

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau

January 2023 • Volume 27 Issue 1

Let It Snow!

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Idaho, 8**

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Some of the best stories start on the farm

Who doesn't love a good story? We all have been there, sitting on the edge of our seats eager to see if our favorite characters will come out OK.

Stories aren't just entertaining; they also help us understand times and places we haven't seen firsthand. In my opinion, the best stories are true to life. That's why I love sharing stories from the farm.

The story of American agriculture is woven with the suspense of uncertainty and driven by the hardworking, innovative men and women who play the leading roles in growing

the safe, sustainable food and products we all enjoy.

These stories may not ever play out on the big screen, but they are the stories that matter to our families and communities.

One of the best parts of my job is hearing and sharing these stories with folks who may have never stepped foot on a farm.

Whether in meetings on Capitol Hill, speeches on the road, my regular podcast, or columns like this one, my goal is to place the story of the American farmer front and center.

See **DUVALL**, pg 6

The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Let's make sure our voices are heard

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 83rd Annual Meeting, which occurred the first part of December, was well attended and very productive.

That meeting is IFBF's signature event and draws a few hundred Farm Bureau members and their families from all over Idaho.

Awards are given, people and groups are recognized, and volunteer members are elected to certain positions within the Farm Bureau organization.

It's also a great chance to catch up with old

friends from across the state.

The annual meeting always includes several seminars on important topics and Idaho Farm Bureau Federation always welcomes and appreciates industry members from outside the organization who take the time to attend.

This year we had the opportunity to hold a joint water seminar prior to our convention starting with Idaho Water Users Association and Idaho Grain Producers Association.

Members of these organizations and others

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Help wanted

Ihate ants. In their defense, it is my fault I carry such disdain for the little critters.

At an early age, I learned that playing in an ant pile is not wise. They really do not appreciate having their home remodeled involuntarily.

One of the things I remember most vividly of my encounter with that ant pile is that they launched a stealth attack on me by positioning ants all over my body. Then they started biting me all at once in a coordinated attack, which was not pleasant.

Even though I still harbor my unfair disdain for ants, they are remarkable creatures. Individually, they are strong and capable but also so small that they are irrelevant. It is their work ethic and synergy that makes ants so unique.

In our fair state, I find those same attributes in many farmers, ranchers, and general business owners. Like an ant, a good farmer or rancher is a remarkable creature.

See **MILLER**, page 7



Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Printed by: Adams Publishing Group, Pocatello, ID

GEM STATE PRODUCER

USPS #015-024, is published monthly except the four months the Quarterly runs by the IDAHO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, 275 Tierra Vista Drive, Pocatello, ID 83201.

POSTMASTER send changes of address to: GEM STATE PRODUCER

P.O. Box 4848, Pocatello, ID 83205-4848. Periodicals postage paid at Pocatello, Idaho, and additional mailing offices.

Subscription rate: \$6.00 per year included in Farm Bureau dues.

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Photos by Sean Ellis

The total value of hay production in Idaho was \$946 million last year, up 16 percent compared with 2020. Hay ranked No. 4 in Idaho among all the state's ag commodities in 2021 for total value of production.

Total value of Idaho ag production up half a percent in 2021

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The total value of agricultural production in Idaho increased half a percent in 2021 compared with 2020.

The total value of Idaho ag production has increased for five straight years.

Idaho's total agricultural production value in 2021 was \$8.45 billion, up half a percent from the 2020 value of \$8.41 billion, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The total value of all crop production in Idaho last year was \$3.44 billion, down 5 percent compared with 2020.

However, the total value of livestock production in Idaho last year was up 5 percent, to \$5 billion.

Milk remained the state's top ag commodity last year in value of production, at \$3.1 billion, which was up 3 percent from 2020 and the second highest value of production on record for Idaho milk, behind the 2014 total of \$3.2 billion.

Milk production continues to play an ever-increasing role in Idaho's overall agricultural landscape and represented 37 percent of the state's total agricultural production value in 2021. That was up from 36 percent in 2020 and 35 percent in 2019.

Cattle and calves remained in the No. 2 spot in Idaho for total value of production at \$1.42 billion in 2021, up 13 percent from 2020.

See TOP TEN, page 17

COVER: Snowpack levels in every Idaho basin were above 100 percent of normal in mid-December. See page 4 for story on what that might mean for Idaho's 2023 irrigation season. Photo by Joel Benson

Idaho's snowpack levels are looking good, so far

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Mountain snowpack levels are well above normal in every Idaho basin but a lot more is needed to ensure irrigators have an adequate supply of water during the state's 2023 growing season.

Water managers say Idaho's mountain snowpack levels are off to a great start but they also caution that a lot more is needed during the state's traditional snow accumulation season, which typically ends about April 1.

"We're off to a good start," said Tony Olenichak,

Snow piles up in the hills east of Pocatello. Snowpack levels were above normal in every basin in Idaho as of mid-December. Photo by Joel Benson

watermaster for Water District 1, which is Idaho's largest and encompasses the Upper Snake River system. "But you can't get too enthusiastic about snowpack levels this time of year."

Idaho's water season begins Oct. 1 and the first part of January typically marks the half-way point when it comes to mountain snow accumulation in Idaho, he said.

In early January last year, mountain snowpack levels were well above normal, but things changed dramatically after that.

"We were really optimistic last year at that point but the weather just broke dry after that and we didn't end up with a very good snowpack," Olenichak said. "Right now we're looking good but we're not out of the woods yet."

Rainfall is great for improving soil moisture levels but it's mountain snow that feeds the state's reservoirs, which provide irrigation water during the hot, dry summer months, particularly in southern Idaho, where most of the state's farms and ranches are located.

Those reservoirs are the lifeblood of agriculture in southern Idaho.

As of mid-December, mountain snowpack levels were ahead of normal in almost every Idaho basin.

On Dec. 14, they were at 118 percent of normal in the Snake River basin above Palisades and 130 percent of normal in the Snake River basin above American Falls.

The important Snake River basin feeds the critical Upper Snake River reservoir system, which holds 4 million acre-feet of water, enough to supply well over 1 million acres of farmland in eastern and southern Idaho with irrigation water.

When the state's 2023 water season began on Oct. 1, most Idaho reservoirs had very little carryover water available to provide a buffer heading into the upcoming water year and irrigators, recreationists and others who depend on those reservoirs are left hoping for a good snowpack year.

"A lot of places are really, really counting on a good snowpack this year to make up for the lack of carryover water in their reservoirs," said Erin Whorton, Idaho water supply specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Snowpack levels in the Boise basin were at 160 percent of normal on Dec. 14 and they were at 177 percent of normal in the Weiser basin, 148 percent of normal in the Payette basin and 136 percent of normal in the Salmon basin.

They were at 185 percent and 192 percent of normal in the Big Wood and Little Wood basins, respectively, and at 181 percent and 197 percent of normal in the Big Lost and Little Lost basins, respectively.

The Henrys Fork and Teton basins were at 131 percent of normal, the Willow, Blackfoot and Portneuf basins were at 180 percent of normal, the Bruneau basin was at 164 percent of normal, the Bear River basin was at 152 percent of normal and the Owyhee basin was at 191 percent of normal.

"It's definitely early in the snow accumulation season but it is a good start; things are looking good so far," Whorton said. ■

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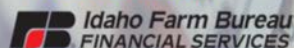
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DUVALL

Continued from page 2

What's more, our research shows that farm stories have an impact. Americans trust the men and women who grow their food.

They trust you, farmers and ranchers, more than any other profession and more than the government to act in their best interest and care for the environment.

And for good reason—we are leading the world in producing the best and most sustainable agricultural products, from the food on our tables to the renewable fuel in our vehicles.

The American public is eager to hear more about the farm and ranch families they trust. Farm families like the Vollemans of Gustine, Texas.

This family brought their dairy farming heritage all the way from Luxembourg to Central Texas.

Like so many American farms, they have placed sustainability and animal welfare at the forefront of everything they do, from ensuring the best nutrition for their animals to establishing practices that reduce plastic waste and protect soil and water.

They also take great pride in sharing their story with neighbors near and far with public dairy tours.

Just to the east of the Vollemans, you'll find Sheri Glazier of rural Oklahoma. Like many farmers, Sheri wears two hats. She and her husband raise cattle, wheat, sesame and hay, and Sheri is a registered dietician.

Also known as the Dirt Road Dietician, Sheri has made it her

*'Every story makes a difference
as we build on the trust the
public has placed in us.'*

mission to help folks take a practical approach to nutrition that includes everything from beans and beets to leafy greens and grains to—you guessed it—beef.

She uses her unique background and platform to engage with thousands of consumers on what goes into a well-balanced diet.

Many farm families, like mine, have been caring for the same land for generations, but a good number are the first generation to break soil.

And some, like Chris and Laura Varhola, come to the farm from another career or a tour of service in the military.

Veteran farmers like the Varholas of Michigan made the decision to continue their life of service by going back to the family farm. As Chris told me, "There has always been a natural transition between being a soldier and being a farmer."

This is just a sampling of some of the stories I've had the privilege to share on my podcast, Farmside Chat, and that podcast is just a taste of the thousands of stories of the good work you all are doing every day.

Let's keep sharing those stories—with our friends, with our neighbors, with our lawmakers.

