is responsible for one in every eight jobs in Idaho, 12.5 percent of the state’s total gross state product and 17 percent of the state’s total economic output.

“These people that are moving here are moving here because of what Idaho looks like; the landscape that’s been brought to us by agriculture,” he said. “You can’t have a rural landscape if you don’t have profitable farming.”

Bedke said he’s confident Idahoans can resolve challenging water issues if they put their collective talents together.

“I have no doubt in my mind that between the talent that is in this room ... that we can solve nearly any problem laid before us,” he said.

The meeting agenda, materials and video of the summit are available at <https://idwr.idaho.gov/iwrd/meetings/board-meeting-materials/>. ■

WEED OF THE MONTH



CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:

This plant has a deep root system making mechanical control ineffective due to other parts of the plant not being destroyed. Hand harvesting the plants prior to seeding will keep the seeds from spreading, but the plant will emerge the next year due to the deep root system left in the ground. Herbicide control is the best method to manage infestations of Rush skeletonweed. Products such as Milestone®, Opensight®, Transline® or Tordon 22K are most effective when used in the fall or early spring. Once the plant has bolted, the basal rosettes recede, giving very little leaf surface to allow the pesticide to get into the plant.

RUSH SKELETONWEED

Rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea* L.) is a perennial plant that has infested several million acres in Idaho. Originally found in the early 80's as a five-acre patch near Horseshoe Bend, it has grown to over 1 million acres in only 20 years. Noticeable, leaves are found as rosettes which are sharply toothed like others in the Asteraceae family. Stem leaves are very small, inconspicuous, and narrow, giving the plant the look of no leaves or "skeletal" in appearance. Flowering heads are found scattered on the branches, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter. This plant resembles an alfalfa plant after a migration of grasshoppers has stripped all the leaves off. To tell the difference look at the base of the stems. If the stem has small red hairs on the lower 3 to 4 inches, where other plants do not, it will be this noxious weed. One can also look for the milky latex that is produced if the stem is broken. This plant has no nutritional value for grazing animals and often displaces elk and deer of their natural habitat. The dandelion-like seeds float in the air for miles and miles.



For more information on Rush skeletonweed and Idaho's other listed noxious weeds go to the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign website at: <http://idahoweedawareness.org/idahos-noxious-weeds/>



Dairy Heifer Replacement Project

A hands-on learning experience

By **Kathy Gaudry**
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

I didn't realize how much work it is to train them," says Solomon, age 9, as he poses with Strawberry, his red and white Holstein.

Andrew, age 8, agrees as he mentions he was body-slammed when first haltering his heifer, Marshmallow. He adds, "I've learned how to halter-break and train her now. No more pushing me around!"

There is one thing that Andrew doesn't like, however: "I don't like getting up early to take care of her. I want to sleep later!"

Good training was evident as all of the participants of the Treasure Valley Dairy Heifer Replacement Project showed their heifers during the Meridian Dairy Days.

The kids washed and brushed their heifers in the barn beside the Meridian Speedway, preparing them for the show ring. Although all the boys and girls were smiling, there was a bit of tension as they waited for their class to be called and the judging to begin.

In the grassy center of the speedway, each class presented their heifers to a judge. The participants lined up with their heifers, then slowly walked with their heifers in a circle around the judge as he assessed both the heifer and the participant's showmanship.

At one point, he would indicate that the kids should walk with the next heifer. After all of the shifting of handlers, he would look to see the type of control each had over a strange animal. Ribbons were given, and all agreed it was a good experience that prepared them for the fair.

Kaelle, age 17 and in 4-H for 10 years, says the project is "tons of work." Then why do it? "It sounded interesting, so I got involved. I have now finished 3 heifers [Holsteins]. I

LEFT: Solomon, a participant in Treasure Valley Dairy Heifer Replacement Project, and his Holstein, Strawberry. Courtesy photo

“I love the work ethic this project teaches. They learn to work with and for the heifer, and as a result, bond with that animal. It’s a terrific life lesson.”

- Sharlie Workman, mother of participant

work on my heifers daily, and practice showing them. I am really enjoying doing this.”

Proudly, she shows one of the beautiful belt buckles she has won over the years.

Samara, age 15 and Kaelle’s sister, has also been in 4-H for 10 years. She entered the heifer replacement program because she loves animals. She has had both Jersey and Holstein heifers.

Why join? “The program showed me how to take financial responsibility for a project. I have learned interpersonal skills, and I interact with the dairymen, which is so interesting.”

The Treasure Valley Dairy Replacement Heifer Project and the Magic Valley Dairy Heifer Project are designed to help youth learn about the dairy industry, including nutrition, health, and reproduction of a dairy cow.

Although there are some differences between the programs, both run between 18-24 months, with the participants purchasing their heifers in April or May, showing a number of times over the project period, getting the heifer bred, and finally showing and selling at the fair.

The Dairy Heifer Replacement projects are very labor intensive, and frequently involve the entire family since the kids range in age from about 8-15.

