

Idaho No. 1 in West in farm income on a per capita basis



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farm income
higher, 5

Wolf attacks
on livestock
up, 12

Growing
giant
pumpkins, 37

Farmers support clean water, clear rules



Farmers are 100 percent supportive of ensuring clean water, including through appropriate regulation, but the 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule had no resemblance to responsible oversight.

Instead, it was an overreach of massive proportions.

That's why its defeat is a big win for agriculture and for America, and why the American Farm Bureau is proud to have led the effort to hit the reset button.

Across the Farm Bureau family, our grassroots showed up and led the charge in making our voices

heard. We called on virtually every member of Congress, offered testimony, engaged the Administration in frank dialogue and led court challenges.

This win shows what we can achieve through the full impact of Farm Bureau's firepower, from expert policy analysis and legal advocacy to communication and grassroots engagement.

It shows the great things we can accomplish when we speak with one voice to defend what is right and good for our farms, rural communities and our country.

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The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Controlling negative impact of problem wolves



Wolf depredations on Idaho livestock have hit a record for two straight years. During the most recent fiscal year, which ended June 30, federal officials confirmed at least 175 wolf depredation incidents.

That number does not include possible wolf kills and attacks. It also does not reflect the fact that many cattle don't add weight as they normally would because of the stress caused by knowing wolves are around.

Lighter cattle mean lighter paychecks for ranchers.

The livestock depredation numbers also don't include the major impact that wolves are causing to wildlife in some parts of the state. Which, it should be noted, pushes the surviving animals such as elk, moose and deer down to ranches and farms, which end up unintentionally feeding those animals at a big cost to the producer.

They also don't reflect the reality that some areas of the state have such high wolf pressure that ranchers aren't even able to graze their animals there because the threat is too high.

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Inside Farm Bureau

By Rick Keller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Civilization, civics and civility



Civilization – a relatively high level of cultural and technological development; Civics – a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens; and Civility – a polite act or expression.

The root of each is from Latin's civitis (civil), related to civis (citizen) and civitas (city), in other words, how we get along as a society. For this editorial, it relates to America.

Of late, watching any media, civility appears to be all but disappearing. We seem to be living in an increasingly uncivil world. From presidential pol-

itics to random Internet comments, there seems to be more and more rude, demeaning, insulting, and aggressive language and behavior in our society.

In U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch's new book, "A Republic, If You Can Keep It", Justice Gorsuch suggests that the proper study of civics – the U.S. Constitution – will aid in civility, thus helping civilization.

Gorsuch is an originalist regarding the Constitution, embracing the idea that the Constitution's meaning is the same in 2019 as in 1788. "Our

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Photo by Sean Ellis

According to recently released USDA data, Idaho is the unchallenged No. 1 state in the West when it comes to total farm cash receipts on a per capita basis.

Idaho leads the West in farm receipts on per capita basis

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Idaho continues to hold the unchallenged No. 1 spot among 11 Western states when it comes to farm cash receipts on a per capita basis.

Put simply, Idaho farmers and ranchers produce far more farm revenue per state resident than producers in any of the other 11 Western states.

California led the West, and nation, with \$50 billion in farm cash receipts — cash receipts are the amount of revenue a farmer or rancher gets for their commodity — in 2018. Washington ranked second with \$9.4 billion and Idaho was third at \$7.4 billion.

However, when farm cash receipts per state are broken down to a per capita basis — total farm income divided by the state's population — Idaho is the undisputed king in the West.

Idaho farmers and ranchers produced \$4,305 in cash receipts per state resident in 2018, up from \$4,287 in 2017. California's per capita farm income average in 2018 was \$1,263 and Washington's was \$1,269.

Montana was the only state remotely close to Idaho, with a per capita average of \$3,326. Wyoming ranked third at \$2,671, followed by New Mexico (\$1,398), Washington, California, Colorado (\$1,262), Oregon (\$1,182), Arizona (\$613), Utah (\$543) and Nevada (\$220).

See **CASH RECEIPTS**, page 4

Photo illustration by Joel Benson
ON THE COVER: Idaho leads the West in farm cash receipts on a per capita basis. Story on this page.



Photo by Sean Ellis

According to recently released USDA data, Idaho is the unchallenged No. 1 state in the West when it comes to total farm cash receipts on a per capita basis.

CASH RECEIPTS

Continued from page 3

The data is based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service data that became available Aug. 30. University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Ben Eborn compiled the rankings to show elected officials and others just how important agriculture is to the state's economy.

"It's easy way to see the contribution agriculture makes to the state's economy compared to other states, on a per capita basis," he said. "We're heavily dependent on agriculture in Idaho."

When it comes to agriculture, "California is by far and away the largest ag state in the nation," said U of I Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor. "But in California, agriculture is nowhere near as important to the average resident as it is in Idaho. Agriculture is far more important to Idahoans that it is to residents of any other state in the West."

Michael Parrella, dean of U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, pointed out to industry leaders during a meeting in Parma Sept. 6. that agriculture accounts for only about 2 percent of California's total gross state product but in Idaho, according to a recent U of I study, agriculture accounts for 13 percent of the state's GSP.

