

GEM STATE **Producer** *Idaho Farm Bureau*

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**NEW REPORT RELEASED ON  
IDAHO WOLVES**



## AFBF in your corner in court, again

In mid-January, American Farm Bureau Federation filed a new lawsuit challenging EPA's latest Waters of the United States (WOTUS) Rule—joined by more than a dozen other organizations representing agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing and housing.

Why? Because even though farmers and ranchers share the goal of protecting our nation's waterways, they deserve better than this rule.

They deserve better than a rule that requires a team of lawyers and consultants just to iden-

tify “navigable waters” on their land.

Of course, we would much rather sort out differences by coming together to find solutions. That's what we tried to do when EPA announced its plans to issue a new WOTUS Rule.

Farm Bureau leaders and grassroots members came to the table, joining EPA roundtable hearings, and I had conversations directly with EPA Administrator Michael Regan.

But despite some helpful clarifications

See **DUVALL**, page 6

# The President's Desk

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



## Idaho's wolf population finally declines

Idaho's wolf population fell by 206, or 13 percent, in 2022.

To be clear, that's a good thing.

Over the last several years, ranchers across our state have shared their own personal frustrations with the pressures and damage that come with the increased number of wolves.

These high wolf numbers in the state have made it so there are certain areas of Idaho that are not safe to run cattle on.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game

estimated Idaho's 2022 wolf population at 1,337, down from 1,543 in 2021.

That marks the first time since the apex predators were “re-introduced” into Idaho in 1994 that the state's wolf population has declined by an appreciable amount.

Again, to be absolutely clear, from the perspective of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members, who develop the organization's policies at the grassroots level, that is a good thing.

See **SEARLE**, page 7

# Inside Farm Bureau

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



## Hall of Fame

Most high-quality organizations strive to honor those who have excelled and dedicated themselves to whatever activity that specific organization represents.

Taking time to reflect on high performers and givers helps to keep us all grounded.

Recognition into a “Hall of Fame” is a small thank you for the countless sacrifices one makes for a cause that is always bigger than oneself.

Everyone in agriculture is associated with

many separate groups, some by choice and some by compulsion. Each organization's purpose, in one way or another, is to assist a farmer or rancher in providing food and fiber.

Among the many groups and purposes, there are always three specific groups of people, and it is pretty easy to spot members of each group.

Group 1 are the leaders, be it by compulsion or volunteerism. If they are in an organization, they are determined to do their part to

See **MILLER**, page 6



# Idaho Farm Bureau

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Photo by Ariane Smith

Idaho is small in population but big in agriculture, a University of Idaho agricultural economist recently told state lawmakers.

# Idaho small in population but big in agriculture

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – When it comes to population, Idaho is a very small state. When it comes to agriculture, Idaho punches way above its weight.

Compared to much bigger states, “Idaho is a very small economy, but we have big agriculture,” University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor told lawmakers Jan. 5.

According to Taylor, Idaho is the fifth-largest agricultural state in the nation when it comes to a state’s gross domestic product generated from agriculture as a percentage of that state’s total GDP.

“We are the fifth-largest ag state in the nation in ag GDP percent- age terms,” he said.

GDP measures the value of all goods and services produced. Taylor said that according to U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data, Idaho farm GDP grew by 120 percent from 1997-2021. During that same period, total Idaho GDP grew 80 percent and GDP from Idaho food manufacturing grew by 70 percent.

“Agriculture – farmers, not food processing – is growing faster than the state’s economy in GDP terms,” Taylor told members of the Idaho Legislature’s Joint Legislative Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee. “It is a fast-growing industry.”

Total Idaho net farm income grew by 150 percent in inflation- ad- justed dollars from 1997 to 2022, Taylor added. Total U.S. net farm income grew by 80 percent during that same period.

See AGRICULTURE, page 37

**COVER: Idaho’s wolf population declined by 13 percent last year, marking the first time since wolves were re-introduced into Idaho that their population has declined markedly. See page 4 for a story on wolves in Idaho.**

# IDAHO'S WOLF POPULATION FINALLY DECLINED IN 2022

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Idaho's wolf population declined by 206, or 13 percent, in 2022. But the state's total wolf number is still currently nine times greater than the original recovery goal for the animals.

That marks the first time the state's wolf population has dropped by an appreciable amount since they were re-introduced in Idaho in 1994 and 1995.

Those who have borne the brunt of the wolf impact – ranchers – see that as a very good thing.

“That's 100 percent a good thing,” says Blaine County rancher Clayton Mecham.

Since being re-introduced to Idaho, the state's wolf population has grown rapidly and the predators have had a major negative impact on many livestock producers, as well as Idaho's elk population. According to IDFG, since 2014 alone, at least 299 Idaho livestock producers have sustained more than 1,291 verified losses to

wolves. And department officials say those verified losses represent only the minimum of total wolf depredations.

“Make no mistake, the majority of ranchers, farmers and Idahoans overall view a reduction in Idaho's wolf population as a great thing,” said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle. “We can only hope the population continues to decline to a much more manageable level.”

Idaho Department of Fish and Game officials estimate the state's wolf population reached 1,543 in 2021 but declined to 1,337 in 2022.

Idaho in 2019 became the first state to begin using remote cameras to estimate a statewide population.

Fish and Game crews used 533 cameras to collect about 10 million photos in July and August of 2022.

The department then used artificial intelligence software to sift through those photos and applied mathematical modeling to estimate Idaho's wolf population.

Some environmental and animal rights groups have claimed Idaho plans to slaughter its wolf population but IDFG officials say that will not happen.

In response to written questions from Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, IDFG in an email said the department “will continue to maintain a viable population of wolves in the state while managing to reduce wolf conflicts with livestock and negative impacts on other big-game populations.”

The department pointed out that Idaho's wolf population is well above the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2009 criteria that there be at least 150 wolves in the state before the animals could be delisted from the Endangered Species Act, which they were in 2011.

In fact, Idaho's current wolf population is above what USFWS considers to be the management objective for the entire Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

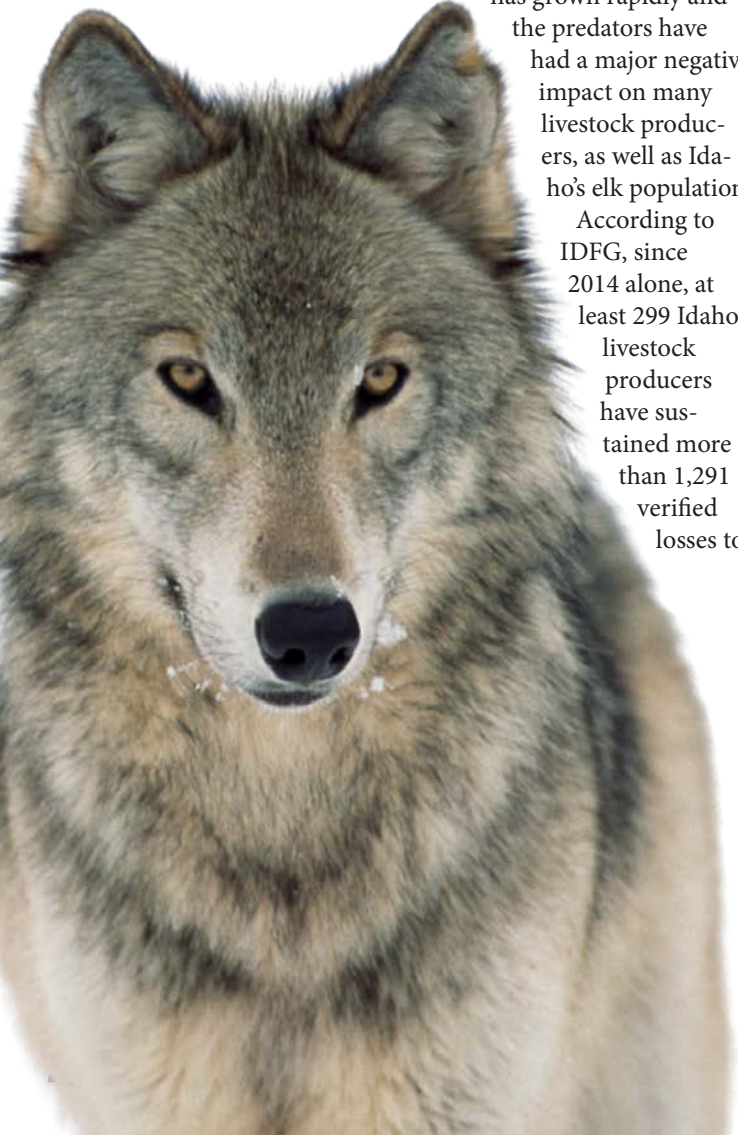
According to IDFG's draft Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan, the department plans to work to reduce the state's wolf population to about 500 over a six-year span.

“The plan identified goals and strategies to reduce wolf numbers and to manage Idaho's wolf population to fluctuate around 500 animals,” the plan's executive summary states.

“The goal of the draft wolf plan is to manage for a wolf population below its current level but well above the USFWS's delisting criteria,” the Fish and Game department told IFBF.

Once, and if, the state achieves its 500-wolf goal, the department will manage the wolf population adaptively as the population changes, IDFG told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

“If at any time the population is below the desired level, IDFG will modify management actions to stabilize the population around 500 wolves,” IDFG told IFBF, adding that Idaho's Fish and



Game Commission has the authority to close or modify wolf hunting seasons at any time.

In a news release, IDFG said that 500 number would reduce wolf and livestock conflicts while still maintaining a sustainable wolf population and healthy elk herds.

“It’s actually not alarming in any sense that there was a decrease in the state’s wolf population last year because the goal is to have a decrease year after year until we reach that sustainable population of

around 500 wolves,” said Chyla Wilson, a governmental affairs specialist with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

Once that 500-wolf goal is realized, Fish and Game officials expect the predator’s population in Idaho to range from a high of 650 following reproduction in the spring, then reach a mid-point of about 500 in November, before declining to a low of about 350 just before reproduction the following year.

Fairfield farmer Rusty Kramer, president of the Idaho Trappers Association, believes

reaching that 500-wolf goal won’t be an easy task given how difficult it has been to make even a small dent in Idaho’s wolf population.

“It’s going to be really tough to achieve that,” he said.