Your platform may be at your local school, on social media, or at the market. Every story makes a difference as we build on the trust the public has placed in us.

We have a great story to tell, and there's an eager audience waiting to hear it. ■

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

had several presentations on water agreements, both current and upcoming, and also addressed what is being done and what needs to be done to protect our current water infrastructure, including the lower four Snake River dams.

The heart of the annual meeting of course is when IFBF's grassroots members get together during the House of Delegates session to set the policy that will direct this organization throughout 2023.

This same process takes place in January when national Farm Bureau policy will be set through American Farm Bureau Federation.

The IFBF and AFBF policy books provide the marching orders for our volunteer members and professional staff as they work to implement the policies that our grassroots members have adopted.

*'The success of agriculture brings strength
and success to the state and our elected
officials need to know that.'*

Each of those policies must originate at the county level and they are voted on by real farmers and ranchers who understand better than anyone how the various issues included in our policy book affect agriculture.

This policy implementation is a year-long process where issues are discussed at a local level by county Farm Bureau members. Once passed at the county level, these policies are discussed and vetted at the district and then state level.

The policies are ultimately accepted or rejected by Farm Bureau members during the House of Delegates session, but I think it's important for people to understand that

we don't just show up and vote on these policies at our convention.

A lot of discussions and homework on each policy has been done before we get to that point.

A lot of hard work by grassroots members went into adopting a final IFBF 2023 policy book.

Now it's time to begin working diligently to try to ensure those policies are implemented.

This requires engagement by the IFBF and AFBF professional and volunteer staff and, most importantly, by our grassroots members.

It's one thing for an elected official to

hear from a Farm Bureau employee why an issue is important to the state's agricultural industry. It's quite another to hear it first-hand from a real farmer or rancher whose livelihood is affected by that issue.

That's why I continue to encourage every farmer and rancher in the state to become and remain engaged with their elected officials, at the local, state and federal level.

They need to hear from you and they need to have a real-life understanding of how the issues they vote on will impact the state's most important industry, agriculture.

According to a University of Idaho

study, agriculture accounts directly and indirectly for one in every eight jobs in the state, as well as 13 percent of Idaho's total gross state product and 18 percent of total sales within the state.

The success of agriculture brings strength and success to the state and our elected officials need to know that.

With our policy book in hand, we now have a real opportunity to engage with our elected officials and make sure our voices are heard.

Don't be shy about reaching out to these elected officials because you are their constituents and, believe me, they know

that. They represent you and need to be held accountable by hearing directly from you, not just the people you have selected to represent you within the Farm Bureau organization.

As we march into 2023, I would strongly encourage each one of you to become and remain engaged in helping to implement Farm Bureau policy.

Remember, if we're not at the table we will probably be on the table.

You can view the IFBF and AFBF 2023 policy books on the IFBF website at idahofb.org. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

When that remarkable individual recruits others to help him or her, tremendous success is achievable. The synergy of many is one of the most significant economic accelerators.

The most successful farms and ranches are teams working together to plant, grow, and harvest.

This publication and many more often rightfully praise the value and blessing of an agricultural lifestyle and the lessons it can teach to both old and young.

Agriculture is rarely the easiest career choice one can make. Most ag workers must deal with long hours, variable work conditions, and significant weather considerations.

As time has marched on in this country, fewer Americans have chosen to own farms, and the same is true of those willing to work on farms.

One of the blessings of our society is freedom. As people have experienced more freedom and options, they have the luxury of choice. Workers today can choose their occupations and opportunities.

For farmers to compete, they have adapted to our modern workforce's demands with competitive pay scales and work environments to maintain a steady force. Farm work is not a minimum-wage, low-skilled environment.

Despite the significant effort farmers continue to exert in recruiting and staffing their farms, often there are still not enough willing local workers available to fill the need.

Many of our fellow citizens are unwilling to perform the work a farm requires even though the farm's pay may be greater than what they currently receive.

This is not new; foreign workers have filled the farm worker gap for many years. Fearmongering, disingenuous politicians often claim that foreign workers are stealing American jobs.

I cannot speak to the entire American workforce, but when it comes to agriculture, such a claim is so ridiculous that it can't even be considered comical.

'Finding enough farm laborers is the greatest challenge farmers and ranchers across this nation face. Like a single ant, a single farmer without a team becomes very vulnerable.'

U.S. agricultural employers' primary access to foreign labor is the H-2A guest worker visa program. This program allows foreign workers to come to the United States to work in a seasonal occupation: picking apples, moving sprinkler pipe, growing potatoes, picking berries, etc.

I have yet to meet a farmer who uses the system that also likes it. It is a costly, challenging program to use.

It also excludes sectors, such as the dairy industry, that need year-round workers. In Idaho, the third largest dairy state, that is a significant problem.

Regardless, it is the only option available.

Finding enough farm laborers is the greatest challenge farmers and ranchers across this nation face. Like a single ant, a single farmer without a team becomes very vulnerable.


Many people have been working for years to find solutions to this challenge. Our nation's current agriculture workforce policy is cumbersome, expensive, and inadequate.

It also harms our farmers, ranchers, and the good, hard-working people on those farms and ranches and their families.

Much work has been done for years to try to solve the labor issues plaguing our farmers. The Idaho Dairymen's Association has been a passionate leader among many others.

You can also be proud of the tireless efforts of your Idaho Farm Bureau Federation president, Bryan Searle, and the IFBF staff, on this issue.

The Idaho Farm Bureau is much like an ant. It will not stop working until our farmers and ranchers have a real labor solution. ■



Southeastern Idaho is a mecca of quinoa production and processing

By Dianna Troyer
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Teton Mills in Idaho Falls is satisfying a steadily growing demand nationwide for quinoa, an edible seed that is considered a grain.

“Farmers in eastern Idaho are by far and away growing the most quinoa acres in the U.S. at 4,000 to 5,000 acres,” said Adrian Garza, general manager at Teton Mills, where the crop is processed. “Our region’s dry, cool climate is ideal for raising quinoa.”

He said shipments have increased dramatically in the past year. “At the beginning of 2021, we were shipping about 60,000 pounds of quinoa monthly, then by October 2021, we started averaging 400,000 pounds a month,” Garza said.

The company ships statewide and nationwide to wholesalers in California, Ohio, Virginia, and Canada.

“Most of our quinoa is milled into flour or made into noodles,” Garza said. “About 25 percent is packed for retail sales, either to serve on food trays or in microwaveable packages.”

He attributes quinoa’s increasing popularity to consumers seeking a gluten-free, nutrient-dense food that is often used as a rice

substitute. It has all nine essential amino acids.

“It’s high in protein and fiber and is packed with minerals and vitamins,” he said.

Domesticated about 5,000 years ago in the Andes and called “the mother grain” by

Incas, quinoa has been a staple in South American diets for centuries. Although considered a grain, it’s technically a seed and has a nutty, buttery flavor.

With more than 100 varieties, quinoa grows in a rainbow of colors. Red, black and white are the most prevalent colors grown commercially.

Quinoa was first raised commercially in the U.S. in Colorado’s San Luis Valley in the 1980s, according to the Agricultural Resource Marketing Center. It has struggled to gain traction nationwide due to issues with weed control, finding markets, processing it to remove the bitter outer coating, and competing with South American farmers, who have raised it inexpensively for centuries.

A dozen farmers contract with Teton Mills.

“It’s definitely a win-win commodity on all counts,” Garza said. “There are no downsides to growing it. It grows well on dryland

farms at high elevation where the growing season is short. It can withstand frost. It doesn't need to be irrigated, although some farmers do. It's also a good rotation crop and puts nutrients into the soil."

About 90 percent of the quinoa processed at Teton Mills is the Kailey variety, which produces a plump white kernel and has low amounts of saponin, a bitter outer coating that discourages birds and insects from eating it.

"Our cleaning process removes the small amounts of saponin," Garza said.

The Kailey variety was developed and grown by Jeremiah Clark after a family member was diagnosed with gluten intolerance. Clark, a third-generation grain farmer and owner of a seed cleaning company, Clark Seed, began raising quinoa in 2013.

He developed several varieties, eventually selecting the most promising one and naming it after his oldest daughter, Kailey.

He established a network of farmers from St. Anthony south to Burley and east to Montpelier to grow quinoa, including Wyatt Penfold of Driggs.

Anticipating a growing market for quinoa, Clark and Penfold built a 2,400-square-foot processing plant in 2015. Four years later, as demand steadily increased, they built a 5,000-square-foot processing plant.