The study also found that agriculture accounts for \$26 billion in sales in Idaho and one of every eight jobs.

"As agriculture goes, so does the state of Idaho," Parrella said.

The USDA data showed that farm cash receipts in Idaho totaled \$7.39 billion in 2018, up slightly from \$7.33 billion in 2017.

Idaho ranked No. 3 in that category and was followed by Colorado (\$7.1 billion), Oregon (\$4.9 billion), Arizona (\$4.3 billion), Montana (\$3.5 billion), New Mexico (\$2.9 billion), Utah (\$1.7 billion), Wyoming (\$1.5 billion) and Nevada (\$660 million). ■

Idaho's 2018 net farm income much higher than expected

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Idaho's total net farm income in 2018 was much higher than anticipated, recently released USDA data shows.

The annual "Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture" report released in January by University of Idaho agricultural economists estimated Idaho's total net farm income in 2018 at \$902 million, which would have been a 31 percent decline compared with the state's \$1.31 billion total in 2017.

However, based on data released Aug. 30 by USDA's Economic Research Service, Idaho's total net farm income in 2018 was \$1.69 billion, up 29 percent from 2017.

Report authors Garth Taylor and Ben Eborn said they are glad their net farm income estimate was off this year.

"That was a good thing since it means Idaho farmers actually made more money than we originally anticipated," said Taylor.

He said the NFI estimates are made using USDA estimates for cost of production that are released in December. This year, however, those cost of production estimates were significantly revised, which accounted for Idaho's much higher than expected net farm income.

"It was the cost of production change that caused our estimate to be that far off," Taylor said.

According to the USDA data, farm cash receipts in Idaho totaled \$7.39 billion in 2018, up slightly from \$7.33 billion in 2017 and \$7.23 billion in 2016.

Eborn and Taylor had estimated total Idaho farm cash receipts in 2018 at \$7.18 billion in their Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report. They



Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions are sorted in a southwestern Idaho facility Sept. 10. After declining for four straight years, Idaho's total net farm income increased 29 percent in 2018, according to USDA data released Aug. 30.

only missed that estimate by 2.9 percent, which is remarkable given that the official USDA data is released eight months after U of I's Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report is finalized.

Estimating net farm income is a much harder job because USDA's cost of production estimate, which is the only thing the U of I agricultural economists have to go off of, is typically revised later, sometimes significantly, as it was this year.

The USDA data showed that Idaho farm expenses, including farm origin (feed, livestock and seed purchases), manufactured inputs (electricity, fertilizer, pesticides, fuel) and other expenses such as marketing, storage, repair and

transportation, totaled \$4.43 billion last year, down from \$4.58 billion in 2017.

When other expenses such as labor, payments to stakeholders, property taxes and fees, and capital consumption are factored in, Idaho's total net farm income in 2018 is set at \$1.69 billion.

That's 29 percent higher than the 2017 total of \$1.31 billion but 6 percent less than the 2016 total of \$1.8 billion and 25 percent less than the state's record total of \$2.25 billion in 2011.

Idaho's total net farm income had declined for four straight years – from \$2.03 billion in 2013 to \$2.02 billion in 2014, \$1.89 billion in 2015, \$1.8 billion in 2016 and \$1.3 billion in 2017 – before heading the other direction in 2018. ■

KELLER

Continued from page 2

Founders deliberately chose a written constitution, its writtleness was important to them,” he wrote. “They rejected the English tradition of an unwritten constitution, because they wanted to fix certain things.”

Gorsuch expounds that our nation was established on the idea that the government exists to serve the people and that our founders chose to believe that the people could govern themselves prudently, without destroying the civil liberties their ancestors had won, and without subjecting political minorities to arbitrary power.

In order for the people to rule themselves, one of the highest priorities is for the people themselves to know how their government works and be able and willing to participate in its administration.

As Gorsuch asserts, “for us to govern ourselves wisely, every generation has to learn the business of government and what

values our republic was designed to serve and then commit themselves to participating in its operation ... If we are to be a self-governing people, we need to know not just our rights but the structures that protect them.”

He then makes the observation, “I just don’t know how a government of and by the people can be sustained if we do not understand its basic structures, what powers we have granted the government and which ones we have reserved – and who does and doesn’t possess the constitutional authority to make new laws to govern us, to execute those laws and to judge us under them.”

Justice Gorsuch emphasizes that just educating about the Constitution isn’t enough, but the people must also be engaged in its process to ensure it remains the people’s government.

How does understanding the Constitution aid in civility? Gorsuch writes: “Just consid-

er the First Amendment’s guarantees of free speech, free press, and free assembly. Those rights ensure that Americans can generally say anything they want, for more or less any reason they want. But most rights bear a corresponding responsibility. And to be worthy of our freedoms, we all have to adopt certain civic habits that enable others to enjoy them, too. When it comes to the First Amendment, for example, that means tolerating those who don’t agree with us, or whose ideas upset us; giving others the benefit of the doubt about their motives; listening and engaging with the merits of their ideas rather than dismissing them because of our own preconceptions about the speaker or topic.”