“Wolves are so prolific that it’s going to be a long-term process.”

IDFG told IFBF the department will continue to use hunter and trapper harvests, as well as control actions to reduce wolf depredations on livestock, as the primary means to manage the population.

The department also proposes to continue to support cooperative agreements with third-party entities to reimburse hunter and trapper expenses to support people who are most effective at harvesting wolves.

If those actions aren’t successful in reducing the population to that 500-wolf goal, “additional IDFG-directed control actions will likely be necessary,” the department told Farm Bureau.

“The objective of reducing the population to fluctuate around 500 wolves by the

end of the six-year period will be challenging to attain, but is achievable,” IDFG said.

According to the department, wolves are widely distributed throughout Idaho, from the Canadian border in the north to the Snake River Plain in the south.

They are occasionally seen south of the Snake River in southern Idaho.

“Most of the state south of the Snake River Plain remains unoccupied by wolves or wolves exist in very low numbers there,” IDFG told IFBF. “However, game management units along the Idaho-Wyoming border have higher quality wolf habitat and some established wolf packs.”

Besides being a thorn in the side to livestock producers, wolves have also had a major negative impact on some of Idaho’s wildlife populations, particularly elk.

“Elk are the primary ungulate prey of wolves in most of Idaho,” the Fish and Game department told Farm Bureau.

According to IDFG, wolf predation is a prominent factor limiting elk populations in five elk zones in the state, primarily in central Idaho.

Secondarily, the department added, “wolves prey upon moose, white-tailed deer, and mule deer where their ranges overlap. Wolves are opportunists and also prey on many other species, including other predators (mountain lions and bears), beavers, a variety of birds, small game species (rabbits and hares), etc.” ■

*“The objective of reducing the population to fluctuate around 500 wolves by the end of the six-year period will be challenging to attain, but is achievable.”*

*- Idaho Fish and Game*



*Continued from page 2*

coming from those discussions, the new rule is still unworkable for America's farm families.

Most important, EPA has doubled down on the old "significant nexus" test, which is every bit as vague as it sounds—not a useful standard for identifying "navigable waters."

We don't set out for the courthouse. But sometimes we have to go there.

In fact, WOTUS is a prime example of why AFBF advocacy must extend beyond Capitol Hill and federal agencies—into the courts.

Several WOTUS cases over the last several years show how litigation is an essential part of advancing Farm Bureau's mission and your mission to fill America's pantries.

Back in 2015, EPA replaced a decades-old, terribly flawed WOTUS rule with a new one that was even worse. The 2015 WOTUS Rule was an enormous federal land grab that would prohibit many commonplace, beneficial farming activities.

*'In our system of checks and balances, the courts are an indispensable check on unlawful agency actions.'*

AFBF and an industry coalition, along with many state and county governments, challenged that rule in court—and we won. Courts blocked the 2015 Rule in 28 states.

Our litigation wins against the 2015 Rule helped persuade the EPA, under a new administration, to replace it with a more clear, workable WOTUS Rule in 2020.

But activists challenged the 2020 Rule in court. So AFBF again led a litigation effort—this time on defense—defending the reasonable rule we had advocated for.

AFBF successfully defended the 2020 Rule in each of the six cases we were involved with. Our legal efforts helped keep the rule in place for almost three years and, importantly, provided support for a similar rule in the future.

But the legal battle was cut short after

another change in administration.

This brings us to the present: another administration, another WOTUS Rule, and another round of litigation. Not where we wanted to be, but where we need to be under the circumstances.

In our system of checks and balances, the courts are an indispensable check on unlawful agency actions.

Litigation is slow, cumbersome, expensive, and often uncertain. But it's a tool we can use, and a weapon we must guard against, as we work for laws that protect your ability to farm.

We'll continue to be in your corner in every forum where issues vital to farmers and ranchers are decided, including the courts. ■

# MILLER

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*Continued from page 2*

help it succeed and grow.

Unfortunately, these people do not represent a large percentage of the ag industry or the general populace. Let us assume optimistically that 10% of all farmers and ranchers are in Group 1.

Those that represent Group 2 are those who may, from time to time, engage in whatever organization they join or are assigned to.

Often, they are supportive of the mission and hopeful for its efforts. Some may even support the organization through vocal or monetary support.

However, most of Group 2 do not engage due to unwillingness to share their time for the greater good.

They often cite the rigors of work and family obligations as why they cannot serve. Ironically, members of Group 2 often readily admit that Group 1 are often busier than they are.

Nevertheless, most of Group 2 are happy to let Group 1 do the

work and accept the benefits.

Group 2 is significant. These good people represent the heart and soul of the trusted and respected farmer or rancher. Probably around 85% of farmers and ranchers fall into Group 2.

People like me often remark that people in Group 2 far too often sell themselves short regarding their leadership potential.

*'The work is important, and so few do the job of leading that we must recognize the best.'*

Group 3 doesn't deserve much time, but they usually find a way to demand it. This is a group of miserable people. No one wants people from Group 3 to show up.

Also, their antics often keep Group 2 people from joining Group 1.

If they are involved in the organization, it is for all the wrong reasons. They are constantly finding fault in everything.

They love to spin tall tales of improprieties with amazingly salacious details. Yet, they never do anything proactive to correct these travesties. Primarily because it would require actual work and selfless results.

Group 3 always wonders why they are never chosen to be lead-

ers and why their bills are never paid. Again, Group 3, indeed, are the undesirables.

Unfortunately, they are the only ones that realize how miserable they are, and none will admit they are part of Group 3. Let us assume they represent 5% of the population.

My percentages are only my opinions; however, I believe I am not far off in my assumptions. I also think that the general public falls into the same groupings.

Considering how so few do so much, is it hard to see why the

## SEARLE

*Continued from page 2*

Hopefully, this will start to bring relief from the wolf kills that many ranchers' herds have been suffering.

These reduced wolf numbers are a great thing, actually.

Wolves reproduce at a very high rate and their population exploded after several dozen of them were relocated to Idaho in 1994 and 1995 by the federal government.

They were brought back to Idaho, by the way, against the wishes of Idahoans, who overwhelmingly opposed that idea.

As stewards of the land, ranchers know from personal experience the damage that can be caused by these vicious animals.

Wolf re-introduction in Idaho is part of history now, unfortunately. They are here and Idaho's wolf population has grown so rapidly that they can no longer be considered endangered or threatened by any stretch of the imagination.

IFBF policy supports "all methods of wolf control and population management statewide" and it also opposes "any efforts to relist the wolf as endangered."

When wolves were forced upon Idaho, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's delisting goal for the animals in Idaho was 150.

Simply put, USFWS said that wolves in Idaho could come off the endangered species list when their population in Idaho reached 150.

That happened a long time ago and wolves were indeed taken off the list in May 2011. Since that time, IDFG has been tasked with managing them within the state.

The department's goal, outlined in its draft wolf management plan, is to see Idaho's wolf population fluctuate around 500, which aligns with USFWS' current goal for the state.

In fact, USFWS' wolf population goal for the entire Northern Rocky Mountain region, which includes Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and other states, is 1,100.

Idaho's wolf population exceeds that goal by itself!

This shows that those people who say Idaho intends a wholesale slaughter of its wolves are, pardon the pun, crying wolf.

Idaho's wolf population is way more than fully recovered and has been for a lot of years.

IDFG intends to, over a period of years, continue to reduce the state's wolf population until it hovers around 500. Again, that's well above the federal government's initial recovery goal of 150 wolves in Idaho.

best shine so brightly? Of course, we should find ways to honor those who do.

This is why a "Hall of Fame" should exist in every organization representing farmers and ranchers. The work is important, and so few do the job of leading that we must recognize the best.

We should also strive to move more talent from Group 2 to Group 1. If you feel you belong in Group 2, consider that joining Group 1 moves you farther from your neighbors in Group 3! ■

The goal in reducing the state's wolf population to a manageable level is to reduce conflicts with livestock and also with the state's ungulate population.

Wolves have had a hugely negative impact in some areas of the state on both deer and elk populations as well as livestock.

In a news release, IDFG Director Ed Schriever said, "Wolf population reduction has been a priority of the Fish and Game Commission. There's been a concerted effort by Fish and Game staff, hunters, trappers and other partners and agencies to reduce wolf conflicts with livestock and bring the wolf population in balance with prey species, particularly elk."

To that, Farm Bureau says, "bravo."

And to those who are fanning the flames by claiming Idaho plans to slaughter all its wolves, we say, stop "crying wolf" and stick with the facts. ■

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Photo by Madison Hardy

FFA members from around Idaho take a group photo on the steps of the Idaho Capitol building with Gov. Brad Little, center left, and Lt. Gov. Scott Bedke Jan. 23 during the organization's annual "Day on the Hill" event.

# Blue jackets storm Capitol for 'Day on the Hill'

By Sean Ellis  
*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – Hundreds of FFA students wearing their iconic blue jackets "stormed" the state Capitol during the organization's annual "Day on the Hill."

The two-day event allows FFA members to meet face-to-face with lawmakers and agricultural industry leaders while sharpening their leadership skills.

A wave of blue jackets mingled with legislators, statewide elected officials and industry leaders during the Jan. 23 "Cenarrusa Day on the Hill" luncheon, which kicks off the event.

One of the main points made during this year's luncheon was that Idaho employers are practically begging for more FFA students.

Lt. Gov. Scott Bedke, a rancher from Oakley, told the students that every time he meets with an employer, they ask, "How can you get us more FFA kids?"

FFA is a career and technical education student organization that aims to make a positive difference in students' lives by developing their potential for leadership and career success through agricultural education.

Bedke, the former speaker of the Idaho House of Representatives, said the skills that FFA students gain through the program "are the very skills that employers want. They distinguish you from many of your peers when it comes to getting that job."

He encouraged them to take full



advantage of the opportunities presented to them through the FFA program.

“You are as sharp as they come,” he said. “In FFA chapters around the state, we have a good thing going.”

The Idaho FFA program, in its 93<sup>rd</sup> year, now has 100 chapters with 5,600 members around the state.

The historical success rate of FFA students, when it comes to going on to college and succeeding in their careers, sets them apart, said Canyon County farmer Sid Freeman, a longtime FFA supporter who started the FFA tractor raffle program that raises more than \$100,000 each year for the program.