Wanting to focus on developing more quinoa strains, Clark sold the plant to Penfold and Wada Farms in 2020. The new

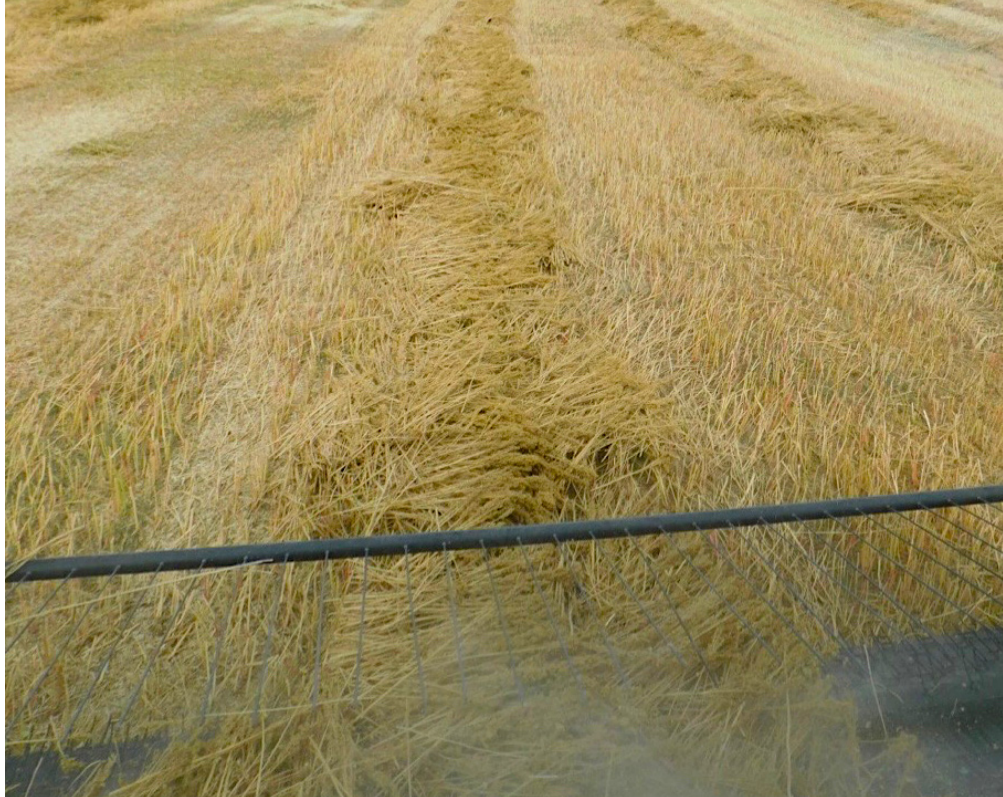


Photo courtesy of Teton Mills

To harvest the crop at Wada Farms, it is first cut and swathed.

partners renamed the plant Teton Mills.

"I'm growing more quinoa varieties to release," Clark said. "While I was breeding lines a few years ago, there were several promising lines that I didn't finish back-crossing. Once they are at seven generations, I'll release them."

To help farmers grow a profitable quinoa crop, the University of Idaho conducted several studies. It thrives with water input at 10 to 15 inches a year, either from irrigation or seasonal rainfall. With about 18 inches of water, quinoa yielded 3,300 pounds per acre. Yields were 940 pounds per acre with 7 inches of water.

Recommended nitrogen rates range from 90 to 135 pounds per acre.

To control weeds, researchers recommend using Syngenta's Dual Magnum with both pre-emergence and post-emergence applications or planting rows closely together to prevent weed growth.

Wada Farms, based in Pingree, has grown quinoa since 2018 when a test plot was planted.

With potatoes as the operation's mainstay, "we started raising quinoa because we like to try different crops for our rotation schedule," said Dallas Ward, chief financial officer for Wada Farms.

"It's a challenging crop to grow with specific windows for planting and harvesting," he said. "It requires cool temperatures, so it can only be grown in certain areas of the farm. Depending on demand, we grow 400 to 900 acres annually."

Generally in mid-April to early-May, when soil temperatures are 45 to 50 degrees, it is planted in rows spaced about 6 inches apart, enabling the quinoa's canopy to block weed growth.

"We use a special planter to control the density," Ward said.

Ideally it should flower before summer temperatures reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

To harvest it in mid-September, it is swathed, then picked up with a combine. Depending upon the growing season, the yield can vary between 600 to 1,500 pounds per acre.

Garza is optimistic about quinoa's future in southeastern Idaho.

"We hope to triple in volume," he said. "Our capacity is 20 million pounds annually. We're definitely on an upward trajectory." ■



LEFT: Adrian Garza, general manager at Teton Mills in Idaho Falls, says quinoa production and processing is on an upward trajectory in southeastern Idaho. The plant has a processing capacity of 20 million pounds annually.

Photo by Kathy Neville

300 attend Idaho Farm Bureau's 83rd annual meeting

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – During Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 83rd annual meeting, president Bryan Searle exhorted members to continue to defend and promote agriculture.

"In agriculture ... today, we're facing more challenges than I think we've ever faced," he said. "We can't sit idle."

It's up to farmers and ranchers themselves to defend agriculture and ensure the industry is strong for this and future generations, said Searle, who farms near Shelley.

The Farm Bureau organization provides agricultural producers an opportunity to unite as one voice and do just that, he said.

From the county to the state level, Farm Bureau is recognized as a unified organization that speaks for farmers, Searle said.

"Keep that in mind: We are the voice of agriculture," he said. "We're looked at and respected in the Statehouse as the voice of agriculture. They come to us why? Because we have voices in every county in this state."

More than 11,000 farmers and ranchers in the state are members of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and together, they can and do make a difference, Searle said.

"It's (about) all of us coming together for the good of agriculture so that we can go forward and continue to be a stronger voice for agriculture," he said. "I thank you for all that you do. You are the best of the best."

Three hundred people attended IFBF's annual meeting, which was held Dec. 6-8 in Boise.

In addition to Farm Bureau members from across the state, industry partners from other ag groups, legislators, state officials and representatives of Idaho's congressional delegation also attended the event.



Photos by James Gallacci

Garrett Barnes, a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, introduces the finalists in IFBF's annual Discussion Meet: From left to right: Jaysa Fillmore, who won the event; Denton Perkins; Barnes; Dallin Greer; and Mitchell Searle

Gov. Brad Little, a farmer and rancher, addressed meeting participants by video and vowed to continue his support of the state's agriculture and natural resource industries.

"The agriculture and natural resources industries are a big part of the Idaho way of life and always will be," he said. "As governor, I will continue to do what I can to support these industries."

Searle reminded participants that it's the state's county Farm Bureau organizations that are the backbone of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

He likened the Farm Bureau organization to a rocket that functions perfectly only when all of its components are working and said that with Farm Bureau, it all starts at the county level.

"When county Farm Bureaus are strong, Idaho Farm Bureau is strong and when the state is strong, American Farm Bureau is

strong and our voice is heard and recognized," Searle said.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation CEO Zak Miller told meeting participants that the organization's grassroots members, real farmers and ranchers, set the direction for IFBF and the job of IFBF staff is to help them succeed.

"Staff is an asset to help you accomplish what your goals are," he said. "Our job is to help you achieve the direction you are looking toward to succeed."

Todd Argall, CEO of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho, told meeting participants the financial condition of the company is strong and improving. He also said the same is true of the relationship between the insurance company and Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

"We view our relationship with the federation as critical," he said. "A strong federation leads to a strong insurance

company and a strong insurance company leads to a strong federation.”

The annual meeting included several learning sessions, including ones on managed aquifer recharge, increasing a farm’s profitability, and farm safety.

For the first time, a Joint Water Seminar was hosted during the meeting, by IFBF, Idaho Grain Producers Association and Idaho Water Users Association.

Presenters discussed the Nez Perce Water Agreement and gave updates on the discussion about the lower four Snake River dams, which are critical to agriculture in the region but continue to be targeted for removal by some groups.

Water attorney Norm Semanko provided a brief overview of the complicated history of the Nez Perce Water Agreement and reminded people that the term of the 30-year agreement ends in 2034.

The agreement was reached in 2004 and settled the Nez Perce tribe’s water rights claims in the Snake River basin.

State, private, tribal and U.S. representatives worked for several years to develop terms of the agreement that provided mutual benefits to the tribes, as well as Snake River water users.

Robust discussion for and against the agreement occurred and included busloads of people from around the state showing up for public hearings, Semanko said.

“The Farm Bureau played an immensely important role fostering the public discussion around (the agreement) and allowing the decision-makers to make an informed decision,” he said.

A roundtable of water experts discussed the agreement and answered questions.

It’s important for people to understand the issue and why the agreement was reached “because 12 years will come fast and you’ll have (a) decision to make,” said water attorney John Simpson.

“We need to start talking now about what is going to happen” when the agreement expires, said Garrick Baxter, who deals with water issues for the Idaho attorney general’s office.

Searle said the water seminar was long overdue.

“It’s no secret we’re all here because of your concern about water,” he said. “It’s our lifeblood in Idaho. We need more of these



Members of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s House of Delegates prepare to debate proposed changes to the organization’s policy book.

meetings ... to be proactive and protect our water here in Idaho.”

The heart of IFBF’s annual meeting is always the House of Delegates session, where representatives of county Farm Bureau organizations around Idaho discuss and vote on proposed changes to Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s policy book.

Every voting delegate is a bona fide farmer or rancher and the proposed policies are developed at the county level.

They are vetted and discussed before reaching the House of Delegates and then they are debated again before being voted on.

Water and wolves are always major topics of discussion during the House of Delegates.

This year, delegates voted down a proposal that would have supported legislation “that all water delivery entities be given five years to begin, develop and implement an aquifer recharge management plan with the Idaho Department of Water Resources.”

Opponents of the proposal argued it was unnecessary and too vague. Supporters said the proposal was meant to increase the dialogue and education about aquifer recharge.