In my observations of Farm Bureau, I’m grateful its basic tenets emphasize the Constitution; active education and engagement in each of the three branches of government – legislative, executive, and judicial; and civility in its relationships as we the people seek to govern. ■

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

We celebrate an important step toward restoring the rule of law and common sense to regulation. We have a system of rules and regulations that govern this country, making our communities safer, protecting the quality of our food and protecting our environment, all while ensuring our constitutional rights are preserved.

It’s our job as Americans to be sure that our government by the people remains for the people.

So when a regulation or rule comes along that ignores the rule of law and gives any agency power beyond what Congress and the Constitution allow, then it’s time for all of us to speak up. That’s just what you have done, and this win is yours.

I have always said that any farmer or rancher should be able to look out on the land—without having to invite a posse of lawyers and consultants—and know what is, and what isn’t, a regulated waterway.

That wasn’t possible under the 2015 rule because the rule wasn’t about water. It was a federal land grab, pure and simple. Courts across the country recognized this, and now the EPA and the Corps under the president’s direction have righted this wrong.

Some will accuse us of being anti-regulation. That’s unfair and untrue. Farmers and ranchers know better than almost anyone the importance of keeping our food safe and protecting our natural resources. We all deserve clean water and clear rules.

Farm Bureau is hopeful that farmers soon will have the common-sense rules we have been calling for, as we look to the new Clean Water Rule the administration is finalizing.

It’s been a breath of fresh air working with EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler as he has walked the talk when it comes to giving farmers a seat at the table.

Under his leadership, EPA has invited farmers and ranchers and business owners to give their input, and the agency has listened.

From all we’ve seen in the published draft, the new Clean Water Rule promises to work for agriculture as well as it does for environmental protection. The new rule recognizes the conservation work we are doing and provides the clarity we need to keep producing America’s food.

Now, more than ever, farmers and ranchers should take pride in our conservation story. We are growing more food with fewer resources and reducing our environmental footprint.

Let’s continue to share that story, starting with our neighbors and communities.

Farming is work grounded in trust across generations and communities—trust that we will do right by the land and do what’s best for our families and neighbors.

I am proud of the work you all are doing every day to make your farms and ranches more sustainable.

This victory is a testament to your perseverance and dedication to protecting the land, air and water we all enjoy now and for generations to come. ■

Despite the fact that wolves are killing livestock at record numbers and in some cases decimating wildlife populations, some pro-wolf advocates continue to push the false narrative that the animals can be controlled with non-lethal measures.

These non-lethal methods of “controlling” wolves include hazing and scaring devices that emit flashing lights and sounds. But these devices only work for a short period of time and wolves quickly learn these deterrents are nothing to be afraid of.

One thing that does control problem wolves permanently is killing them.

After the federal government imposed wolves on Idaho beginning in 1995 with the release of 35 of the killing machines in Central Idaho, the animal’s population quickly soared, growing at an average rate of 28 percent a year in Idaho.

The state’s wolf population soared to 856 in 2009 but that growth trajectory quickly came to a halt after 2009. The reason: the state began an annual wolf hunting season.

That’s right, hunting, i.e., killing wolves, works. It halts their rapid spread and it also puts the fear of man into them.

Wolves don’t fear blinking lights or shrieking noises. They do fear lead.

That’s why Idaho Farm Bureau Federation supports the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board, which was created by the Idaho Legislature in 2014 with the mandate of funding lethal wolf control efforts.

The board has a cooperative service agreement with U.S. Wildlife Services, the federal agency tasked with solving conflicts between humans and animals. Wildlife Services conducts wolf control actions when directed to do so by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

A little history about why the board was created in the first place is helpful.

After 2010, the amount of federal funding Idaho Wildlife Services received to control problem wolves shrunk by about \$620,000. The board was created to make up that difference.

It has received \$400,000 per year in state funds, another \$110,000 from the state’s livestock industry and \$110,000 from Idaho sportsmen.

Idaho’s cattle industry agreed to increase the state brand renewal fee to come up with their share of the funding and sheep producers increased their wool assessment to fund their annual commitment.

Idaho sportsmen, to their credit, have also stepped up to the plate to provide the board significant funding each year.

During the 2019 legislative session, lawmakers passed a bill that removed the wolf board’s sunset clause. That’s great news since the board was due to sunset on June 30, 2020.

This past legislative session, the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board for the first time only received \$200,000 in state funding for the next fiscal year. But Gov. Brad Little has told IFBF members that’s only because the board had built up a sizable reserve balance and he wanted the board to use that money first and not build up a financial war chest.

The governor, a rancher himself who understands very well the impact wolves are having on the state’s livestock industry and wildlife, has told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members on more than one occasion not to worry about where he stands on wolves and he also said the board will receive the funding it needs.

Without the work the board funds, the damage caused by wolves to Idaho livestock and the state’s wildlife population would be far greater than it already is.

That said, we remain frustrated that wolves were reintroduced to Idaho in the first place. During public hearings on the proposal to bring wolves to Idaho, it was standing room only and testimony was heavily against that idea.