“Today, we heard from the lieutenant governor ... that industry is asking the question, ‘What’s it going to take to get more kids involved in FFA?’” Freeman said. “Industry wants these students specifically because of their degree of success.”

“The demand for these kids is through the roof, because of the historical success rate of the agricultural education students who participate in FFA,” added Freeman. “The resumes of these students go right to the top.”

One of the main focuses of the annual FFA event, which includes a leadership conference hosted by national FFA officials, is to provide students with an opportunity to see first-hand how public

*“The demand for these kids is through the roof, because of the historical success rate of the agricultural education students who participate in FFA. The resumes of these students go right to the top.”*

*- Sid Freeman, Canyon County farmer*

policy is developed during the legislative process.

It also allows FFA members to establish a relationship with their elected representatives and talk about agricultural and other issues.

“They really get an opportunity to mingle with their legislators and they find out how easy it is to be involved in the legislative process,” said Shawn Dygert, an ag education teacher and FFA instructor from Kuna. “They also get to see where the things they learn from a leadership perspective get applied in a regular, everyday kind of setting.”

Clara-Leigh Evans, executive director

of the Idaho State FFA, said lawmakers in turn get to interact with the FFA students and experience first-hand the results of the program.

“I think the event is important in both directions, for FFA students and for legislators,” she said. “It’s just a win-win for everybody.”

Freeman agreed that the event is equally important for lawmakers.

“The Day on the Hill was created specifically to get these kids and the FFA program before the eyes of our legislators,” he said.

The luncheon is named for former Idaho Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa, who died in 2013 and whose 51 years in the legislative and executive branches of Idaho government make him the longest-serving public servant in state history.

Cenarrusa started the first ag classes at Cambridge and Carey high schools and was known as a champion of Idaho agriculture.

During this year’s luncheon, honorary degrees for their long-time support of Idaho FFA were presented to Sen. Julie Van Orden, R-Pingree, and Rep. Rod Furniss, R-Rigby.

Northwest Agricultural Cooperative Council, the main sponsor of the luncheon, presented friend of the industry awards to Sen. Janie Ward-Engelking, D-Boise, and Rep. Lori McCann, R-Lewiston. ■

**LEFT: Sen. Abby Lee, R-Fruitland, chats with FFA members Jan. 23 during the organization’s annual “Day on the Hill” event. Photo by Sean Ellis**



# Direct farm sales of food up 3 percent from 2015 to 2020

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Direct farm sales of food increased 3 percent from 2015 to 2020.

But the number of organizations selling locally produced food decreased by 12 percent during that same time, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

According to NASS, U.S. farmers produced and sold \$9 billion worth of local edible food directly to consumers, retailers, institutions and intermediaries in 2020.

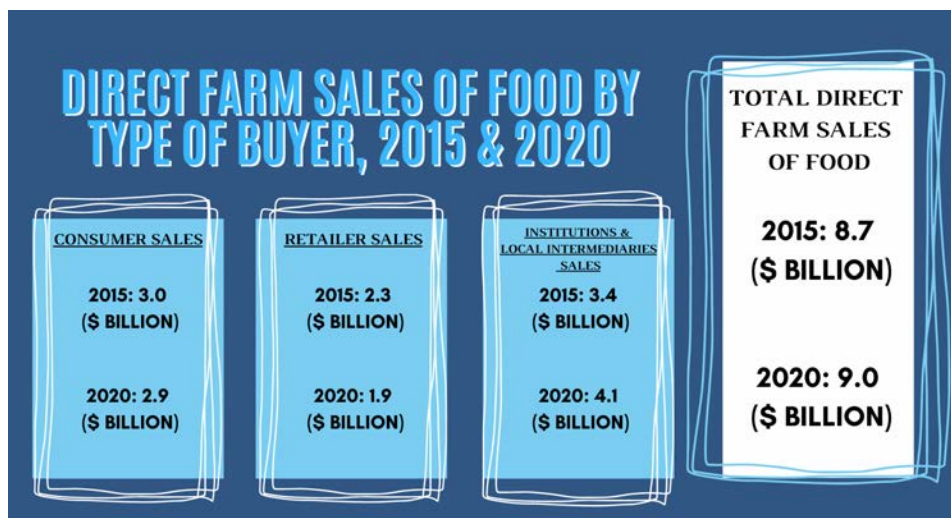
Direct-to-consumer sales of food accounted for 33 percent of that total, while intermediaries and institutions accounted for 46 percent of direct food sales, and direct sales to retailers accounted for 21 percent.

“The 3 percent increase from 2015 to 2020 in direct farm sales is a hopeful sign that consumers are sourcing more food from local producers,” said Katie Baker, executive director of FARE Idaho, which was founded in 2020 to help independent restaurants as well as the farmers and ranchers that sell food products to them.

One of the main ways FARE is trying to do that is by attempting to increase the amount of food and beverage products being sold by farmers and ranchers directly to independent restaurants.

“The 12 percent decrease in the number of operations selling local food indicates that more work needs to be done to improve the livelihood of local producers and provide long-term sustainability for their success,” Baker said.

Direct farm sales included both fresh foods and processed or value-added products such as bottled milk, cheese, meat, wine and jams.



TOP: Graphic by Kristy Lindauer  
ABOVE: People shop for locally produced food at the Boise Farmers Market in August. Direct farm sales of food increased by 3 percent from 2015 to 2020, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. Photo by Sean Ellis

Nampa farmer Janie Burns, who sells grass-fed lamb at the Boise Farmers Market, said it's probably a given that the amount of direct farm sales has risen since 2020 because of the supply chain disruptions that occurred during the COVID pandemic.

Anecdotally, "I think the COVID year certainly increased the number of direct sales," she said. "You can talk to anybody selling direct and they will tell you their sales have increased since then."

Purple Sage Farms sells specialty produce, culinary and medicinal herbs, leafy greens and flowers directly to consumers, restaurants and distributors through a variety of ways, including through farmers markets, home delivery and even Etsy.

"Our sales increased 20 percent this past year," said Purple Sage Farms owner Tim Sommer.

He said he would sell everything his farm produces in the Boise area if he could and he suspects there are a lot of other farmers who have the same mindset.

"I think a lot of farms are like that," Sommer said. "If we could, we would sell everything here in the Boise valley, and I think every farm wishes they could do that."

When calculating direct farm sales of food, NASS defined local food as agricultural food products transported less than 400 miles or within the state it is produced.

Farm sales directly to consumers included sales through farmers markets, onsite farm stores, roadside stands, online sales, pick-your-own operations, mobile markets and Community Supported Agriculture arrangements.

Direct sales to retailers included supermarkets, supercenters, restaurants, cater-

ers, food cooperatives and independent grocery stores.

Direct sales to institutions included schools, colleges, universities and hospitals.

Intermediary markets included intermediary businesses such as wholesalers, distributors and processors.

According to the NASS data, 147,307 farms sold food directly in 2020.

Fifty-two percent of direct-to-consumer sales in 2020 were fresh food products.

According to NASS, 57 percent of farms marketing food directly were located in metropolitan counties and these farms accounted for 62 percent of all direct food sales.

About 78 percent of farms selling food directly sold all of their directly-marketed food within 100 miles of the farm. ■

# Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins





Photo by Joel Benson

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members gather on the steps of Idaho's Capitol building Feb. 8 during IFBF's annual, two-day Legislative and Commodity Conference.

# Farm Bureau members meet with legislators, discuss issues

By Sean Ellis  
*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual Legislative and Commodity Conference is one of the organization's signature events and an important way for IFBF's grassroots members to connect with lawmakers face to face.

More than 70 of Idaho's 105 legislators and 175 Farm Bureau members attended this year's event, which was held Feb. 7-8.

The highlight of the conference is a strolling buffet that allows

farmers and ranchers to sit down with lawmakers over dinner and discuss important issues.

"Building relationships with our legislators is one of the most important things we can do," said IFBF President Bryan Searle. "They are right in the middle of Idaho's legislative session during this event, so it's an opportunity to come and remind them of our policies and where we stand on some of the legislation that's being proposed."

There is no program for the strolling buffet. It's simply an opportunity for agricultural producers to engage in face-to-face

discussions with legislators.

“We purposely don’t have a program at the dinner so that they can just talk about whatever’s on their mind,” said Russ Hendricks, director of IFBF’s governmental affairs division. “Our members do a great job of talking about the issues that are of concern to them.”

Weston rancher Jason Fellows, a member of IFBF’s board of directors, said the highlight of the two-day conference “is getting together and meeting with our legislators.”

The low-key nature of the strolling buffet allows both parties to engage in frank discussions about important topics, he said.

“It’s pretty hard not to be able to listen to somebody when you’re breaking bread,” Fellows said.

During the conference, Farm Bureau members also visit the Capitol building and attend legislative committee meetings.

“For the legislative side of the conference, the main emphasis is on helping our members better understand the legislative process that affects their farms and ranches and how they can meaningfully engage in it to make sure that the outcome is positive for them and their fellow farmers,” Hendricks said.

While attending the House State Affairs Committee Feb. 8, five Farm Bureau members who were there for the conference ended up testifying on a school elections bill with provisions that IFBF policy supports.

The bill passed out of committee by an 11-2 vote.

“As I spoke to the chairman and some



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members and state lawmakers mingle during a strolling buffet dinner Feb. 7 during IFBF’s annual, two-day Legislative and Commodity Conference.**

of the committee members afterward, they just thanked me again and again for having real members come and share their thoughts with the committee; they loved it,” Hendricks said.

During the IFBF conference, members of the organization’s various commodity committees also meet to discuss the latest issues affecting their commodities.

Members of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s wheat and feed grain, hay and forage, beef, water, potato, dairy, forestry and farmland preservation committees met during this year’s event.

“This allows grassroots members who are experts in the potato area or beef area or wheat area or whatever it is, to really dial in on those issues affecting that commodity so we can have relevant policy that meets the needs of agriculture,” Searle said.

The commodity side of the conference is held in conjunction with the legislative part “so that there is cross-pollination,” Hendricks said. “We found there’s a lot of synergy in terms of bringing them together

and getting the commodity committee folks to engage on the legislative side and vice versa.”

The new director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Chanel Tewalt, also addressed Farm Bureau members during the conference.

She said ISDA’s relationship with Farm Bureau is strong and important to the department and assured agricultural producers that ISDA understands it “is there to serve agriculture, not the other way around.”