“I don’t think it’s necessary; I don’t know where this is going,” said Dale Mortimer of Jefferson County. “It seems like more paperwork and regulations without specific direction.”

Delegates also voted against a proposal that supported “Improving efficiency of water management and delivery systems for the optimal use of Idaho’s water.”

Supporters of that proposed policy said it was intended to find ways to better

use Idaho’s limited water resources and ultimately ensure there is enough water for farmers and ranchers.

Again, opponents said it was too vague and they questioned who would measure what “efficiency” is.

Everyone agrees with water efficiency, “the problem is there is no way to measure this efficiency, and who does it?” said Tom Billington of Twin Falls County Farm Bureau. “‘Efficiency’ for one system may take another system out.”

The delegates voted in favor of a new policy that supports creating a state of Idaho employee to oversee and coordinate wolf and grizzly bear management efforts in the state among both state and federal agencies.

“In this case, we need a little more government,” said Phil Davis of Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau. “It’s appropriate the state of Idaho pay for an employee dealing with this.”

The delegates also supported a proposal that originated out of Caribou County that supports the “creation of a wildlife management system where property owners and Idaho Department of Fish and Game cooperatively manage wildlife, and income generated from that management unit be shared between both parties.”

Caribou County Farm Bureau President Lori Anne Lau said these types of agreements have been successful in Utah and seven other states and they recognize contributions made by private landowners to provide habitat on their land.

“It helps create a great revenue stream for these (landowners) and a cooperative system between fish and game, landowners and hunters,” she said. ■

EMPOWERING IDAHO AGRICULTURE



Photos by James Gallacci

Jim and Doris Pearson of Buhl, shown here with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, right, received IFBF's highest honor Dec. 8 during the group's annual meeting.

Idaho Farm Bureau presents several awards

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Jim and Doris Pearson of Buhl received Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's highest honor Dec. 8 during the group's annual meeting.

The Pearsons, who owned and operated a dairy and grew their own corn and alfalfa before retiring last year, were presented IFBF's President's Cup Award, which goes to an individual or individuals who have committed themselves to the organization.

"It's the highest award we award and it recognizes individuals for their outstanding service to Farm Bureau," IFBF President Bryan Searle said before presenting the Pearsons with the honor.

He said the award doesn't mean the person's service to Farm Bureau is necessarily over. "It just means they are recognized for the many, many years of service and the difference it's made to our organization."

Searle said when he thinks of the Pearsons, "I think of the

words 'unselfish servants.' That's who they are. They have served and served. They have been dedicated and committed their lives to help others and this great organization and agriculture. They are truly just wonderful people."

The Pearsons have been involved with Farm Bureau since the 1980s.

"We were very surprised and honored to be given this award," Jim Pearson said. "We just appreciate Farm Bureau and the things they do. We'd like to thank our Farm Bureau family for this prestigious award."

"Over the years, we've met many very good people and many of them have become lifelong friends," he added.

Several other awards were presented during the meeting, which took place Dec. 6-8 in Boise.

Andrew Mickelsen, who farms in Roberts, was presented with IFBF's Achiever Award, which recognizes young farmers or ranchers who have excelled in their farming or ranching operation and honed their leadership abilities.



TOP: Jaysa Fillmore from Filer won Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual Discussion Meet, which helps young producers hone their public speaking and problem-solving skills during a competition that is meant to simulate a committee meeting rather than a debate. She is shown here in the center receiving her award plaque.

ABOVE: Chase and Lacy Neilson of Moore received Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Excellence in Agriculture Award, which spotlights young Farm Bureau members who are agricultural enthusiasts but have not earned a majority of their income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in the past three years. They are shown here, second and third from right, with their award plaque.

Mickelsen is a sixth-generation Idaho potato farmer who grows seed potatoes and Idaho spuds for the fresh market.

Chase and Lacy Neilson of Moore received IFBF's Excellence in Agriculture Award, which spotlights young Farm Bureau members who are agricultural enthusiasts but have not earned a majority of their income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in the past three years.

The Neilsons operate a farm and cattle ranch in eastern Idaho. Chase also works as an agronomist and Lacy as a seamstress and stay-at-home mom. They are chairmen of their local Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers program.

The Achiever and Excellence awards are both part of IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, which is open to Farm Bureau members between the ages of 18 and 35.

Achiever award contestants are evaluated on a combination of

their farming operation's grown and financial progress and their leadership both within Farm Bureau and outside of the organization.

Contestants give a presentation to a panel of judges, who ask them questions.

Competitors for the Excellence award are judged based on their understanding of ag issues as well as their leadership experiences and achievements.

Jaysa Fillmore from Filer won IFBF's annual Discussion Meet, which helps young producers hone their public speaking and problem-solving skills during a competition that is meant to simulate a committee meeting rather than a debate.

IFBF also presented awards to Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho agents.

Walt Dinning of Boundary County received an Agent of the Year award.

According to one of his nomination letters, "Walt has been a huge advocate for Farm Bureau for over 40 years. His commitment to our county and state (Farm Bureau) organization is evident in his past and present engagement ... I would say that apart from the county (Farm Bureau) board activities, Walt Dinning is the face of Farm Bureau in Boundary County"

Kent Jeppesen of Cassia County was named District Manager of the Year. He regularly attends county Farm Bureau board meetings throughout IFBF's District III, which encompasses Idaho's Magic Valley.

One of his nomination letters said that "he is always making sacrifices to attend as many county (Farm Bureau) board meetings as possible to help answer any insurance questions there may be."

Blake Van Etten of Butte County was named Rookie Agent of the Year.

According to one of his nomination letters, "Blake has created multiple new member benefits in our small community. He has helped in the planning for Young Farmers and Ranchers events and recruitment. He has sponsored local events, which is bringing attention to the Farm Bureau name." ■



Andrew Mickelsen, who farms in Roberts, was presented with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Achiever Award, which recognizes young farmers or ranchers who have excelled in their farming or ranching operation and honed their leadership abilities. He is shown here in the center receiving his award plaque.



Photos by Sean Ellis

Idaho's dairy industry had a solid financial year in 2022 but the industry faces a lot of challenges heading into 2023. However, there are also a lot of opportunities for the U.S. and Idaho milk industry.

Idaho dairy industry faces challenges but also 'incredible' opportunities

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Idaho's top agricultural commodity – dairy – faces a lot of challenges and headwinds, including a dramatically increased cost of production.

But the Idaho and U.S. milk industry also has some tremendous opportunities.

That was one of the main messages delivered during Dairy West's annual meeting, which was held Nov. 9-10 in Boise.

"You all are seeing unprecedented market volatility and pricing constraints," Dairy West CEO Karianne Fallow told several hundred dairy industry members during the event. At the same time, she added, "Incredible opportunities lie ahead for the dairy

industry."

Fallow said milk producers are facing a lot of headwinds, including supply chain constraints and soaring production costs.

The nation's dairy industry also faces a rise in the introduction of alternative meats, lab proteins and cultured dairy products, which are all becoming more mainstream.

Despite those challenges, she added, U.S. dairy consumption is at its highest level ever, at 667 pounds per person.

"Ninety-six percent of households in the U.S. have dairy in their home; that's a lot," she said.

U.S. dairy exports are at a very healthy level and inching higher, and volumes of plant-based alternatives are on the decline, Fallow said.

She said farmers continue to rank very high on surveys that

measure trust. “Inspiring Trust” was the theme of this year’s Dairy West meeting.

“I hope you will continue to trust that you produce the healthiest, most delicious, most affordable protein in the world and consumers know it,” Fallow said. “They are drawn to your products every day.”

Dairy is Idaho’s No. 1 agricultural commodity in terms of total farm-gate receipts and the state’s 376 dairies brought in an estimated \$4.2 billion in revenue during 2022.

The prices that Idaho dairy operations received for their milk touched record levels for part of the year and the state’s dairy industry enjoyed a profitable 2022, said Idaho Dairymen’s Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout.

But, he added, the cost to produce milk has soared and dairymen have a wary eye on what this next year will bring financially.

While the break-even cost of milk production in the state was around \$16.50 per hundred pounds a couple years ago, it’s closer to \$22 now, he said.

“The average dairy producer made good money in 2022,” Naerebout said. “Overall, they’re going to be in the black and had a pretty healthy year.”

However, he added, with feed costs up substantially and farm-gate milk prices trending downward, there is a lot of concern about 2023.

“How much of that profit from 2022 are they going to give back and what does it look like for 2023?” Naerebout said. “We just don’t know. That’s what has a lot of guys concerned. The margin hasn’t elevated with the increased risk it’s taking just to produce milk.”

There are about 650,000 milk cows in Idaho and they have to be fed and it’s gotten a lot more expensive for dairies to do that.

“The award is generally given to dairy farmers who have had tenure, have a great reputation for the businesses they run, and who are committed in terms of their service to the industry and the community.”

- Karianne Fallow, Dairy West CEO



Several hundred people attended Dairy West’s annual meeting, which was held Nov. 9-10 in Boise.

Cost of production has elevated at a pretty aggressive pace and a lot of that is related to feed costs, Naerebout said.

More than half the average milk check for dairies goes to feed and because most dairies have locked in feed costs, there isn’t a lot of opportunity for them to drop in the near-term.

“There’s just a lot of uncertainty about how this next year will shape up and what that will mean for our dairy families,” he said.