The federal government completely disregarded Idaho residents’ opposition to wolf reintroduction and put them here anyway.

While the state’s hunting season and creation of the wolf board are good things, the reality is that in some parts of the state, wolves are out of control and having a devastating impact on livestock and wildlife.

We appreciate the support the wolf control board and hunting season have provided to address this problem but more, a lot more, still needs to be done to control the problem.

We look forward to hearing, in the coming days and months, any ideas or proposals that would lead to more effective ways to control problem wolves. ■

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Idaho ag export value up 7 percent in 2019

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Despite trade wars and rumors of trade wars, the total value of Idaho agricultural exports increased 7 percent during the first six months of 2019, compared with the same period last year.

According to data provided by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, the value of Idaho ag product exports to other nations totaled \$450 million during the first half of 2019, up from \$421 million in 2018.

Support from the state's famous potato industry has played a big role in the strengthening of Idaho ag exports this year, said Doug Robison, Idaho president of Northwest Farm Credit Services.

"Idaho produced one of the largest potato crops on record in 2018, which led to increased shipping of both fresh and processed potatoes during the first half of 2019," he said. "Drought in Europe resulted in a smaller 2018 potato crop and a rebalancing of global supply chains, further supporting exports from Idaho."

Canada was the No. 1 destination for Idaho ag exports as Gem State producers and companies sold \$137 million worth of ag products to that nation during the first half of 2019, an increase of 2 percent compared with the same period in 2018.

Mexico was Idaho's No. 2 ag export market at \$89 million, an increase of 27 percent, and South Korea was No. 3 at \$37 million, a 53 percent increase.

Idaho ag exports to China during the first six months of the year totaled \$25 million, down 5 percent from 2018.

The total value of dairy product exports from Idaho was \$101 million during the first half of 2019, a decrease of 0.33 percent from 2018. Dairy accounted for 22 percent of the state's total ag export value, making it Idaho's top farm export in terms of dollar value.

"Dairy exports have remained flat,"



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo
The total value of Idaho agricultural product exports during the first half of 2019 increased by 7 percent compared with the same period in 2018.

Robison said. "However, there has been some rebalancing toward Mexico due to strong demand for milk powder, close market proximity and lower prices on dairy products in the United States."

The total value of Idaho dairy product exports to Mexico during the first half increased 26 percent to \$12 million.

According to Rita Du, a University of Idaho agricultural economist, Idaho dairy product exports to China were down 20 percent during the first half of 2019 compared with the same period last year.

The total value of Idaho ag exports listed under the "edible vegetables" category was \$89 million, a 19 percent increase over 2018, and products listed under the "milling, malt and starch" category totaled \$52 million, an increase of 34 percent.

Some Idaho ag industry leaders said although the increase in the state's total ag export value so far this year is good news, the number could be even higher if it weren't for the many trade challenges the United States faces right now,

such as the ongoing tit-for-tat tariff war between the U.S. and China.

The relatively strong U.S. dollar is a bigger headwind that is affecting U.S. farm exports, said U of I Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor.

"You can go around a tariff," he said. "You cannot run around a strong dollar and we've had a very strong dollar."

Mexico was one of the bright spots for Idaho ag exporters during the first half of 2019. Idaho ag export value to Mexico during the first six months of 2019 totaled \$89 million, up from \$70 million in 2018.

Exports to Mexico listed under the "milling, malt and starch" category increased 36 percent to \$39 million, oilseed exports increased 18 percent to \$12 million and dairy product exports increased 26 percent to \$12 million.

The 53 percent increase in Idaho ag exports to South Korea was led by dairy exports to that nation, which totaled \$32 million, up 54 percent compared with the same period in 2018. Virtually all of that was cheese. ■

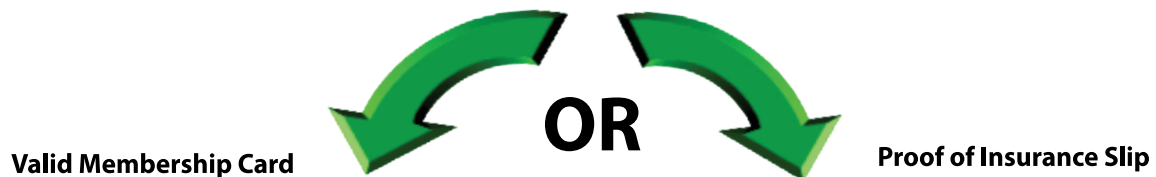


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Photo by Doug Lindley

Bret Mortensen, general manager of Driscoll TopHay at the Pocatello Regional Airport, stands near a hay compactor, which makes 1,800-pound bales that are put onto a shipping container and driven to Salt Lake City. Driscoll, as well as other ag shippers, would benefit from a proposed intermodal facility at the airport, where shipping containers could be sent directly to ports.

Proposed Pocatello projects could help Idaho's ag shippers

By John O'Connell
Intermountain Farm and Ranch

POCATELLO — Companies are researching separate but complementary projects that officials say would make the Pocatello Regional Airport a major transportation hub and improve the state's ability to export goods overseas.