Blair Garcia, a parent with kids involved in the Magic Valley Project, explains, “Our family is supportive, but my daughter does 90% of the work on the heifer.”

Many times, parents were involved in the heifer replacement programs in their youth and encourage their children to join the project.

Mike Relk, grandpa of several participants, did 4-H as a kid, living on a dairy farm. He encouraged his daughter, Sunny Christensen, to do a dairy heifer replacement project when in 4-H.

Now that she is the mother of two participants, Sunny says, “We raise hay and corn chop for the dairies, so it is good for the kids to see the entire process. We raise the feed to raise the heifers.”

Not everything is “work.” Simple things when caring for the heifers please the kids.

Hudson says his heifer Roxie loves to be bathed. Because of that, she has really connected with him and gets excited to see him. Why do the project? “Mom did it, so I’m doing it!” He grins as he holds Roxie.

Alexis Hanson, raising four kids, says, “It’s a lot of hands-on work as a family. We raise pigs, but the heifer project presented us with a new species. I see the dedication my girls are showing while learning to break a cow to lead or train a pig for the show ring. It’s good for them.”

Interestingly, her 10-year-old twins have gone in different directions with one showing a Holstein, and the other showing a pig.

Sophie, a 12-year-old 4-H youth, has jumped into the program with both feet.

“Mom had a dairy farm, so I wanted to try this project,” she says. “I chose a Holstein because I liked the color and size. In the past, I have done pigs, quiz bowl, skillathon, but nothing like this. So far, I have learned how to halter-break her, trim her, and get her all set up in the show ring.”

Watching her with pride, mother Sharlie Workman says, “I love the work ethic this project teaches. They learn to work with and for the heifer, and as a result, bond with that animal. It’s a terrific life lesson.”

Idaho is the No. 3 milk-producing state in the nation, and dairy is a significant part of the state economy, being Idaho’s top agricultural industry.

However, the rising costs of production, environmental concerns, plus evolving consumer preferences and urbanization have posed significant obstacles for farmers seeking to maintain their livelihoods.

Recognizing the need for adaptation and innovation, the Treasure Valley Dairy Replacement Heifer Project emerged in 1992 as a collaborative effort to secure a brighter future for dairy farmers. The Magic Valley Dairy Heifer Replacement Project soon followed.

When considering the top 10 milk-producing states, every state listed has taken a unique approach to encourage youth to explore dairy projects. California and Washington have replacement heifer programs similar to Idaho.

Some states, such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota, have breeding heifer leasing programs where participants only lease the animal for the project’s duration.

Most interestingly, New Mexico has a calf scramble for teens (13-16) to get them started raising a dairy heifer or beef calf. The calf scramble has complicated rules, but also a stipend to assist them in buying their chosen animal.

Even if a state program doesn’t involve live animals, all of the state extension programs have simple dairy information projects which teach participants about nutrition, breeding, and production within the dairy industry.

Within the Treasure Valley Dairy Heifer Replacement Project, every participant and every family rave about the support the dairymen have given them.

“They have held seminars and practices at their place. They are always available to answer questions and mentor the youth in an empowering manner,” says Sunny.

Jeff Kelly, watching his FFA daughter show her heifer, is enthusiastic about the program. “It teaches all of the kids the serious responsibility of taking care of a large animal. They learn so much from the entire experience. We all have learned along the way from this project. Did you know that cows have personalities?” He laughs.

A parent and dairyman from the Magic Valley Dairy Replacement Heifer Project sums up the program’s purpose: “Any day you get a kid with an animal, it’s a good day!” ■

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Oven Roasted Short Ribs



Ingredients



- 6 Short ribs of beef
- 1 Clove garlic, minced
- 1 Large onion
- 1 Can of tomato soup
- 1 Teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 Teaspoon of chili powder
- 1/4 Teaspoon of rosemary
- 1/8 Teaspoon of pepper



Directions

Brown ribs, saute garlic and onion in the same pan. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Cover tightly. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 1/2 hours, or until tender. Skim off fat if necessary. Serve with pan gravy.



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LOOKING FOR A NEW PODCAST? DIRT ROAD DISCUSSIONS

Episode 36: Don't Be A-Freight To Farm

CROWDS HAVE GATHERED ALL OVER THE WORLD TO WATCH CRANES LIFT AN ENTIRE FARM UNIT OFF OF A SEMI-TRUCK AS IT IS BEING DELIVERED TO A CITY, RESIDENT, OR SCHOOL. THOSE WHO THOUGHT FARMING WASN'T POSSIBLE FOR THEM CAN NOW HOOK IN WATER AND ELECTRICITY TO THESE FREIGHT FARMS AND IT'S TIME TO GROW FOOD! DAVE HARRIS, HEAD OF PLANT SCIENCES, AND BROOKE SMITH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE OF FREIGHT FARMS TELL US HOW OVER 600 OF THESE NEW-AGE FARMS HAVE BEEN DELIVERED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