Dairy West was formerly known as United Dairymen of Idaho and now represents

milk producers in Idaho and Utah. It was created five years ago with the goal of expanding the market reach of Idaho’s dairy industry.

“Consumers in a lot of ways don’t see state borders any more on digital mediums, so we can really take advantage of

that,” Fallow said. “Dairy farmers in Idaho and Utah now share a single staff, a single budget and we can do things more effectively and have a bigger impact because we can do it consistently across the region.”

Awards

During the Dairy West meeting, Frank Veenstra of Hagerman was inducted into the Idaho Dairy Hall of Fame and Scott Wayment of Ogden was inducted into the Utah Dairy Hall of Fame.

Fallow said the Hall of Fame is a legacy award.

“The award is generally given to dairy farmers who have had tenure, have a great reputation for the businesses they run, and who are committed in terms of their service to the industry and the community,” she said.

Fryslan Dairy of Marsing was presented the industry’s 2022 Idaho Milk Quality Award.

This award is based on a dairy’s routine monthly tests for somatic cell counts, which are an indicator of quality, and bacteria counts, which reflect the cleanliness of cows and the facility.

All of Idaho’s dairy’s produce quality milk but “this award is given to the crème of the crop,” Fallow said. ■

Idaho set a record for total agricultural export value in 2021

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – For the second straight year, Idaho set a record for total agricultural export value in 2021.

According to recently released USDA data, a total of \$2.55 billion worth of agricultural products from Idaho were exported to other countries last year.

That was a 9 percent increase over the 2020 total of \$2.34 billion, which was also a record at the time.

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor pointed out the increase came despite the fact Idaho and U.S. producers face a significant headwind in the form of a strong U.S. dollar, which makes domestic products less competitive in the global marketplace.

“We have a super-strong dollar against a lot of currencies and that’s a monster headwind,” he said.

Drought, supply chain disruptions, ongoing West Coast port issues and rapidly rising input costs are also major headwinds for Idaho farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses, Taylor said.

“It’s truly amazing that we’ve bucked those headwinds,” he said.

While the total value of Idaho ag exports increased by 9 percent in 2020, that increase lagged the 18 percent increase in total U.S. agricultural export value last year, pointed out Doug Robison, the Idaho president for Northwest Farm Credit Services.

The total value of U.S. agricultural exports reached a record \$173 billion in 2021, up from \$147 billion in 2020. The previous U.S. record was \$150 billion in 2014.

A lot of the Idaho increase in total ag export value in 2021 had to do with substantially higher commodity prices.

But not all of it.

“I think it largely had to do with price



Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are planted in a Bingham County field last year. A record \$2.55 billion worth of agricultural products were exported from Idaho to other nations in 2021.

but we couldn’t hit that type of number without a big chunk of quantity, too,” Taylor said.

Dairy was the state’s top agricultural commodity in 2021 in terms of total export value, as a record \$558 million worth of dairy products from Idaho were sold to other nations last year. That was a 17 percent increase over the previous record of \$476 million set in 2020.

Idaho beef product exports totaled a record \$241 million in 2021, a 26 percent increase over 2020 and 12 percent more than the previous record of \$215 million set in 2018.

Idaho in 2021 exported a record \$349 million worth of products in the processed vegetables category, which includes frozen potato products. That was a 21 percent increase over 2020 and 7 percent more than the previous record for that category of \$325 million set in 2019.

Idaho in 2021 exported a record \$173

million worth of products in the fresh vegetable category, which includes potatoes. That was up 16 percent from 2020 and 2 percent more than the previous record of \$170 million set in 2019.

Idaho grain product exports were down in value in 2021, likely a result of the significantly reduced grain yields experienced in the state last year due to severe drought conditions.

Idaho wheat exports were valued at \$344 million in 2021, down 11 percent from 2020 and well off the record of \$563 million set in 2011.

Idaho exported \$60 million worth of products in the processed grain category last year, down 23 percent from 2020.

A record \$1.63 billion worth of plant products were exported from Idaho in 2021, a 3 percent increase over 2020, and a record \$918 million worth of animal products were exported from the state in 2021, up 22 percent over 2020. ■

TOP TEN

Continued from page 3

Potatoes kept the No. 3 spot and remained Idaho's top crop with a total value of production of \$1.12 billion in 2021. That was a 14 percent increase over the 2020 total and a record, surpassing the previous high of \$1.04 billion set in 2019.

Hay came in at No. 4 with \$946 million in total production value 2021, an increase of 16 percent over 2020, and wheat ranked No. 5 in the state with a total value of production of \$529 million, down 8 percent from the previous year.

The NASS value of production report differs slightly from farm cash receipt rankings because the value of production rankings include those parts of a crop that are used on the farm and not sold. For example, a lot of hay is used on the farm and does not show up in the rankings for farm cash receipts, which is the money producers receive for their product.

That's why wheat ranks ahead of hay in the Idaho farm cash receipts rankings.

Those top 5 commodities – milk, cattle and calves, potatoes, hay and wheat – had a combined value of \$7.1 billion, which accounted for 85 percent of the state's 2021 production value for all ag commodities.

Those same five commodities accounted for 79 percent of the total value of Idaho agricultural production in 2020.

Rounding out the Top 10 Idaho ag commodities list in 2021 were sugar beets at No. 6 with \$361 million, down 1 percent from 2020, barley (\$239 million, down 12 percent), corn for grain (\$149 million, up 20 percent), hops (\$104 million, up 5 percent) and onions (\$64 million, up 11 percent).

The total value of Idaho hop production topped \$100 million for the first time last year and that Idaho ag commodity has increased in total value for nine straight years.

Idaho ranked No. 1 in the nation in five different ag commodity categories last year: potatoes, barley, alfalfa hay, peppermint oil and food-size trout.

The state ranked No. 2 in the United States last year in sugar beets and hops, No. 3 in milk and cheese production and total milk cows, No. 4 in dry onions, spring wheat and lentils, and No. 5 in dry edible beans, corn silage and dry edible peas.

Idaho ranked in the top 8 nationally in 22 different ag commodity categories in 2021.

Idaho took over the No. 1 spot in the U.S. in 2020 for alfalfa hay production, which is probably no big surprise given the state's sizable milk and cattle industries. Idaho ranked No. 3 in that category in 2019, behind Montana and California.

Idaho ranks No. 3 nationally in total number of milk cows and No. 11 in cattle and calves.

Idaho is a big cattle state and alfalfa hay plays a major role in feeding those animals, said Twin Falls County farmer Larry Hollifield.

"We have a lot of animals to feed in Idaho," he said.

The state's cooler climate makes Idaho a great place to grow alfalfa hay, said Bannock County hay farmer Fred Burmester. And in East Idaho, the higher altitude is also favorable to growing hay, he added.

"That's where you get your quality from, the higher altitude," he said. Between the cooler nights and higher altitude, "that brings the relative feed value of your hay up."

"It has a lot to do with the weather," said Twin Falls County farmer Rick Pearson. "It's because of our climate – warm days and cool nights." ■



The total value of agricultural production in Idaho increased by half a percent in 2021 compared with 2020.



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Photos by Chris Schnepf

Landowners learning about herbicide application during a University of Idaho “10 Acres and a Dream” class. Most new owners of small acreages want to learn how to care for their lands responsibly.

Ten Acres and a Dream

By Chris Schnepf
University of Idaho

Idaho and many other rural areas of the western United States have always been destinations for people looking to escape more densely populated regions – both here and abroad.

Land ownership and culture have deep roots in the American psyche, celebrated by many American leaders and writers.

For example, Thomas Jefferson noted, “Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people whose breasts He has made his particular deposit for substantial and particular virtue.”

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold noted that, “There are two spiritual dangers to not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery. The other is that heat comes from the furnace.”

More recently, Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer and winner of the National Humanities Medal, noted, “The small family farm is one of the last places . . . where men and women (and girls and boys, too) can answer that call to be an artist, to learn to give

love to the work of their hands. It is one of the last places where the maker – and some farmers still do talk about “making the crops” – is responsible, from start to finish, for the thing made. This certainly is a spiritual value, but it is not for that reason an impractical or uneconomic one.”

Public lands get a lot of discussion in Idaho and rightly so, given how much of Idaho is in public ownership. But private lands, including lands owned by forest product companies, live quite large in many of Idaho’s counties.

For example, in Kootenai County, 62% of all lands are private, and in Benewah County that figure is 78%.

Idaho’s private land parcels range in size from several thousands of acres to as little as a few acres. Sometimes smaller acreages, whether they are growing trees or crops, tend to be dismissed.

But in aggregate, private lands are very important in many areas of the state. For example, 28% of northern Idaho’s timber supply is harvested from family forests.

Private lands are critical to water, wildlife and many other shared values. Private land parcels also tend to be more concentrated near key locations for ecosystem functions (e.g., along

lakes, streams and in increasingly rare low-elevation wildlife habitats).

The number of people seeking to move into these areas has increased in recent years. Additional small parcels of land have become available as timber companies have been selling more of their lands, especially smaller parcels that are disconnected from the larger parcels they own and manage.

Idaho Master Forest Stewards – University of Idaho Extension volunteers who do 70 hours of training to provide peer outreach to forest owners and others – have had more and more interaction with these new Idaho landowners.