Perishable goods would be stored, packaged and flash-frozen at an expansive, planned cold storage warehouse on the airport grounds. Fresh potatoes and other goods from the warehouse could then be loaded into large shipping containers at a proposed intermodal facility, which would also be located within the airport's business park.

Trucks would deliver goods to the airport from a more than 150-mile radius, to be loaded into containers at the intermodal facility and delivered by rail directly to Northwest ports. Officials say the intermodal facility would help producers of Idaho goods and commodities overcome a freight disadvantage impeding their ability to access overseas

markets, especially in Asia.

Brig Skoy, with Midvale, Utah-based Savage Services, said the nearest location to Pocatello for loading and shipping containers by rail is in Salt Lake City, and containers are often in short supply there.

He explained his company is still evaluating the feasibility of building the intermodal facility — which would comprise expanded rail infrastructure and mobile equipment for handling and storing shipping containers — but the preliminary results appear promising.

“Tariffs are all the talk right now, but I think as far as Idaho exports go, there’s a lot of products being exported, and I think that can grow with this facility,” Skoy said Aug 28, while presenting the concept to businessmen within the potato industry at the annual Idaho Grower Shippers Association meeting in Sun Valley.

Savage describes itself as an international supply chain facilitator, with more than 4,500 team members in the U.S.

Pocatello area leaders, Idaho Gov. Brad Little and representatives of Idaho commodities and businesses have sent letters supporting the concept, providing estimates about their anticipated shipment volumes.

Pocatello Mayor Brian Blad said the addition of an intermodal facility would have major ramifications for the community’s future growth. Blad knows of four local companies that would like to expand in the area, but their leaders have said they won’t be able to do so without improved transportation to West Coast ports.

“They’ve put expansion plans on hold right now, waiting to see if this moves forward and is completed ... or not,” Blad said. “If not, they’ll look to expand in the Salt Lake Valley somewhere because they’ll be closer to the facility they need.”

Dirk Driscoll, whose family operates Driscoll TopHay at the airport, said the hay business ships 80 containers of hay per week out of Salt Lake City — mostly top-quality dairy hay bound for China. His brother wrote a letter of support for the intermodal facility, based on the significant savings of time and shipping costs it would provide for the business.

“That hay would not have to go to Salt Lake City (with the intermodal facility),”

Driscoll said. “We’re totally excited if this becomes a reality.”

Kenneth Brown, managing partner of Lionchase Holdings in Washington, D.C., said the cold storage facility would employ about 100 workers and would include about 280,000 square feet of space for cold, frozen and dry goods.

The company’s model calls for “customizable space,” with walls that could be moved, adjusting to demand for a given storage type.

He said the facility could be built within eight months. In addition to the rail access, Brown said his company anticipates future growth in air freight will occur in the next few years, making the airport an ideal location.

“We’re waiting on a few more things to happen, and we’re really excited about this moving forward right away,” Brown said.

John Regetz, president and CEO of Bannock Development Corp., said his organization introduced officials from Savage and Lionchase to one another, and they have been encouraged by the potential synergy of their proposals.

Regetz said his staff have been active in helping to answer their questions about the local market.

“If we want to continue to grow and advance in Pocatello and do it faster, we need a better logistics solution,” Regetz said. “That is what is being researched and proposed.”

A spokeswoman with Union Pacific Railroad, Kristen South, offered a general statement via email about the two projects under consideration in Pocatello: “Union Pacific is open to discussing new opportunities that align with our business goals and objectives.”

Gov. Little emphasized the importance of the state having “one place where that train takes off from,” and he said he believes Pocatello is “absolutely the right place.”

“It’s really important to farmers and processors and growers and shippers that we have that venue to get the freight out of Idaho,” Little said.

Idaho’s potato industry has taken a lead role in advocating for the intermodal facility.

The Idaho Potato Commission recently

took a group of potato shippers on a trip to the Port of Tacoma in Washington to evaluate the logistics of shipping spuds overseas.

Frank Muir, the IPC’s president and CEO, said foreign markets will be increasingly important for Idaho potato growers’ bottom lines in the future.

For example, he said, a single Idaho shipper currently exports fresh potatoes to Taiwan. Next year, additional potato fields should be certified so that five Idaho shippers can export to the East Asian country.

Shawn Boyle, president of the IGSA, which represents the state’s fresh potato shippers, said his organization has taken Savage officials on visits to meet with corporate leaders within the potato industry.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has provided a letter of support for the facility.

“In our role of strengthening Idaho’s agriculture, we view this venture as extremely beneficial to the needs of many of Idaho’s farmers and the industries that process and ship their products,” the IFBF letter states. “We expect that the facility would be a benefit to all Eastern Idaho and Magic Valley....”


The Farm Bureau letter said one of the constraints in meeting world demand for Idaho potatoes is the ability to transport cold products to their destination in a prompt and efficient manner.

“For this reason, we strongly encourage the investment in a cold storage facility in Pocatello to coincide with the intermodal terminal,” the letter states.

Boyle said Basic American Foods officials also anticipate they would benefit greatly from the intermodal facility, and the facility would be a boon for other crops potato farmers raise in rotation with their spuds.