She also encouraged people to make sure the department is kept up on important new issues.

“I have a very open-door approach to things; please tell me when you have issues,” Tewalt said. “If I don’t know about it ... I can’t fix it.”

All four members of the state’s congressional delegation addressed IFBF members by video during the conference.

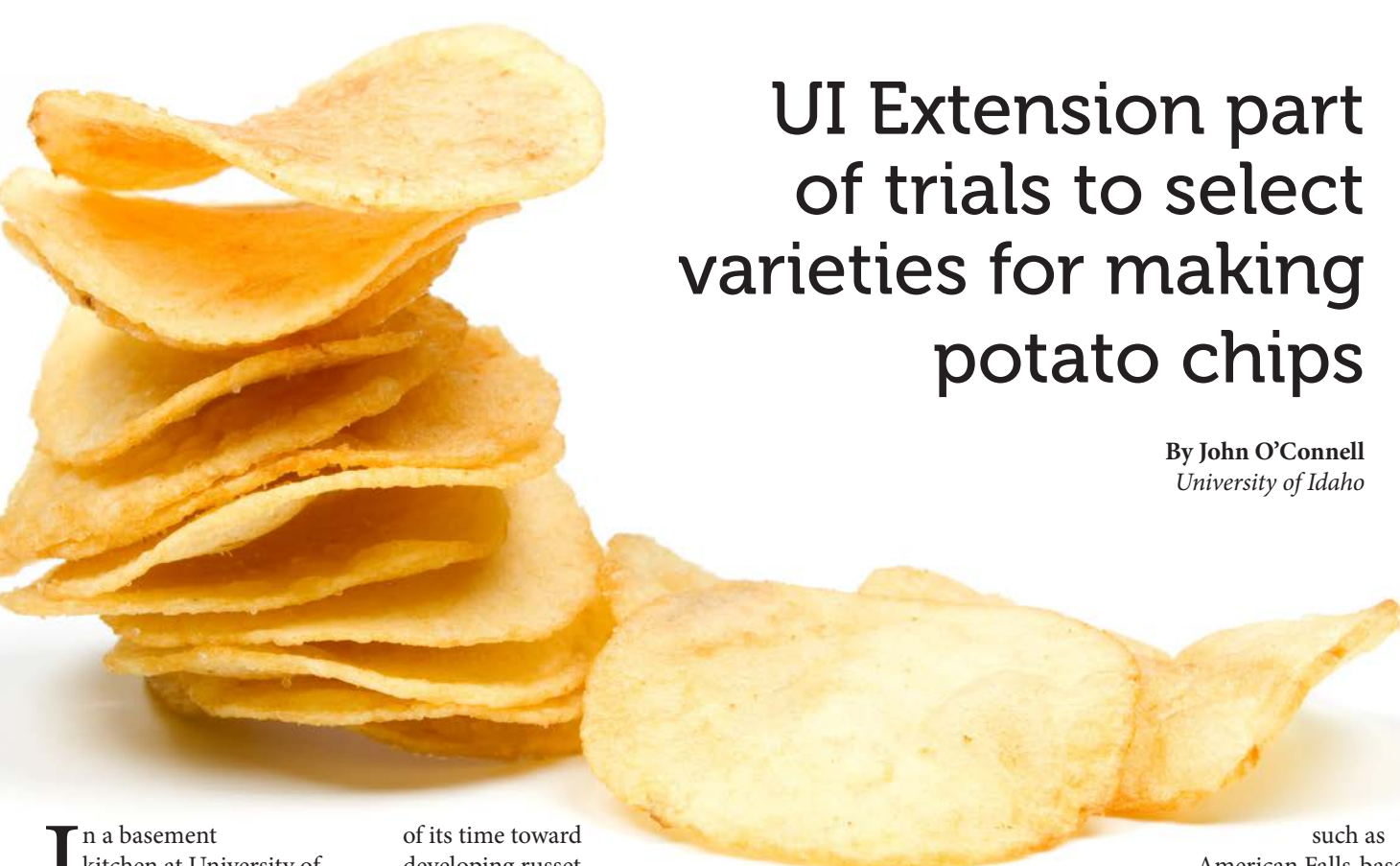
Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, said he understands how critical the new farm bill is for agriculture.

“This is an important piece of legislation, for agriculture, for Idaho,” he said. “We have to make sure this is a decent bill ....” ■



**LEFT: Members of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s beef committee meet in Boise Feb. 7 during IFBF’s annual, two-day Legislative and Commodity Conference.**

Photo by Sean Ellis



# UI Extension part of trials to select varieties for making potato chips

By John O'Connell  
*University of Idaho*

In a basement kitchen at University of Idaho's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, scientific aid Chelsey Lowder sliced a white-fleshed, tennis ball-sized tuber into translucent circles, allowing them to dry before dropping them into a fryer.

Once the hot oil stopped bubbling, Lowder removed the basket and placed the finished chips in a row adjacent to a color chart. Her colleague, UI Extension potato variety development specialist Rhett Spear, explained the chips were a tad dark but still within industry's acceptable color range.

Frying snack foods for careful evaluation is a recurring chore among the scientists with the U of I and USDA-Agricultural Research Service collaborative potato breeding program based in Aberdeen.

The team devotes the bulk

of its time toward developing russet potatoes for making French fries, but the pipeline also includes a steady stream of spuds for chipping.

U of I makes a significant contribution toward filling bags with America's No. 1 snack food.

Aberdeen is one of a dozen public potato breeding programs throughout the U.S. that participates in a nationwide program, known as the National Chip Processing Trials, to identify the next great varieties for making potato chips.

Rich Novy, a USDA-ARS potato breeder, estimates chippers comprise 10-15% of his breeding crosses.

Spear oversees the exhaustive process of evaluating spuds in the breeding program.

"Chips in general are made from potatoes with a high specific gravity which gives a

better chip texture," he said. "They want a round potato, and usually it's a white-fleshed potato. We're looking for high tuber set and tuber size somewhere between a racquetball and a baseball."

The variety development process starts with Novy making a cross in a greenhouse setting. Though potatoes are clonally propagated by industry, breeders harvest true potato seeds from berries, which they plant and germinate in a greenhouse to yield seedling tubers.

Those seedling tubers are planted in the field during the next growing season, and chipping clones are selected in the field for better agronomics, which start the process in the development of a new chipping potato variety.

Researchers and representatives from the industry,

such as American Falls-based R & G Potato Co. and Michigan-based Walther Farms, assist in selecting the best specimens for retaining in the program from the plots of chippers raised in Aberdeen.

In the Pacific Northwest, the U of I, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Washington State University and Oregon State University potato breeding programs collaborate in the Tri-State Potato Breeding Program.

A nonprofit corporation called the Potato Variety Management Institute handles licensing and royalties of Tri-State varieties.

After several field generations in Aberdeen, the best crosses move on to the Tri-State Trials and are grown in all three states. The best of those varieties graduate to the Western Regional Trials, which also include Colorado, California and Texas.



Photo by John O'Connell

University of Idaho researchers Chelsey Lowder and Rhett Spear slice and fry chips in Aberdeen.

Potatoes USA spearheads the National Chip Processing Trials, which include hundreds of entries, evaluated by each participating program on about 20 variables, such as yield, quality, storage attributes and fry color.

“Those candidates are in the system for five or six years, and after about year four a handful that look really good go into our SNAC (Snacking, Nutrition and Convenience) Trials,” said John Lundeen,

research director with Potatoes USA. “The first year in the National Chip program, you’re looking at 17 hills. That’s like one row of potatoes. By the time you get to the SNAC Trials we are committing a third of an acre – that’s what they need to run through a chip plant to see how they process.”

The trials wrap up before an annual meeting hosted in early December in Chicago, where researchers and industry meet to discuss the results.

“You go from tens of thousands down to just a handful in final testing, and not even all in that handful get commercially released,” Lundeen said.

The Tri-State program has released three chipping varieties in its history – Gem Chip in 1989, Ivory Crisp in 2002 and Willamette in 2003. The most popular of the varieties, Ivory Crisp, was

initially selected and developed out of the Aberdeen program, with its release as a Tri-State potato variety.

Novy made the initial cross of another Aberdeen breeding line that’s showing great promise, A13125-3C.

A facility based at Michigan State University is in the process of developing pathogen-free tissue culture plantlets for the production of certified seed for more intensive evaluations of that line by the National Chip Program.

“Potato chips are the greatest snack,” Lundeen said. “Just think of how many sandwich restaurants you go into where there’s a whole display of chips, and think how many kids’ lunch bags have a small bag of chips in them. They’re a very important product that the American people love.” ■





Photo by Sean Ellis

A wheat field near Ririe is harvested last year. There is still time for farmers and ranchers to fill out their 2022 Census of Agriculture survey.

# There's still time to fill out 2022 Census of Ag survey

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – The official but “soft” Feb. 6 deadline to respond to the 2022 Census of Agriculture has passed.

But that was not a hard deadline and there's still time to respond to the survey, which is conducted every five years and provides a complete account of the nation's farms and ranches

and the people who operate them.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will continue to accept completed census questionnaires through the spring.

This is an attempt to ensure all farmers and ranchers have the chance to take advantage of the opportunity to be represented in the widely used data, said Ben Johnson, director of NASS' Idaho field office.

The census of ag data is widely used, by companies, farmers



and the groups that represent them, as well as by the federal government to provide programs that serve producers.

“To see that data at the county level and the state level across America is really helpful and beneficial to those in power in making decisions on behalf of farmers,” Johnson said.

Every farmer, large or small, can make sure their voice is heard by filling out the census of ag survey, he said.

“We want all producers to use their voices to help shape the future of American agriculture,” NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer said in a news release. “Census data inform decisions about policy, farm and conservation programs, infrastructure and rural development, research, education and more. The stronger the response, the stronger the data.”

NASS will continue to follow up with ag producers through the spring with phone calls, mailings and personal visits.

The ag census contains a host of data about American agriculture and is the only official source of this type of data in the United States.

“I use NASS data every week, at least,” said Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Chanel Tewalt. “Census data is really important. It is one of the most important ways we track trends within agriculture.”

Tewalt encouraged every farmer and rancher to fill out the census survey.