They get many questions from new landowners about a whole range of issues in addition to forestry.

Based on those interactions, Idaho Master Forest Stewards helped us develop a new University of Idaho Extension program for newer, smaller acreage landowners titled, “Ten Acres and a Dream.”

Some of the content for the program is focused on simple questions that many long-time rural Idahoans take for granted.

For example, what is the best way to connect with neighbors? How do you develop water sources? How do you care for your land responsibly?

Many of these smaller landowners are part of a renewed “homesteading” movement – people who want to get more of their food and some income from their own lands.

Therefore, in addition to having content on the basics of rural landownership,

“Ten Acres and a Dream” introduces participants to fundamental principles and techniques for growing their own food



Participants in a University of Idaho “10 Acres and a Dream” program in St. Maries. Many newcomers to Idaho are eager to learn how they can live on their small acreages sustainably.

and meat and managing their forests.

“Ten Acres and a Dream” is also an opportunity for new landowners to connect with peer local landowners who have similar interests to theirs and learn about other educational resources to help them manage their lands to meet their goals.

We also provide a lot of direction on where they can find more detailed information to help them care for their land.

“Ten Acres and a Dream” has been very popular. Thus far we have had over 200 participants in person and at least as many participants in online offerings of the program held when COVID was limiting public gatherings.

We are currently working on a companion publication for the program tentatively titled, “Living Rural in North Idaho,” to introduce readers to basic tenets of rural living; wildfire risk reduction; basic principles of forestry, gardening, small scale livestock; water quality; weed control; and living with wildlife.

Much of the content for this publication will flow from our experiences teaching “Ten Acres and Dream” and from the many, many questions extension offices field from new rural acreage owners.

But if you are a new rural acreage owner,

a local elected official, or work with small acreage owners, we always welcome additional ideas. Feel free to reach out to me at cshnepf@uidaho.edu or Gail Silkwood at gsilkwood@uidaho.edu.

If you are interested in attending “Ten Acres and Dream,” the next offering of it will be held at the University of Idaho Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center on Saturday, May 13.

Registration details about the program will be posted on the University of Idaho Extension web site no later than six weeks prior to the program.

Small rural acreages are vital to the economy, ecology, and vitality of rural Idaho communities. They also provide a space where people can learn about the practicalities of agriculture and forestry, giving them a richer understanding of similar practices on larger ownerships as well.

We hope that our extension programming in this area supports those values as effectively as possible. ■

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

FARE Idaho to hold first Field to Fork Festival

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



FARE Idaho, an organization that formed during the pandemic year of 2020 with the goal of helping independent restaurants and farmers, will hold its inaugural Field to Fork Festival in January. The main goal of the event is to bring the state's farmers and independent restaurant owners together so they can find solutions to challenges that both sides face. Photo by Sean Ellis

BOISE – FARE Idaho will hold its inaugural Field to Fork Festival in January with the aim of bringing the state’s farmers and independent restaurant owners together so they can find solutions to challenges that both sides face.

Other members of the state’s food and beverage industry are also invited to the Jan. 19 festival, which FARE plans to make into an annual event.

The trade fair will be an all-day event held at the JUMP (Jack’s Urban Meeting Place) facility in downtown Boise.

FARE Idaho was formed in spring 2020 with the goal of connecting Idaho food producers with Idaho food and beverage retailers in order to build a more resilient food system, said executive director Katie Baker.

FARE stands for food, agriculture, restaurant and beverage establishments.

The main goal of the non-profit organization is to help farmers and ranchers sell more product more directly to independent restaurants, Baker said.

A major goal of the Field to Fork Festival, she said, is to try to facilitate that by introducing Idaho farmers and ranchers directly to representatives of independent restaurants and other food retailers.

The festival will include a trade fair in the morning where that can happen.

“Our main goal with this festival is to advocate for the farmer all the way up to the people that support them, the independent businesses such as restaurants and beverage establishments,” said FARE Idaho board member Dave Krick, who owns three restaurants in downtown Boise. “This trade show is a great opportunity to bring these two sides together.”

One of the results of the COVID shutdowns is that “a lot of our retailers have actually said it’s harder to source nationally, so they want to start sourcing more local product,” Baker said. “I had a restaurant owner ... say to me, ‘Look, I don’t want to source anything nationally anymore. I want to get as much as I can from Idaho. I’m sick of the supply chain disruptions.’”

The festival will include chef-led classes using locally sourced ingredients and highlighting local food producers.

It will also include panel discussions led by people representing various links in the food system.

Both the chef-led classes and panel discussions will be free to the public.

“The goal is really to educate community members about the importance of sourcing locally and also, when you are able to meet your farmers, you have a direct connection with them and you want to source from them,” Baker said.

“The festival is an opportunity to build engagement among community members and help restaurants find more local food sources,” she added.

Krick said putting together a trade show “is challenging and this first one is probably going to be humble. Our goal is to grow it year to year.”

The trade fair will also be a celebration of Idaho’s farms and independent food and beverage businesses, said Rocci Johnson, the incoming president of FARE Idaho’s board of directors.

“We have a unique food and beverage industry in Idaho and one of the purposes of this event is coming together to celebrate it,” she said.

Johnson said FARE Idaho’s goal of strengthening the local food supply system is not meant in any way to compete with the Idaho agriculture industry’s existing supply chains and infrastructure.

“We’re just augmenting what our already great Idaho food and beverage industry is about,” she said.

“Our main goal with this festival is to advocate for the farmer all the way up to the people that support them, the independent businesses such as restaurants and beverage establishments. This trade show is a great opportunity to bring these two sides together.”

- Dave Krick, FARE Idaho board member

For more information about the trade fair or to register, visit the FARE Idaho website at fareidaho.org and click on the Events tab in the top left section of the homepage.

According to FARE, there are about 3,300 independent restaurants in Idaho.

FARE Idaho now has 300 members, including about 45 farmers.

The organization’s first year of existence was heavily focused on helping independent restaurants and beverage establishments survive the pandemic-related disruptions, Baker said.

A big focus of the group going forward will be on helping small and medium-sized farmers and ranchers, she added.

“We really want to help our farmers,” she said.

That includes educating them about tax credits and other resources they may not be aware of. The group is also working on livestock processing issues and health insurance options for producers.

FARE is in the pilot phase of setting up an online ordering program that connects retailers directly with producers.

“For a lot of farmers, the current ordering system is really archaic for both parties, the buyers and producers,” Baker said. “We are trying to figure out how FARE Idaho can simplify that process of sourcing locally.”

She said the organization hopes to take that online ordering system statewide within the next year. ■

Lime application study assesses looming soil threat

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

MOSCOW, Idaho – A northern Idaho farmer planted barley after a few years of raising Kentucky bluegrass. The barley seedlings grew to about 3 inches tall and then started to die.

The cause of the crop failure was apparent when the farmer checked the pH of his soil; it was 4.4, which is much too acidic for barley.

Growers throughout northern Idaho, especially those who plant barley, have reported similar experiences.

University of Idaho Extension barley agronomist Jared Spackman and UI Extension cropping systems agronomist Kurt Schroeder suspect many fields in the region that have historically been suitable for grain production but have been trending acidic are finally getting too far out of balance.

In parts of eastern Idaho, where soil acidity is also becoming a problem, Spackman has started a study on applying sugar beet lime, a byproduct of the sugar extraction process, as a means of raising soil pH, thereby improving crop health and keeping weeds in check.

Agricultural lime is typically composed of calcium carbonate. The carbonate reacts with acid in soil to neutralize it, and the calcium can benefit crops deficient in the nutrient.

Lime supply is limited in northern Idaho, adding to the cost of application for farmers needing to raise their soil pH, such as the barley grower who contacted Spackman about his lost barley crop.

“He’s running out of viable options for growing his rotation crops,” Spackman said. “I’m sure it’s becoming a more and more widespread issue, especially farms that were taken out of a forested system rather than prairies.”

Schroeder added, “Lime application will be challenging due to the cost and landowner arrangements, but it will eventually be about the only solution.”

A neutral soil has a pH reading of 7. Soil becomes more acidic as the number gets lower and more basic as it increases. At a low pH, microbial activity declines, interfering with nitrogen mineralization.

Some nutrients will leach below the rooting zone at a low pH, and some will bind to minerals, making them unavailable to plants.

Over time, soil pH may decline following nitrogen fertilizer applications, as nutrients are removed from the soil at harvest, and when excessive rainfall or irrigation leaches soil nutrients down the soil profile.



Submitted photo

Crops are planted in University of Idaho Extension cropping systems agronomist Kurt Schroeder’s trials in Moscow evaluating the effects of lime application.

Soil acidification in northern Idaho has been documented since the 1980s. Schroeder has been studying the issue in the region for the past 12 years, dating back to when he worked for USDA’s Agricultural Research Service in Pullman, Wash.

About eight years ago, shortly after Schroeder arrived in Idaho, he and Doug Finkelnburg, a UI Extension educator specializing in cropping systems, conducted a soil survey of northern Idaho. They found about 30 percent of soils sampled had a risk of aluminum toxicity due to low pH.

Schroeder screens wheat lines in his variety trials for tolerance to aluminum toxicity, and he’s convinced growers who may not be aware of the acidity problem are already sacrificing wheat yields.