“We feel that once that facility is built, there would be a lot of growth in that area — exporting fresh potatoes,” Boyle said. “Geographically, we’re a little limited. Anything that could get our potatoes economically into shipping lanes to major markets, that’s a benefit.” ■

Sean Ellis contributed to this story.

A photograph of a wolf running through tall, green grass. The wolf is captured in motion, with its body angled towards the right side of the frame. Its fur is a mix of grey, white, and brown. The background is a dense field of tall grass, slightly out of focus.

Wolf livestock depredations hit another record

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Wolf depredations on livestock in Idaho reached a record level during the past fiscal year, which ended June 30.

From July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, Idaho Wildlife Services conducted 264 depredation investigations related to wolf complaints from 136 livestock producers in 17 counties.

Of those 264 investigations, 175 involved confirmed wolf depredations, said Todd Grimm, the Idaho state director of Wildlife Services, which is a federal agency that helps solve conflicts between humans and animals.

“Last year we had a pretty busy year,” he said during the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board’s Aug. 21 meeting.

“The cattle guys the last four or five years are the ones who have really been taking the brunt of the wolf depredations,” Grimm added.

The 175 wolf depredations of Idaho livestock during fiscal year 2019 was a record for the second straight year.

During the previous fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018, Wildlife Services conducted 217 wolf depredation investigations for Idaho livestock producers and determined 140 involved confirmed wolf attacks.

The wolf control board was created by the state in 2014 and tasked with funding lethal control efforts of problem wolves. The board has a cooperative service agreement with Wildlife Services, which conducts wolf control actions as directed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The wolf control board’s recent meeting was attended by five wolf advocates and an equal number of people who support the board’s mission to fund lethal control actions of wolves that cause chronic problems to livestock and wildlife.

Weiser-area rancher Cody Chandler told board members that wolves in his area are having a major impact on his operation. He described how early in the morning on Aug. 20 “the wolves just went wild that night. They were so loud and you could hear them running

around. It was scary. That night, they were too close for comfort.”

“This is just hurting us really bad,” he said.

His father, Kirk Chandler, a rancher and Washington County Commissioner, said ranchers in the area “are all having the same experiences. It’s a big problem. It really affects the economy of our county.”

Braden Jensen, who handles natural resource issues for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, told the board that the presence of wolves has caused some wildlife to change their habitat and migration patterns, which in turn is causing increased wildlife depredation on cropland “where those herds haven’t traditionally been in the past.”

“We hear repeatedly from many of our members just how big an issue this is ... and it’s a growing issue,” he said.

During the meeting, wolf advocates had a far different take on the presence of wolves in Idaho.

Suzanne Stone, a wolf advocate, said one of the biggest thrills in her life was when she took her daughter into the wilderness to hear wolves howling.

“To me, those wolves do belong there,” she said. “They have ... a right to be there. Our family does support agriculture but not at the cost of our wildlife.”

She said the board’s money would be better spent proactively preventing wolves from attacking livestock.

Talasi Brooks, staff attorney for Western Watersheds Project, said she was concerned about the board’s emphasis on lethal methods of controlling wolves rather than non-lethal methods, which can include hazing and scaring devices that emit flashing lights and sounds.

Federal funding for wolf control actions in Idaho declined by about \$620,000 from 2009 to 2014. The wolf control board was created to make up for that deficit.

The board has received \$400,000 in state funds annually and the state’s cattle and sheep producers provide another \$110,000 each year, as do Idaho sportsmen. That has provided the board \$620,000 per year to fund lethal wolf control actions.

But for the first time this past year, at the governor’s request, the Idaho Legislature provided the board just \$200,000 in state funds.



Idaho Department of Fish and Game photo
Wolves are shown in an Idaho forest in pictures captured by an Idaho Department of Fish and Game remote camera.

Gov. Brad Little told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation during a recent interview that he recommended the board receive \$200,000 this year because it had built up a big reserve fund and he wanted the board to use that reserve first.

Little, a rancher, said he fully understands the impact wolves are having on Idaho livestock and wildlife and that he supports the board’s mission. He told Farm Bureau members earlier this year not to worry about where he stands on wolves.

“They will have the resources they need,” he said about the wolf board during his recent interview with Farm Bureau.

“Fish and game is doing a pretty good job of managing them but ... I talk to ranchers all over the state and there are areas where they are causing huge problems,” Little added.

According to a Wildlife Services report, in addition to the 175 confirmed wolf depredation incidents involving Idaho livestock during the past fiscal year, 16 of the agency’s depredation investigations involved probable wolf attacks, 35 were possible wolf depredations and 38 were determined to have not been wolf related.

A minimum of 53 cows were killed by wolves last year and another eight injured, according to the report. Eighty-three

calves were killed and 18 injured, 107 sheep were killed and two injured, four dogs were killed and one injured, two llamas were killed and one horse was killed.

Probable wolf attacks included 11 cows killed, seven calves killed and two injured, 10 sheep killed and 14 missing, three dogs killed, one llama killed and one domestic bison killed.