“The only way we get good data is by hearing from everybody,” she said. “You need to take it seriously. You need to get your data in. It has a real impact on ... production agriculture.”

The Census of Agriculture is the only source of uniform, comprehensive and impartial agriculture data for every county and state in the nation.

“If you’re a processor looking to locate in Idaho, it’s good to hear from an unbiased source and that’s what NASS data is,” Tewalt said.

The Census of Ag contains millions of data points and helps tell the story of American agriculture, Johnson said.

“Looking through the census data, you can really find out what the story of agriculture is in America,” he said. “The more data we have, the more that story can be



told.”

The data from the 2022 ag census year will be released early next year and it’s eagerly awaited by many people and organizations, Johnson said.

“People are definitely anxious to have the new data available,” he said.

Some of the highlight data points of the census include whether the total number of farms in a county, state or the nation increased or decreased.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture showed that the number of farms in the United States declined by 3 percent from 2012 to 2017, from 2.1 million to 2.042 million.

During that same period, the number of farms in Idaho actually increased by 0.7 percent, from 24,816 in 2012 to 24,996 in 2017, although most of those farms were very small farms.

Johnson said it will be interesting to see if Idaho continues to buck the nationwide trend when it comes to total farms.

Given Idaho’s rapid population growth, it will also be interesting to see how much farmland was lost in the state between 2017 and 2022.

The 2017 ag census showed Idaho had 11.7 million acres of land in agriculture that year, down 0.8 percent from 11.8 million acres in 2012.

Canyon County and Ada County in the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho rank as the No. 1 and No. 2 counties in the state, respectively, when it comes to number of farms, and Idaho’s population growth has been centered in those two counties.

Another data point highlight that a lot

of people in Idaho are looking forward to seeing is how much agricultural land in the state is irrigated, Johnson said.

“That’s an interesting data point to know for water users and policy makers,” he said.

The 2017 census for the first time began tracking how many new and beginning farmers there are, with the definition of a new and beginning farmer being someone who has been farming for 10 years or less.

The census will also ask farmers if they consider themselves retired.

“So, we’ll see how many are coming in to farming and we’ll get somewhat of an idea of how many are going out,” Johnson said.

Census of Agriculture questionnaires were mailed to every known ag producer in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Federal law requires everyone who receives a census survey to fill it out and return it. That same law requires NASS to keep the data private.

The data is not shared with other government agencies, Johnson said.

NASS uses the information for statistical purposes only, he said, and publishes aggregate data to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation.

“The same law that requires the census to be filled out requires us to keep the data very private and very secure,” Johnson said.

Farmers and ranchers can complete their ag census either online at [accounts.usda.gov](https://accounts.usda.gov) or by mail. ■

To learn more about the Census of Agriculture, visit [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](https://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).



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Photo by Erika Eidson, Idaho Department of Lands

North Idaho saw significant wind events during the winter of 2020-2021, which caused significant damage for area landowners.

# Assessing winter damage in your forest

By **Audra Cochran**  
*University of Idaho*

The first glimpse of sunshine and melting snow at the start of spring makes everyone excited to get back outside.

For forest owners, this typically means taking a stroll through their forests. This can be a great time to assess how your forest fared over the winter.

Monitoring how your trees handled the winter conditions can be a good indicator of how they will come out of dormancy and perform during the next growing season.

Any damage to trees can have an impact on the overall health of your forest.

## **Downed trees**

Downed trees, either from wind events

or over-saturated soils, can present an opportunity for insect infestation. Downed trees create nice host sites for different varieties of bark beetles to inhabit and reproduce.

If you look back to the winter of 2020-2021, North Idaho saw a series of significant wind events, which resulted in a large amount of blow-downs.

The Idaho Department of Lands surveyed much of the damage and created some helpful resources for landowners. These resources can help you evaluate what bark beetles your trees are most at risk for, and determine an action plan for keeping your forest healthy (<https://www.idl.idaho.gov/about-forestry/insects-and-disease/>).

While every tree can be susceptible to wind and blow-down, shallow rooted species can be at higher risk.

## **Broken limbs**

Broken limbs can be likened to open sores. While they don't kill the trees immediately, they can create host sites for different insects.

Also, depending on severity of the breakage, they can cause a disruption to the nutrient transport, which can lead to tree mortality.

Though tree density and age can be a factor, breakage is typically a result of Mother Nature. Snow loads, ice buildup, lighting, wind, etc., are all natural occurrences that can cause damage but are hard to control or predict.

## **Frost damage (crack)**

Frost damage, or frost crack, occurs during the winter months when trees are dormant and there is a sudden drop or





ABOVE: This is an example of tree mortality caused by Western Pine Beetle. Outbreaks occur in “pockets” and are often caused by external disturbances such as drought, mechanical damage, fire, or diseases. Idaho Department of Lands photo  
 RIGHT: Broken stems or limbs on a tree can leave trees vulnerable to insect, disease and mortality. Photo by Dan Miller



increase in temperature.

The wood on the outer layers of the tree cools quickly and contracts, while the inner wood layers remain warmer. This causes the wood to break, or crack, in either a radial, vertical, or spiral pattern.

Spiral breakage can also be caused by excessive wind that puts pressure on the tree stem. This can lead to physical cracks to form in the tree, again creating insect host sites.

The spiral breakage may also cause internal decay to occur within the tree. Frost cracks are often seen on the south or southwestern side of the tree, and tend to affect younger trees with underdeveloped bark layers.

#### Sunscald

Like a sunburn to the tree, sunscald can be identified as scars and sunken holes on a tree with high sun exposure. This results as the temperatures rise and

fall, causing the cells nearest the surface to burst and die.

This causes the calluses and scars to appear. While

not highly common in the region, we will see sunscald affect our western redcedar populations, due to their thin barked nature.

We also see sunscald affect trees in areas of open exposure, whether from a blow-down event or a recent harvest. Solar radiation from the sun reflecting off snow can also scald younger trees in plantations or growing in the open.

#### Foliar damage

Any combination of damage can also cause foliar damage, decay, or death on trees. Sun, wind, snow, and ice or extreme cold can all cause the foliage harm.

In a previous article I also wrote about how road salts can cause damage to foliage. In all these cases, the best scenario is to try to protect your trees from these extremities.

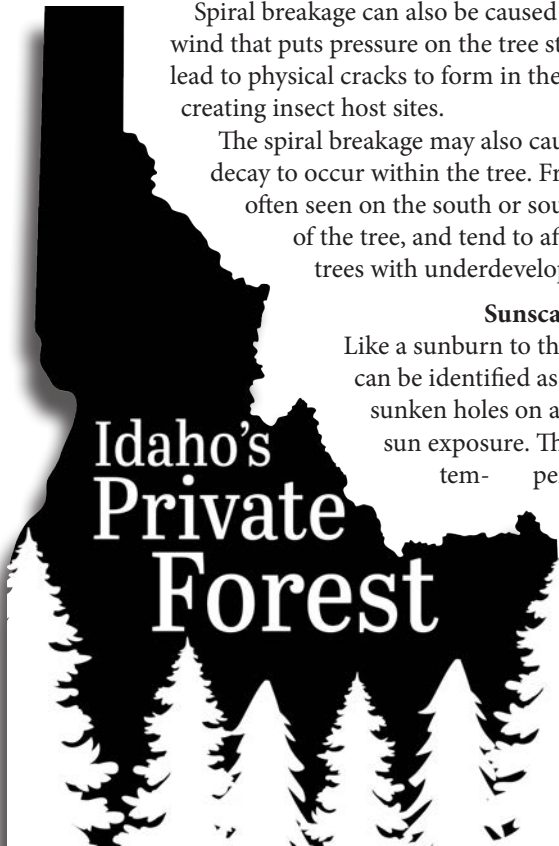
If foliar damage is less than 20% of the tree, the tree has good odds of surviving. Higher than that, and you will likely see mortality within the stand.


Those early spring days can be a great time to assess your forest for any sign of winter damage. Timely corrective actions can mean thinning a few weak, sick, or lame trees vs. having to conduct a full-scale harvest or salvage operation.

In another previous article, I wrote about working with a logging contractor. Having a contractor that you know and trust on retainer, so to speak, can result in a timely “clean up” spring harvest.

Contacting your logging contractor early allows you to be prepared for entry by May or June, to avoid further damage or insect invasion. ■

*Audra Cochran is a University of Idaho Extension educator in Lewis County. She can be reached at [audrac@uidaho.edu](mailto:audrac@uidaho.edu)*





# Owl box program has helped broaden farmers' perspectives on pest management

By John O'Connell  
University of Idaho

MOSCOW, Idaho – A long-running University of Idaho Extension project to build, distribute and monitor wooden houses for nesting barn owls is wrapping up, but Idaho farmers who have struggled to control ravenous voles should enjoy lasting benefits from the program.

UI Extension educator Jason Thomas has sold about 150 owl boxes since starting the effort. He's offering to sell his remaining inventory at the discounted rate of \$100 each and plans to transition to projects involving biological control of insects, including distributing bat boxes.

His owl box plans can be accessed free online at <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/county/minidoka/agriculture/barn-owl>.

Thomas estimates voles are being held in check throughout 76,374 acres of Idaho agricultural land thanks to owls using either the boxes he's sold or boxes built by landowners who have used his design.

Thomas launched the popular owl box program shortly after starting at U of I in 2018, seeking another means of helping

*“The whole purpose of this barn owl project is to help farmers and other people understand there are more options besides just pesticides. We're trying to help farmers change their mentality.”*

*- Jason Thomas, UI Extension educator*

farmers who were sustaining heavy crop losses to voles.

The farmers were spending thousands of dollars on the primary tool available to them – the rodenticide zinc phosphide – and were still losing large swaths of their grain, hay fields and pastures to the rodents.

“As I went out to cereal fields, there were islands of dead ground in the middle of the field where 10% to 20% of the field was just this dead stuff because they had such a high number of voles,” Thomas said. “They talked to me and said, ‘We wish we could do something about this.’”

He found information about how owl

boxes were being used to help control rodents in California. To fund his own project in Idaho, Thomas obtained \$4,000 from UI Extension and a \$3,000 mini-grant through Western Sustainable Agriculture Research.

A California bird bander and woodshop teacher allowed Thomas to use his design, and Thomas made his own tweaks.