Barley tends to be more sensitive than wheat to aluminum toxicity. Rather than addressing the pH problem, Schroeder has

found many growers in the region have simply stopped planting barley.

Schroeder is now in the sixth year of a liming trial examining how lime rates of 0, 1, 2 and 3 tons per acre at four northern Idaho sites affect rotations with cereal and legume crops.

“In addition to observing significant increases in soil pH and reductions in soluble aluminum, there has been an average yield increase of 14% and 19%,” Schroeder said.

Schroeder hopes to publish some Extension papers on the long-term benefits of liming based on his data. Though northern Idaho lacks an ample supply of affordable lime, some growers in the region have gotten lime from a former Amalgamated Sugar Co. plant in Moses Lake, Wash.

The Nez Perce Tribe has also discussed the possibility of mining and crushing limestone to supply area farmers.

Spackman is in the initial year of his study, funded by the Idaho Wheat Commission. It’s planned to last between three and five years.

Last fall, he applied lime at rates of 0, 2, 4 and 6 tons per acre at three irrigated commercial sites in Ashton, where farmers

“Most growers don’t necessarily see the impact of lime application until the year after because it can be slow to react. I’m interested in seeing how quickly the soil changes.”

- Jared Spackman, UI Extension barley agronomist

were transitioning from seed potatoes to wheat.

He also applied lime on a Swan Valley dryland field now planted in barley. Participating growers will manage their fields as they normally would.

Spackman has started gathering the first of many sets of soil samples to assess how his lime applications are changing soil pH. He’s taking samples at 2-inch increments down to a foot deep to monitor how pH varies by depth.

“Most growers don’t necessarily see the impact of lime application until the year after because it can be slow to react,” Spackman said. “I’m interested in seeing how quickly the soil changes.”

Farmers in the Ashton area haul in

lime from Amalgamated Sugar’s Magic Valley processing operations. It would be extremely costly to haul lime from Magic Valley all the way to northern Idaho.

Casey Chumrau, former executive director of the Idaho Wheat Commission, said Northern Idaho wheat farmers have been mentioning the issue lately as a concern.

“We always appreciate when the U of I researchers bring relevant topics for funding, and we know this is a growing issue across the state and it’s something we need to start finding creative solutions to resolve,” Chumrau said.

Spackman’s research should provide insight into how much each ton of lime can affect pH in various soil types, as well as how long the benefits may last.

Research on Montana dryland farms showed lime applied at 2.5 tons per acre could raise a soil pH from 4.7 to 6.0 with an expected remediation time of 15 to 20 years. Results could be significantly different on an irrigated farm in Idaho.

Furthermore, light-textured soils tend to need less lime to raise soil pH than heavier silt or clay loam soils.

Lime tends to move very little through the soil profile, and the more it’s mixed into the soil the faster it reacts.

Spackman anticipates lime applications will also reduce weed pressure, either by stymying weed development or by contributing to healthy crops that outcompete weeds. He’ll evaluate the weed response as part of his study. ■



University of Idaho Extension barley agronomist Jared Spackman, front, and research specialist Jacob Bevan pose with a pile of lime derived from processing sugar beets. They’ve applied lime to fields in the Ashton area of Eastern Idaho as part of a research project. Submitted photo

Total U.S. farm cash receipts estimated up 24 percent in 2022

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Total U.S. farm cash receipts are forecast to increase 24 percent in 2022 compared with 2021.

But total farm production expenses are also expected to be way up this year compared with last year, according to USDA's Economic Research Service's "2022 Farm Sector Income Forecast," which was released Dec. 1.

Total cash receipts from the sale of agricultural commodities in the U.S. is forecast to reach \$541.5 billion this year, which is \$105.7 billion or 24 percent more than the 2021 total.

This is a record for farm cash receipts in the United States and follows an 18 percent increase in total farm cash receipts in the U.S. in 2021.

However, farm production expenses in the U.S. have also soared this year, which has had an impact on net farm income, which is the farmer's paycheck.

According to the USDA farm income forecast for 2022, total farm production expenses in the U.S. are forecast to increase by \$70 billion this year – 19 percent higher than 2021 – to \$442 billion.

The \$70 billion increase in farm production expenses represents the largest year-over-year increase on record.

Nearly every category of expenses is forecast to be up significantly this year.

"The growth in production expenses is exceeding inflation," USDA officials said Dec. 1 during a webinar outlining the highlights of the 2022 Farm Sector Income Forecast.

According to the USDA-ERS forecast, expenses for fertilizer and soil conditioners are forecast to be up 47 percent this year compared with 2021, and feed expenses are forecast to be up by 17 percent.

Interest expenses are up 41 percent and



Photo by Sean Ellis

Dry beans are harvested in a field near Wilder in 2022. Total cash receipts from the sale of agricultural commodities in the U.S. is forecast to be up 24 percent in 2022 compared with 2021. Most of the increase is due to higher commodity prices.

fuel and oil expenses are up 47 percent

So, while total U.S. farm cash receipts increased by an estimated 24 percent this year, when expenses are subtracted, total U.S. net farm income is forecast to be up 14 percent in 2022.

Total U.S. net farm income, a broad measure of profits, is forecast at \$160.5 billion in 2022, a \$19.5 billion increase over 2021.

Adjusted for inflation, total U.S. net farm income is forecast to be up by 7 percent this year compared with 2021.

The increase in net farm income in 2022 occurred despite a hefty decrease in total government farm payments. According to USDA-ERS, total federal government farm payments are forecast at \$16.5 billion in 2022, which represents a 36 percent or \$9 billion decrease from 2021.

Most of the decline in government farm payments is due to much lower assistance related to COVID-relief programs.

According to the USDA-ERA forecast, balance sheets for U.S. farmers and ranchers are forecast to have strengthened

in 2022.

"Farm sector solvency is forecast to improve," USDA officials said during the Dec. 1 webinar.

Debt-to-asset and debt-to-equity ratios for U.S. farmers are both forecast to have improved in 2022. However, USDA officials stressed that is for the U.S. agricultural sector as whole.

"There is a lot of variability in the amount of debt held by individual farms," they said.

USDA-ERS is forecasting the U.S. farm bankruptcy rate will decline in 2022 to less than 1 operation per 10,000 farms, which would bring the U.S. farm bankruptcy rate to its lowest level since 2004.

Most of the increase in farm cash receipts this year is due to higher commodity prices, according to the USDA-ERS report.

For example, while total farm cash receipts are forecast to rise by \$105.7 billion this year, \$96.8 billion of that total is directly attributed to higher commodity prices. ■

Time to get back to work

It's the start of a new calendar year and we are about a third of the way through a wheat crop year. December is always a slow month as most of us take a little break and simply enjoy the holidays.

Now it's time to get back to work. Many still have most if not all of your 2022 production still either on the farm or in the grain elevator on storage.

Even though we have taken a considerable amount of money out of the market, there will still be opportunities in the weeks ahead to contract your commodities at a good level.

The question is, will the market get back up to the levels we experienced earlier in 2022? The answer is a definite maybe but I wouldn't bet on it.

We need to make our decision on contracting in the weeks ahead based on facts.

The first fact is that the world stocks-to-use ratio is going to end up at 34%. Now, this isn't the highest we have ever been but it is certainly not the lowest, either.

In fact, the level is somewhat neutral to the market and neutral is definitely not bullish.

I know that the news can change overnight, as we have experienced this past year, but in December wheat shipments out of the Black Sea were flowing at a good rate of speed. Russia was leading the world in exports.

The Russian wheat stocks are high as countries haven't been buying from them earlier and now, they have the tonnage to all but saturate the market.

Looking forward to the 2023 wheat crop, they also are looking at positive acreage and moisture for a good crop this year.

Now let's look at Australia, where we are hearing reports of flooding. We can look at this as being both positive for production and negative at the same time.

However, having moisture is far better than not having moisture when looking at production. The December World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report showed the Australian crop at 36.6 million metric tons, which is record production.

The report also showed the crop in Canada to be the third largest in history.

The local mills produced as much flour as they usually do, yet prices continued to drop. Many people looked at this wondering



just how this could be.

It is important for us to remember that just as the U.S. trades in a world market, the local flour mills trade in a national market and so do we as producers.

We can look at the local market and think that prices need to move higher simply because the mills need our wheat.

But the reality is that, yes, they do need wheat but that doesn't necessarily mean that they need our wheat. Let me give you an example.

In December, the flour mills were bringing in rail cars of wheat out of the East within just a few cents of the bids to local producers.

Another thing to keep in mind is that some of them are telling us that they currently have enough wheat on contract to make it into the end of February or possibly first half of March.

We need to ask ourselves just how many days and bushels would it take for them to be covered into May.

When we look at the market we are selling into, it will be important to study just how that market works and the time frame as well as quality they need in order to produce a consistent product for their customers.

The bakeries like to be able to set their equipment in the fall so they are able to produce a consistent product for their consumers throughout the year. They can only do this when the quality of the flour is consistent.

What I am saying is that everyone has their own set of challenges every year and the more we all understand those challenges right – from planting the seed to the consumer putting the end product on the table – the better we will be at marketing a quality product at a level that is profitable for us as well as at the time the processor needs it.

There could very well be a time, if we are waiting for the high in the market, that we could find ourselves on the outside looking in with nobody there to buy.