In response to confirmed wolf depredations, Wildlife Services lethally removed 66 wolves during fiscal 2019. During fiscal 2018, the agency removed 76 wolves for livestock depredations and another 10 to protect wildlife.

During the first two months of the current fiscal year, Wildlife Services has confirmed 40 percent fewer wolf livestock depredations compared to the same period last year.

“That’s a good sign because July and August are always our biggest months for depredations,” Grimm said.

He said it is now known for sure why the number of depredations is down but that it could have something to do with control actions taken earlier in the spring in some areas with chronic wolf problems. That resulted in the removal of some wolves that likely would have caused problems later in the summer, he said. ■

Hamer farmer first in U.S. to commercially raise new mustard type

By John O'Connell

Intermountain Farm & Ranch

HAMER — Justin Place will soon become the first U.S. farmer to commercially harvest a type of mustard developed using a promising new approach to breeding varieties of the crop.

He's planted 70 acres of a new "F1 hybrid" variety of mustard, called AAC Brown 18, which was bred in Canada and should deliver growers whopping yield gains, even if they plant at a fraction of the usual seeding rate.

"It is quite a bit more money for the initial seeding cost, but if the yield is there, it should more than pay for the initial seeding expense," Place said of his unique field of brown mustard.

Not long ago, experts thought it would be improbable to breed a mustard hybrid.

The term refers to the first generation of seed resulting from a cross, also called F1. Mustard, like corn and alfalfa, is open-pollinated, meaning fertilization requires pollen from another plant to be delivered by bees or other pollinators.

Jim Davis, a research specialist involved in University of Idaho's canola and mustard breeding program, explained the most conventional way of breeding mustard involves producing a small amount of F1 seed from two parents and then refining the genetics through subsequent generations of inbreeding and making careful selections.

The process eventually yields homogeneous seed that growers can replant.

In the case of hybrid crops, two inbred parents are selected, and one is emasculated, leaving only female flower parts intact. F1 seed is saved only from the female plants, reducing the potential for



variability in that generation.

Crossed seed produces higher yields through a concept known as heterosis, or “hybrid vigor.”

Growers can’t save and replant hybrid seed, as genetic variability would return in the next generation.

“Canola is moving toward hybrid varieties; mustard is lagging behind because it’s a smaller-acreage crop,” Davis said, adding that his program currently breeds mustard varieties only through the conventional approach.

In breeding corn, emasculating a plant for hybrid production simply requires removing the tassel. Mustard is far more difficult. The flower is too tiny to easily emasculate, so the breeder of the new hybrid variety, Bifang Cheng with Agriculture Canada in Saskatoon, sought mustard seed for a parent with male-sterility mutations.

The new hybrid was registered for sale in the fall of 2018. Growers must pay a royalty to raise it.

Though Place is the sole commercial grower in the U.S. raising AAC Brown 18, Utah State University has planted a small amount of it in trial plots. A handful of growers in Canada are also raising it this season.

“The variety is promising to the industry as it is yielding significantly higher — 15 to 20 percent — than other varieties in the marketplace,” said Rick Mitzel, executive director of Sask Mustard, who was involved in developing the hybrid.

Place started raising a conventional variety of mustard last season for Bill Meadows with American Falls-based Mountain States Oilseeds, seeking to add a new crop to his rotation. Despite his lack of experience, Place was among the region’s top-yielding mustard growers.

Aside from when he harvests potatoes, Place avoids tilling or disturbing his soil. Mustard helps him better control weeds in a no-till system, as he can use herbicides for treating grasses that would harm barley and wheat.

The crop’s deep tap root improves water infiltration, and the heavy chaff keeps his sandy soil from blowing in the spring.

Meadows approached Place in the early spring about planting the hybrid mustard, which was developed as a dryland variety, as an experiment to determine how it would perform under irrigation.

For comparison, Place planted part of his pivot in conventional mustard and the remainder in the hybrid variety.

“It grew faster. It started blooming four to five days ahead of the conventional mustard,” Place said.

Place has taken random samples from conventional plants growing adjacent to the hybrids. Conventional samples averaged about 110 seed pods per plant, compared with about 450 pods per hybrid plant.

Place said the seeding rate for his conventional mustard is about 14 pounds per acre. He admits he was a bit nervous when he followed the low-end of the recommended planting rate for his hybrid brown mustard of 6 pounds per acre — seeding directly into barley stubble from the prior year.

“When it came up, I thought we were in for a wreck. The hybrid was pretty spotty — not near enough plants,” Place said.



Photo courtesy of Justin Place

The new hybrid mustard offers a significant yield boost.
LEFT: Hamer farmer Justin Place wades through his field planted in a type of mustard derived from a new breeding technology for the crop.

“Once it got established, the hybrid really took off. It got bushier, and a lot taller.”

Place is 6 feet tall, and hybrid mustard plants have grown above his head in parts of his field.

Meadows plans to gradually shift all of his brown mustard production to the hybrid variety. He likes that the breeding technology achieves a significant yield boost without involving genetic modification, which can limit potential markets due to challenges with public perception.