The wooden boxes have an elliptical hole – 3.75 inches by 4.5 inches – to allow owls to enter while keeping predators out. Grips below the hole help owls get in and out. They're built to last 30 to 40 years.

Each box has a door in the back or bottom that opens to facilitate cleaning.



University of Idaho photo

Jason Thomas, University of Idaho Extension educator in Minidoka County, cleans a barn owl box.

Thomas recommends cleaning the boxes every couple of years while wearing an N95 respirator mask for protection from diseases spread by birds.

Thomas has recruited Idaho youth, including Boy Scouts in need of an Eagle project, to help build the boxes. He's also worked closely with the school districts in Minidoka and Power counties and Mini-Cassia Juvenile Probation.

Students at J.R. Simplot Elementary School in American Falls build the boxes annually during their ecology day.

Thomas has monitored his owl boxes regularly to assess occupancy rates. Dietary studies show a family of barn owls consisting of two parents and five owlets can eat more than 2,000 voles within the three-month span before the brood reaches maturity.

Anecdotally, he's noticed owls tend to avoid using boxes placed within 500 meters of an occupied home or a frequently visited building.

"Where we are seeing activity is away from humans," Thomas said.

Nests can be mounted on a pole or tree. Thomas advises locating them at least 6 feet above the ground for protection from predators, and he suggests mounting them no higher than 12 feet to ensure they're easy to clean and maintain.

Thomas estimates the average occupancy rate of his boxes has been about 75%.

Sean Mallett, with Harmony Organic Dairy in Twin Falls, has been using owl boxes for vole control since 2015, when the Magic Valley experienced a major outbreak.

"They were destroying everything – winter wheat, pasture, everything. They wiped out 300 acres of our pasture," Mallett recalled.

Mallett found an owl box design on the internet and had someone build him about 40 boxes, which were placed about 40 acres apart. He's also set boxes adjacent to additional fields he's acquired throughout the past seven years.

"We really haven't had a problem since," Mallett said, adding that using the boxes helped him meet requirements of the biodiversity section of his organic systems plan. "Overall, I think there's been a great benefit to our farm utilizing these owl boxes."

Thomas acknowledged owl boxes aren't a cure-all and farmers and ranchers who put them up may still need to use some zinc phosphide.

One of the greatest benefits of the owl boxes in Thomas' opinion is that they've led the state's agricultural producers to think more broadly about their approaches to integrated pest management.

"The whole purpose of this barn owl project is to help farmers and other people understand there are more options besides just pesticides," Thomas said. "We're trying to help farmers change their mentality." ■



Photos by Sean Ellis

USDA expects total net farm income in the U.S. to decline by 16 percent in 2023.

# USDA forecasts a drop in net farm income in 2023

By Sean Ellis  
*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – U.S. farmers and ranchers, as a whole, are expected to see a significant drop in net farm income this year.

USDA, in its 2023 Farm Sector Income Forecast, is forecasting that total U.S. net farm income will decline by 16 percent, or \$26 billion, in 2023 when compared with 2022.

“The farm income forecast is a stark reminder that America’s farmers and ranchers are not reaping big benefits from higher prices at the grocery store,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said in a news release.

According to USDA’s farm income forecast, which was released Feb. 7 and

offers the first official glimpse of how the nation’s collective farming community will fare during the calendar year, total U.S. net farm income in 2023 is estimated at \$136.9 billion, down from \$162.7 billion in 2022.

Net farm income is a broad measure of farm profitability and represents the farmer and rancher’s paycheck after expenses are deducted from total revenue.

This anticipated decrease follows a 49 percent (\$47 billion) increase in total U.S. net farm income in 2021 and a 16 percent (\$22 billion) increase in 2022.

Total net farm income in the U.S. hit a record last year.

According to the USDA forecast, total farm sector production in the United

States is expected to remain fairly even this year when compared with last year, but commodity prices are expected to decrease.

Total U.S. net farm income is anticipated to drop 16 percent this year “as commodity prices fall and total expenses continue to rise,” USDA Senior Economist Carrie Litkowski said Feb. 7 during a 2023 Farm Sector Income Forecast webinar.

USDA expects total U.S. farm cash receipts – this is the money a farmer or rancher receives for their commodity – to decline by 4 percent (\$24 billion) to \$520 billion in 2023.

At the same time, total direct government payments to agricultural producers are forecast to drop by 34 percent (\$5 billion) from 2022 levels.

And total farm and ranch production expenses are expected to increase by 4 percent (\$18 billion) in 2023 to a record \$460 billion. Last year was also a record for total U.S. farm production expenses.

Total farm production costs in 2023 are expected to increase for a sixth consecutive year.

While USDA expects the cost of some inputs such as fertilizers, fuels and cumulative feed costs, to decline from record highs, other cost categories are expected to increase, including marketing, storage, labor and transportation.

Total labor expenses for U.S. farms and ranches are expected to rise by 7 percent in 2023, to \$43 billion.

Rising interest rates are expected to also take a bite out of farmers’ income in 2023.

According to the USDA report, “Interest expenses (including operator dwellings) are forecast to rise by \$6.2 billion (22.4 percent) to \$33.8 billion in 2023 following a projected increase of \$8.2 billion (42.1 percent) in 2022.”

Total farm cash receipts from animal and animal products are forecast to decrease 6 percent (\$15 billion) to \$243 billion in 2023.

“The largest decrease in net farm income is tied to a projected fall in cash receipts from livestock due to lower prices for all major categories except for cattle,” according to an AFBF Market Intel report that analyzed the USDA forecast.

USDA forecasts that milk cash receipts in the U.S. will decline by 15 percent (\$8 billion) in 2023. Milk production is expected to increase but prices are expected to drop.

Milk is Idaho’s top agricultural commodity and accounts for about a third of total farm cash receipts in Idaho each year.

Cash receipts for cattle and calves, Idaho’s No. 2 agricultural commodity, are forecast to increase by 2 percent (\$2 billion) in 2023.

According to the AFBF Market Intel report, “Tighter cattle supplies have pulled both cash and futures prices higher, leading to continued growth in cash receipts.”

Farm cash receipts for crops are expected to total \$277 billion in 2023, which is 3 percent (\$9 billion) lower than 2022.

Cash receipts from potatoes, Idaho’s top crop and No. 3 agricultural commodity in terms of revenue, are forecast to increase by 8 percent (\$500 million) in 2023.

Cash receipts for hay, Idaho’s No. 4 ag commodity, are expected to rise by 6 percent (\$600 million) and cash receipts for wheat, Idaho’s No. 5 ag commodity, are expected to increase by 4 percent (\$600 million).

According to the AFBF Market Intel report, “Much of the forecasted decline in 2023 net farm income is tied to lower crop and livestock cash receipts, continued increases in production costs and a decrease in ad hoc government support....”

USDA expects total quantity produced on America’s farms and ranches to remain steady with 2022.

“In 2023, falling prices are expected to account for most of the decline in cash receipt,” the report states. “The vast majority of expected receipt declines are linked to falling prices rather than volume dynamics.” ■

**Total U.S. net farm income in 2023 is forecast by USDA at \$136.9 billion, down from \$162.7 billion in 2022.**



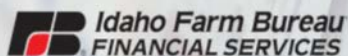
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# Trich Detection

Dr. Scott Leibsle, State Veterinarian  
Idaho State Department of Agriculture



The Idaho cattle industry saw several developments with the Trichomoniasis Control and Eradication Program this past year.

During the 2022 grazing season, three bulls from a Southeast Idaho grazing association tested positive for Trich.

An Idaho State Department of Agriculture investigation revealed the affected herd had shared a grazing allotment with an out-of-state herd that had bulls test positive in 2021.

ISDA placed an immediate quarantine on the affected herd that will remain in place, per state rule, until all bulls in the herd receive three consecutive, negative Trich tests. The affected producer is in the process of completing all quarantine requirements.

The most effective and proactive enforcement of testing regulations for in-state grazers comes from grazing associations. ISDA urges all grazing associations to require every member to submit their herd's Trich test results prior to turnout.

Grazing associations that allow producers to turnout before testing requirements are verified create an unnecessary risk for all herds in the association that can be time-consuming and very costly to manage.

For grazing associations that have been impacted by Trich in recent seasons, ISDA recommends that members discuss increasing test requirements temporarily.

A requirement of two or three negative tests for all bulls in an affected association, along with a mandatory document submission date, would be an example of a proactive temporary requirement.

Recommendations like these will help minimize the likelihood of carrying a positive animal from one season to the next. As always, ISDA is available to answer any questions or attend association meetings to further discuss the issue.

## What is Trich?

Trichomoniasis (Trich) is a common cattle venereal disease caused by the organism *Tritrichomonas foetus* and is spread through sexual contact in cattle. Trich can cause infertility, abortion and stillbirths in pregnant cattle and can devastate a herd's conception and calving rate. Idaho's cattle industry recognized the threat that Trich posed to our cattle herds and passed the nation's first Trich testing rule in 1989.

## Testing and Tagging

Idaho's Trich season runs from Sept. 1 to Aug. 31 of the following year. Producers have the option of testing/tagging their bulls either after they come off pasture in the fall or prior to turnout in the spring. Bulls must be tested by a veterinarian and are then given a colored bangle tag specific to the current testing season. Failing to properly test and tag your bulls according to the requirements in the rule could result in a fine of up to a \$5,000 per bull.

## Doing Your Part

Please help Idaho's cattle industry and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture keep our cattle free from Trich. Call a licensed veterinarian and schedule your bulls for their annual Trich testing today. Visit [agri.idaho.gov](http://agri.idaho.gov) to review the Rules Governing Trichomoniasis or to learn more about the 2023 changes to the Trich rule.

# Agricultural Profile

## Blaine & Camas Counties



Photo by Sean Ellis

Because of the short growing season, hay and grain are by far the main crops in Blaine and Camas counties

# Hay is king in Blaine-Camas counties

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

The cold climate and short growing season in Blaine and Camas counties limits what crops can be grown there.

That's why hay and grain are the only two crops grown on a major scale in the two-county area.

"We have a really short growing season up here and that's what limits us," says Camas County farmer Rusty Kramer, a member of the Blaine-Camas Farm Bureau board of directors. "The only two things that we can grow up here are alfalfa and grain."