In a nutshell, the more knowledge we all have about the market and how it works, the better we will be at marketing our commodities. ■



Farmers and ranchers in Oneida County, shown here, are concerned about a dwindling water supply.

Photos by Dave Baker

Water a major concern for Oneida County farmers, ranchers

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

MALAD – Even though it's facing growth and development pressure like other areas of Idaho are, Oneida County is still considered an agricultural county.

“When I think of Oneida County, I think of it as an agricultural county that involves most of the community,” said Malad farmer Austin Tubbs, who has a cow-calf operation and grows his own hay. “Everyone here seems to be tied back to agriculture somehow. There are a lot of family operations that have been around for

generations.”

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 422 farms in Oneida County during the 2017 census year and the average net cash farm income – \$36,000 – generated by those operations was much less than the statewide average of \$53,000.

That means many producers here hold other jobs as well outside the farm.

“I would guess the biggest percentage of our farmers, except for the real big ones, have jobs elsewhere as well,” said Oneida County Farm Bureau President Dave Baker, who grows forage crops near Malad. “People here farm because they like to farm.”



TOP: Cattle and calves is the top agricultural commodity in Oneida County when it comes to total farm-gate revenue.

ABOVE: Hay is one of the top crops produced in Oneida County.

According to the 2017 ag census, there was 320,000 total acres of land in farms in the county in 2017, including 33,830 acres of forage crops (mostly hay), 25,323 acres of wheat, 1,404 acres of safflower, 1,392 acres of field and grass seed crops, and 994 acres of barley.

The market value of all ag commodities sold in the county in 2017 was \$36 million, according to the ag census.

The main agricultural commodity in

Oneida County in terms of total farm-gate revenue is cattle and calves, which brought in \$12 million in revenue in 2017.

It takes water to grow crops and raise animals but that resource is becoming more difficult to obtain in Oneida County.

“I think the biggest issue in our county right now is water,” Baker said. “We have pretty limited water resources, especially in drought years like we’ve had over the past few years, and we’ve had struggles in

getting enough water to grow anything.”

The county has several smaller reservoirs, “we just haven’t had the weather to get them full,” Baker added.

The county has been in a severe drought for the past few years.

All of the water available in Oneida County has to be produced from within the county, either through snow or rainfall or from springs, said Tubbs, who serves on Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s board of directors.

“Nothing comes from outside the valley,” he said. “What water we produce here is what we have. So this drought has been hard on us.”

“When those reservoirs dry up – if they dry up in July, for example – your irrigation season is over with,” said Lin Higley, who produces beef cows and hay and grain in Samaria.

In 2022, most farmers in the county only got two cuttings of hay and some only got one, Tubbs said. “It’s getting kind of scary.”

He said state water officials are trying to get a handle on what’s going on with the local aquifer and water situation. Possible solutions could involve raising reservoirs or piping water from reservoirs instead of having it run through open ditches.

Baker said when his father-in-law dug the stock well on his farm 30 years ago, “you could hear that water gushing through that well. Now I’ve got it dropped clear to the mud and can barely get enough to water my cows.”

“We’ve got to do something about the water situation,” he said. “I think that’s one of our biggest concerns in our valley.”

In addition to trying to address the water situation, Baker said, the Oneida County Farm Bureau also focuses on educating kids about agriculture, which includes providing scholarships and visiting schools with IFBF’s Moving Agriculture to the Classroom trailer, which is used to teach kids about where their food comes from in a hands-on way.

“The biggest thing we focus on is up-and-coming farmers and going into the schools to educate the kids about agriculture,” Higley said. “The youth are our future and if we can educate them about farming early, maybe the outcome in Idaho for everyone will be better.” ■

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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.

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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 January 18 for the February Quarterly.

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Sydney Plum's FFA journey began in 2015 when she first zipped up her blue jacket at Meridian High School. From that moment on, Sydney took advantage of all that FFA had to offer. She competed in Career & Leadership Development Events, showed animals at the fair, and served as the 2019-2020 Idaho FFA State Reporter. One of her favorite parts of FFA was competing in the Agricultural Communications CDE where she was awarded 2nd Individual in the nation. "After competing in Ag Comm, I knew I wanted a career that helped spread the message of this unique industry," Sydney. With the help of FFA scholarships, Sydney graduated in December 2022 from the University of Idaho with a degree in Agricultural Science Communication & Leadership.



What's next?

After interning for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) for the past two years, Sydney starts her job with the ISDA in January 2023 as their Public Information Officer. In her new role, Sydney will be in charge of all communication and media efforts for the agency. "Through my experiences in the blue jacket, I gained confidence and the skills needed to find success throughout my time at the University of Idaho, and now in my job with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture."

Sydney gives thanks and credit to the mentors she connected with as an FFA member for encouraging her to find and pursue her passions.



Sydney and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Team at the Idaho Farm & Ranch Conference



Farm Bureau photo contest winners

These are the winners of a photo contest held by Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Promotion and Education Committee. More than 240 entries were received for the contest, which included five categories. There were seven winners and their entries are shown here.



Best In Show
Aubrey Banks



Livestock & Overall People's Choice
Britney Chandler



Farming
Candace Cope



Scenic
Janessa Waldron

Generations
Candace Cope



Rural
Ariane Smith



University of Idaho photo

A tour group at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch checks out the ranch's wildlife-friendly fencing.

Fencing developed for U of I ranch a win for wildlife and ranchers

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

While visiting a rancher on the Idaho-Montana border, Wyatt Prescott gleaned the basic idea behind the rangeland fencing design he's using to better protect wildlife while still enabling cattlemen to save on staff hours and material costs.

The rancher devised the special fencing to withstand heavy snow loads in areas prone to drifting. Prescott, who contracts to do ranch and infrastructure management at University of Idaho's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in the Wood River Valley, made his

own tweaks to the design.

Prescott installed the first section of wildlife-friendly fencing at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in 2018. The fencing has delivered significant benefits for rangeland management and conservation, furthering the objectives of the unique research ranch.

Rinker is jointly managed by U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the College of Natural Resources. Two nonprofits that aided the university in acquiring the property, The Nature Conservancy and Wood River Land Trust, serve on an advisory board that provides management direction.

"I'm a big fan of it," Prescott said of the special fencing. "It

“By installing wildlife friendly fencing and removing barbed and woven wire fencing, we’re making the landscape much more permeable for migrating animals.”

- Cameron Weskamp, Rinker Rock Creek Ranch operations manager

seems like I’m talking about it all of the time.”

Rinker Rock Creek Ranch’s highly touted design is a three-strand, high-tensile wire fence that can be laid on the ground when not in use, which avoids wear and tear in addition to removing an obstacle for wildlife.

The wires are electrified when cattle are present.

“In seasons when animals are moving through the property – the spring and fall migrations – we typically have the fence already laid down,” said Cameron Weskamp, operations manager at Rinker.

The wood or metal fence posts that support wildlife-friendly fencing are spaced about 100 feet apart, versus 15 feet apart for conventional barbed-wire or woven-wire fences.

Hollow post tops are covered with spray foam to prevent songbirds from flying inside of them and getting trapped.

Prescott estimates he spends about half the usual cost on materials for wildlife-friendly fencing. It takes him about an hour to pin up each mile of wildlife-friendly fencing before cattle return each spring.

“I can’t fix brand-new barbed wire at a mile per hour, and we have fewer cattle getting out than I do with the four-strand barbed wire,” Prescott said.

The land now encompassed by Rinker Rock Creek Ranch was historically homesteaded by several different families and divided into various pastures using barbed wire. The ranch is also situated within a north-south wildlife migration corridor.

“Four- or five-strand barbed wire and woven wire can really inhibit elk deer, and pronghorn migration,” Weskamp said. “By installing wildlife friendly fencing and removing barbed and woven wire fencing, we’re making the landscape much more permeable for migrating animals.”

For the initial installation, the Governor’s Office of Species Conservation provided the ranch a \$19,000 grant to remove 7.5 miles of barbed- and woven-wire fencing and put up 4 miles of wildlife-friendly fencing.

Ranch officials consulted with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game on design modifications.

They’ve gradually expanded their network of wildlife-friendly fencing throughout the years, most recently in 2020 and 2021 with \$100,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Prescott said the surrounding ranchers were initially skeptical of the concept, but several have been won over. Some of them have even had him install it on their property.

Prescott has installed about 20 miles of wildlife friendly fencing during the past few years at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch and on some surrounding ranches. He estimates about a dozen ranchers come to check out the fencing each year.

“Every mile gets better. I feel like we’ve got it dialed in,” Prescott said. “Everybody I talk to is really happy with it.”

Dusty Perkins, land stewardship manager with The Nature Conservancy in Boise, recently advised a rancher who was interested in updating his fencing to check out Rinker Rock Creek Ranch’s design.

Accommodating the seasonal migrations of ungulates and other wildlife is a growing priority among conservationists, Perkins said.

“I think this fencing is a good demonstration of how we can meet the management needs and objectives and also we’re meeting some conservation goals,” Perkins said. “The design that U of I is using is an elegant solution. I

look at the work at Rinker Rock Creek as a demonstration. I’m excited because we have a place we can point to and say, ‘Look, they’re doing it.’” ■



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