Late frosts and cold temperatures are the limiting factors, he

says, adding, "Last year it froze twice in July."

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 67,526 acres of hay grown in Camas County and 28,148 acres of hay grown in Blaine County during the 2017 census year.

That same year, there were 8,836 acres of barley and 3,686 acres of wheat grown in Camas and 8,205 acres of barley and 1,418 acres of wheat grown in Blaine.

Cattle is also a major ag commodity in the two counties – there were 11,171 cattle in the counties during the 2017 ag census year – and a lot of the hay produced there goes to that sector. But a lot is also sold outside the counties.

"There are thousands of tons of alfalfa shipped out of south





**ABOVE: Cattle graze in Blaine County in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo.**

Photo by Joel Benson

**RIGHT: Sheep graze in Blaine County in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo.**

Photo by Sean Ellis



Blaine County every year, maybe hundreds of thousands of tons,” says BCFB President Clayton Mecham, a Blaine County rancher. “We can grow good quality alfalfa up here. I’ve had some friends over the years who are shocked that our alfalfa will test as high as it does.”

Another defining feature of agriculture in the Blaine-Camas area is large farms.

While the average size of a farm in Idaho was 468 acres in 2017, the average size of a farm in Camas County was 1,276 acres and in Blaine County, it was 1,112 acres.

According to the ag census, there were 190 farms and 211,228 total acres of land in farming in Blaine County in 2017 and 151 farms and 192,672 acres of land in farming in Camas County.

Mecham says the political climate in Blaine County in particular hasn’t been overly favorable toward agriculture over the years and he points out there are currently no FFA or agricultural programs in the schools there.

Changing that is a main goal of the Blaine-Camas Farm Bureau organization,

he says.

“We’re hoping to get some things going and try to ramp up some sort of FFA program,” Mecham says. “I don’t care if we only teach these kids how to grow a ... garden. I would be happy if they can learn something about getting their hands in the dirt, get away from their cellphones and get back to where we came from.”

He says farmers and ranchers in that area have also had to fight off regular attempts by environmentalists to limit

livestock production.

“It seems like everyone who comes here (to Sun Valley) wants to go hiking, backpacking and wants to be in the wilderness, and they don’t want to see domestic livestock,” Mecham says. “So, the battle we fight over here more than anything else, and it’s a constant battle, is how do we maintain our public lands to be utilized by the local farmers and ranchers, and keep that from being shut off? That’s an ongoing battle.” ■

# Classifieds

## FARMING/EQUIPMENT

Grow your own food! Single row potato equipment. 1 row diggers 3 point on or pull type. 2 row planters 3 point or full type. 2 row rolling cultivators. All have been reconditioned and are field ready. Call or text 208-757-0400 Blackfoot.

Balewagons: New Holland self-propelled or pull-type models, parts, tires, manuals. Also interested in buying balewagons. Will consider any model. Call Jim at 208-880-2889.

## LIVESTOCK

Quality Beefmaster Bulls for sale. 4-year-old bull \$2,600. Yearling bulls \$1,600 each. Request pictures by calling or texting Jody 208-573-3209. Nampa.

Weaned piglets looking for new pastures! Heritage grazing pigs are docile, easy keepers that provide gourmet pork. Idaho Pasture Pigs x American Guinea Hog and Kune Kune x American Guinea Hog. \$100 each. Careywood, ID 208-610-2960.

## TRAILER

2014 Forest River Wildwood 21RSB RV Trailer. Table

slide outs with all new parts. 4 new tires, 2 deep cell 6 volt batteries, new roof. Two 7-gallon propane tanks. Electrical jack on hitch. Call 208-941-7435. Nampa.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Our Idaho family loves old wood barns and would like to restore/rebuild your barn on our Idaho farm. Would you like to see your barn restored/rebuilt rather than rot and fall down? Call Ken & Corrie 208-530-6466.

## PROPERTY

In Teton Valley Idaho 65.22 acres. Just miles from the Mouth of the Teton Mountains. Great ground for development or your personal house. Call 208-201-5303.

## WANTED

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.

Looking for old sawmill two or three board edger mounted or by itself. Older three- or four-sided lumber planner. Call 208-743-9204. Lewiston, ID.

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, Hunting, Idaho Cattlemen Assoc, Idaho Fish and Game. Top Dollar Paid! Call, email or text pics. Rusty Kramer idahotrappguy@hotmail.com 208-870-3217.

## FREE CLASSIFIEDS

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 March 15 for the April Producer

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# IDAHO FOUNDATION FFA



## EXTEMPORANEOUS PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation generously sponsors the National qualifying Extemporaneous Public Speaking Leadership Development Event winner every year on their trip to Indianapolis, Indiana to compete at the National FFA Convention & Expo. This year, Kamille Mirkin from the Jerome FFA Chapter represented Idaho at the National FFA Convention and Expo. During her time in Indianapolis, Kamille made unforgettable memories meeting members from across the nation and putting her Extemporaneous Speaking skills to the test as she competed against the best of the best. Congratulations Kamille on being awarded as a Silver Emblem Individual!

## LOOKING FORWARD

"Participating in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking Leadership Development Event gave me the confidence and skills to think on my feet and speak eloquently to larger audiences," shared Kamille Mirkin. This fall, Kamille plans on attending the University of Idaho and majoring in Agricultural Science, Communication, and Leadership with the plans to attend law school after her time as an undergraduate.



**We are so grateful for the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's support of the Extemporaneous Public Speaking Leadership Development Event and Kamille's trip to Indianapolis, Indiana!**

# U of I research sheds light on attributes of cattle that thrive on range

By John O'Connell  
University of Idaho



University of Idaho photo  
Jim Sprinkle, University of Idaho Extension beef specialist, holds up one of the collars he designed to track cattle movements for his research.

BELLEVEUE – University of Idaho livestock researchers believe a genetic marker they've identified associated with cattle that like to climb hills could provide a new tool for breeding animals that excel in rangeland conditions.

Through their recent research at U of I's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in the Wood River Valley and the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center in Carmen, Jim Sprinkle and his team have correlated hill climbing on range during hot days with good cattle efficiency.

In published research, efficient cattle are predisposed to maintain or gain weight with 10% to 15% less feed than their inefficient counterparts.

"We may be able to take a blood test or an ear punch at weaning and identify if heifers have the marker for hill climbing and that would be one thing I'd look at," said Sprinkle, a UI Extension beef specialist.

Cattle had been classified by efficiency in a feedlot setting for more than two decades when Sprinkle set out in 2016 to evaluate how efficient and inefficient animals would perform on rangeland.

Working with Gulf Coast Data Concepts in Mississippi, Sprinkle designed his own high-tech collars to record cattle activity. His collars are rugged, with the electronics fitted inside PVC.

They each have a GPS unit to determine location and elevation, as well as an accelerometer – used on rockets to measure velocity in three directions. -

Accelerometers are also used to enable screen orientation in mobile phones. -

Paired with recorded head movements of livestock, the accelerometers tell researchers how long individual animals spend walking, hill climbing, grazing, nursing or relaxing.

Sprinkle can produce his collars for \$315 each, compared with \$2,500 each for similar products that are available commercially. He updated his collar design in 2021.

When he first started the efficiency study, Sprinkle anticipated inefficient cattle would spend more time climbing hills, as they'd need to wander further in pursuit of forage.

During the cool days of spring, his theory held true, as the inefficient animals grazed for about 1.7 hours longer per day

than efficient animals.

When temperatures rose, however, inefficient animals began congregating around streams while efficient animals grazed the hills.

"I originally thought inefficient cows would be the ones we'd want on the rangeland. They'd have more incentive to go out and harvest forage. That's not what we found," Sprinkle said.

Sprinkle hypothesizes that inefficient animals have larger, less efficient gastrointestinal tracts, which generate more heat and cause them to stay in the shade and by water for comfort when the temperature is especially hot.

"The efficient animals tend to have a more efficient metabolism and use of nutrients," Sprinkle said.

Sprinkle and his colleagues have noticed no significant differences in weaning weights and body conditions between efficient and inefficient livestock.

In one study, efficient cows without calves started on winter pasture with slightly poorer body conditions than inefficient cows, but they lost less weight over the late fall grazing period, maintaining

better body condition on poor-quality forage.

A two-year project starting this summer, led by Ph.D. student Landon Sullivan, will evaluate how enzymes and hormones related to stress affect grazing behaviors in efficient and inefficient cattle.

The study should answer questions about how nature compared with nurture affect grazing behaviors of calves.

Sullivan will study the genetic, physiological and environmental factors that influence why some cattle remain in riparian areas while others climb hills, with the aim of identifying genetic traits

that may be passed along associated with good grazers.

“As feed intake decreases, many components of production will decrease; thus, cattle that are best able to thermoregulate – deal with the heat of summer – are more likely to sustain, maybe even optimize production,” Sullivan said. “If we can better understand the genetic and physiological factors, we can select cattle via genetic markers that possess the potential for grazing higher elevations and implement husbandry practices to meet the physiological needs to fulfill that genetic potential.” ■

## AGRICULTURE

*Continued from page 3*

Taylor said the significant growth in the state’s agricultural industry is a product of the ag-friendly climate that exists in Idaho, especially compared to some other states.

“The climate toward agriculture is very favorable in Idaho, especially compared to some neighboring states,” he told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. “Idaho doesn’t have an aversion to production agriculture.”

Taylor said he constantly sees negative stories about how some neighboring states are doing things to hamper agriculture.

“That doesn’t happen in Idaho,” he said. “It’s a very ag-friendly state.”

That, he added, has allowed agriculture to be an engine for growth in Idaho.

“We’re not only ag friendly but we’re also ag friendly to large farms and that’s where our GDP growth is,” Taylor said.

He told lawmakers Idaho agriculture had a record year in 2022 when it comes to total farm cash receipts, which is the money farmers or ranchers receive for their commodity.

However, he added, Idaho also set a record for total farm production expenses last year.

The record for total revenue happened despite the fact that total federal government payments to farmers and ranchers in Idaho declined by a large margin in 2022 compared with 2021.

In their annual “The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture” report, University of Idaho economists estimate that federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers totaled \$185 million



Photo by Sheila Hasselstrom

**Despite its small population, Idaho is a heavyweight state when it comes to agriculture, a University of Idaho agricultural economist told Idaho lawmakers recently.**

in 2022, which is 36 percent lower than the 2021 total, which included a substantial amount of COVID-relief payments.

Taylor said federal payments to Idaho agriculture are expected to decline or stabilize moving forward and Idaho is estimated to have received only about 1 percent of total government payments to U.S. agriculture in 2022.

Overall, that \$185 million total represented only 1.6 percent of the total revenue that Idaho farmers and ranchers generated in 2022.

“Idaho farmers don’t farm the government,” Taylor told lawmakers. “(Gov-

ernment payments are) not a big part of agriculture in Idaho.”

He said that overall, Idaho farmers and ranchers have pretty clean balance sheets. But he did caution that high inflation is a major concern for agricultural producers and he reminded legislators it’s what severely harmed many producers in the 1980s.

“This is the No. 1 thing to watch for – inflation,” he said.

“It’s probably a primary worry among producers,” U of I Agricultural Economist Brett Wilder told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. ■

# U of I researching artificial beaver dams as stream restoration tool

By John O'Connell  
*University of Idaho*

MOSCOW, Idaho – University of Idaho researchers are testing artificial beaver dams as a tool to restore degraded stream systems, thereby improving riparian habitat and bolstering the late-season water supply.

Known as beaver dam analogs, these structures comprise the same materials beavers use in nature, including willow boughs, sediment and stone.

They cause water to pool and spill beyond the banks. The spillage supports marshland vegetation before seeping into the groundwater and re-emerging later in the season downstream.

Beaver dam analogs provide an option to restore habitat where resources are insufficient to support beavers or where beavers would pose a nuisance.

A team of researchers with U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) and College of Natural Resources (CNR) is entering the final year of a three-year study of the concept, funded with a \$75,000 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service grant.

The research is being conducted in an intermittent stream, Guy Creek, within the university's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in central Idaho's Wood River Valley.

From CNR, the research team includes Jason Karl, Harold F. and Ruth M. Heady endowed chair of Rangeland Ecology; Charles Goebel, head of the Department of Forest, Rangeland and Fire Sciences; and Eric Winford, who is spearheading the project as his dissertation for a doctorate in natural resources.

CALS team members include Melinda Ellison, an assistant professor and Extension specialist focused on the effects of raising livestock on wildlife and range; Laurel Lynch, assistant professor with the Department of Soil and Water Systems;



University of Idaho photo

**A beaver dam analog at University of Idaho's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch.**

and two of Lynch's graduate students – Ellen Incelli, a graduate student studying environmental science, and Heather Neace, a graduate student studying water resources

science and management.

"It really is bringing together CALs with CNR to ask some of these important social and ecological questions," Winford said.

“Across the West we can restore some of the function beavers were maintaining in these systems by mimicking their activity.”

At the project’s start, Guy Creek flowed through a deep channel disconnected from riparian areas. Riparian vegetation can be essential for livestock, providing a verdant source of late-season forage.

In July 2020, a group of recent high school graduates with the Idaho Conservation Corps spent a week helping the research team build 65 beaver dam analogs within three meadows.

The team has been using drones to evaluate gradual changes in the channel. They’ve noticed pools and riffles are forming and sediment is accumulating behind the structures, and they expect to eventually see gains in groundwater levels and

improvements in natural processes such as nutrient cycling.

They anticipate their stream gages and groundwater monitoring will evidence that beaver dam analogs build up groundwater and hold water until it’s needed without curbing flows to downstream users.

The Idaho Department of Water Resources requires anyone who installs a beaver dam analog to obtain a permit and is interested in the research.

“In the lower two meadows we’ve been able to collect water samples later in the season from more pools than the year before,” Lynch said. “It’s too early to say definitively that water levels are increasing, but it does seem anecdotally we’re pushing the system in that direction.”

Lynch and her graduate students are

also evaluating how riparian restoration influences water quality, soil carbon, microbial ecology and soil macroinvertebrate density.

The team plans to host field days and workshops at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch for public land managers and private landowners to highlight the beaver dam analogs, as well as how to make and maintain them.

Several federal agencies offer funding for improving wildlife habitat that could be used for building them.

“There are potentially hundreds of miles of these meadows throughout the state where these could be applied,” Winford said. ■

# Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



“I don’t have any cash flow problems.  
It all washed away in the flood.”



“I don’t ever remember it being so windy, do you, Mack?”

# U of I leading USDA-funded project to help potato farmers combat nematodes

By **John O'Connell**  
*University of Idaho*

MOSCOW, Idaho – A University of Idaho-led research team has received a \$6.8 million U.S. Department of Agriculture award to develop new diagnostic tools, management practices and resources for controlling harmful nematodes in potato fields.

Nematodes are tiny roundworms with unsegmented bodies. Most nematodes are beneficial to soil, but plant-parasitic nematodes attack plant roots and may kill entire plants.

Potato nematodes can significantly reduce spud yields, but are not a human health issue.

The project's goals include developing support models to guide growers' management decisions, identifying molecular assays to differentiate nematode pathotypes, developing resistant potato varieties and creating a "smart chemical" for nematode-specific control.

Louise-Marie Dandurand, with U of I's Department of Entomology, Plant Pathology and Nematology, heads the project, titled "PAPAS: Potatoes and Pests, Actionable Science Against Nematodes."

The four-year project is funded through the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

The project was backed by more than 70 letters of support from packers, processors, farmers, regulators and large agricultural businesses.

"You have to have a large amount of industry support for your proposal," Dandurand said.

Joseph Kuhl, with U of I's Department of Plant Sciences, and Philip Watson, with U of I's Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, are co-project directors, along with researchers from Michigan State University, Washington State University and USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

U of I researchers Allan Caplan, Fangming Xiao and Rhett Spear are among the principal investigators.

Inna Popova, who will be leaving U of I to join the University of Wisconsin faculty, will continue as a project principal investigator at her new institution.

Researchers from Washington State University, Cornell University, Oregon State University, Michigan State



Photo of a nematode cyst.  
University of Idaho photos



University and USDA-ARS are also participating.

The researchers will target two species of potato cyst nematodes – the pale cyst nematode, which is known in the U.S. to exist only in a small area of eastern Idaho, and the golden nematode, found in New York.

Potato cyst nematodes, which produce cysts harboring eggs that can remain viable for decades in the absence of a host, are especially concerning to the industry and keeping them from spreading is vital for trade.

“Potato cyst nematodes are an internationally regulated pest,” Dandurand said. “If an infestation gets out of hand, there’s an 80% yield-reduction potential.”

The team will also evaluate other nematodes important to the industry, such as the Columbia and northern root-knot nematodes.

There’s been little research to date on nematode population thresholds that warrant fumigation. Having the ability to identify nematodes by pathotype or race would allow potato farmers to select appropriate resistant varieties to plant.

The researchers are seeking to identify a gene responsible for nematode resistance within litchi tomato, which is a plant in the nightshade family known to stimulate nematode cysts to hatch in the absence of a viable host.

Potato breeders would then introduce the trait into popular potato varieties using biotechnology. Conventional breeding efforts to develop resistant varieties are also underway.

“We have made quite a bit of progress toward introducing resistance through traditional breeding methods,” Dandurand said.

Researchers have developed potato varieties with up to 50% resistance to nematodes. The project aims to significantly boost the resistance level by producing varieties that incorporate multiple resistant genes.

The researchers suspect litchi tomato contains a chemical that is highly toxic to nematodes. Another aspect of their project entails identifying that chemical and using it as a nematicide that likely wouldn’t harm beneficial nematodes and insects.

Dandurand and her team will evaluate



**Photo of a nematode cyst. Most nematodes are beneficial to soil, but plant-parasitic nematodes attack plant roots and may kill entire plants.**

how crop rotations involving resistant potato varieties affect nematode populations.

The researchers will conduct their trials in infested commercial fields. They will use nematode-infested soil in 50-gallon steel tanks and 5-gallon buckets placed within an infested field to determine the best rotation to reduce the nematode populations.

Nematodes will be constrained by nylon mesh sacks, and irrigation water will be filtered to prevent escapes. Work on golden nematodes will be conducted in trial fields already set up for nematode research in

New York.

To help the industry implement their findings, project researchers will host workshops in the grant’s third year to provide training on diagnostic methods to determine the race or pathotype of a nematode species, and to educate farmers about resistant varieties and rotations.

In the fourth year, they’ll also host workshops teaching farmers how to use predictive models and diagnostic tools to guide management decisions. ■

# Cheese 'N'

## Beef BBQ

Butter

1/3 Cup Chopped Green Pepper

1 Cup Chopped Onion

1 lb. Ground Beef

1 Teaspoon Salt

1/4 Teaspoon Pepper

1/4 Teaspoon Sweet Basil

1/8 Teaspoon Tabasco

1/3 Cup Ketchup

1 can (6 oz.) Tomato Paste

1 can (4 oz.) Sliced Mushrooms, Drained

1 Cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese

6 Hamburger Buns

**In a large skillet melt butter, brown green pepper, onion, and beef. Add salt, pepper, basil, Tabasco, ketchup, tomato paste, and mushrooms. Heat thoroughly. Just before serving, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted. Serve over buttered toasted buns. Top with additional cheese if desired. Makes 6 servings.**



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# DIRT ROAD DISCUSSIONS



## **EPISODE 24: SIMPLE GOODNESS SISTERS**

"LEAVING THE TECH SECTOR FOR GARLIC, GOATS, & SO MUCH MORE" REAL-LIFE SISTERS VENISE CUNNINGHAM AND BELINDA KELLY USED TO TRAVEL A DISTANCE TO WORK IN THE TECH SECTOR, BUT LIFE CHANGED WITH THE PURCHASE OF 10 ACRES OF LAND. THE PROBLEM: NEITHER OF THEM KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT FARMING, SO OFF TO GOOGLE AND MENTORS THEY WENT TO LEARN HOW TO GROW SOMETHING TO SELL. TODAY, THEY HAVE DEVELOPED A HOST OF COMPANIES. THEY TELL THEIR STORY OF FAMILY, COVID, LEARNING, AND SMALL-BUSINESS SURVIVAL.



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# MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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IT IS LIKE YOUR OWN  
A POT OF GOLD  
AT THE END OF  
A RAINBOW  
WHEN YOU HAVE  
MEMBER BENEFITS!



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