“If we can plant at half rate and get 20 to 30 percent more yield, that’s a pretty good cash crop for the grower,” Meadows said. “I feel really good that we were able to get some of that seed in the U.S.”

In addition to brown mustard, Meadows also contracts for oriental and yellow mustard in Eastern Idaho. He said his growers are steadily increasing their mustard yields as they refine their production techniques. ■

Potato commission to team with NFL player from Idaho

By John O'Connell
Idaho State Journal

SUN VALLEY — Pocatello native and pro football “Swiss Army knife” Taysom Hill has a lot in common with an Idaho russet, if you ask Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Frank Muir.

Muir said that Hill, a New Orleans Saints player with a knack for playing several positions, is as versatile as an Idaho potato, making the athlete an ideal choice to promote the crop the world associates with his home state.

During the Idaho Grower Shippers Association’s annual meeting Aug. 29 in Sun Valley, Muir announced that Hill has agreed to star in a social media campaign on behalf of Idaho spuds.

Hill, a 2009 Highland High School graduate, started at quarterback for Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, before joining the Saints, where he’s turned heads with his diverse skill-set.

He also boasts one of the team’s most popular selling jerseys. Last year, Hill made tackles, threw passes, caught passes, ran the ball and returned kicks and punts.

“What we’ll try to do is show how versatile he is. While we can’t necessarily show off NFL footage without the NFL’s permission, we certainly can have him talk about it,” Muir said. “It’s akin to how versatile an Idaho russet is.”

Indeed, the IPC’s website boasts a database of about 1,600 Idaho potato recipes, ranging from creative sides, such as vegan deviled Idaho red potatoes, to gourmet entrees, including Idaho potato Mexican tamale spheres.

“He has become a beloved person in New Orleans,” Muir said. “This guy is incredible.”

Though Muir said details of the ar-



Idaho Farm Bureau photo

Pocatello native and NFL player Taysom Hill, center, speaks to Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho insurance agents in February. Hill is teaming up with the Idaho Potato Commission to help promote the state’s most famous commodity.

rangement with Hill have yet to be finalized, Hill will likely produce videos and photographs that will be widely shared through various social media platforms and posted on the IPC website — idaho-potato.com.

The IPC has a history of partnering with NFL personalities. TV sports reporter Heather Cox had an agreement through which she produced social media promotional materials featuring the IPC’s mascot, Spuddy Buddy, at NFL and college football games.

Hill is also no stranger to Spuddy Buddy. Muir explained Hill posed with the plush, grinning potato mascot in a tweet he sent encouraging his former teammates last year, when BYU participated in the IPC-sponsored Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, hosted at Boise State University.

Muir anticipates the Hill campaign will start within the next few months. He said

the IPC will have to work within Hill’s busy schedule.

“He’s very selective of who he will work with, and he loves the idea of working with Idaho potatoes,” Muir said, adding Hill’s agent is also “on board.”

Muir said it’s yet to be determined if the relationship with Hill will build and grow into a long-term partnership.

“I’m not looking for him to be a spokesperson so to speak. ... We’re working with celebrities to do things that make sense,” Muir said.

Muir sees another similarity between the Pocatello native turned NFL standout and Idaho potatoes. Both are known for their high quality, Muir said.

“Everything about him is positive,” Muir said. “The kid has got a lot of ethics and good values. That’s what we like to work with is somebody who reflects what we think is a quality brand.” ■

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Photo by Sean Ellis

People visit a petting zoo during the recent Eastern Idaho State Fair in Blackfoot. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation helped sponsor the display, which used animals to help educate people about agriculture.

Farm Bureau partners with petting zoo at Eastern Idaho State Fair

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BLACKFOOT — Idaho Farm Bureau Federation teamed up with a “petting zoo” at the recent Eastern Idaho State Fair to teach people about animal agriculture through a hands-on learning experience.

IFBF was the main sponsor of the “Bring the Farm to the Fair” display that was set up during the fair, which was held Aug. 30-Sept. 7 and attracted an estimated 247,000 people.

The display featured different animals under two large tents and allows people to milk a cow, watch chicks hatch, pet farm animals and ride a pony.

Several fun facts about Idaho and U.S. agriculture were posted throughout the display, which included a water buffalo, a yak, sheep, goats, a Texas Longhorn, pigs, a Scottish Highlander cow and a miniature Herford cow the kids could brush.

“Basically, all the animals that you see at a farm, and we bring them to the fair

and try to educate the general population about agriculture and the important role that animals play in our lives,” said Animal Specialties owner Connie Boger, who started the Arkansas-based company 25 years ago when she realized that most kids in her rural community didn’t have a basic understanding of agriculture.

“I grew up on a ranch in South Dakota where I had all the benefit of learning about ranch life and the food cycle and why animals are important,” she said. “I felt that it was very important for kids to know the things that I’m trying to teach them right here.”

Even in a rural area like Blackfoot, most kids don’t have a basic understanding of agriculture, she said.

“Kids don’t have an opportunity to go to the farm anymore,” Boger said. “All kids used to get to go grandpa and grandpa’s house and milk the cow and gather the eggs, feed the chickens and play with animals. Well, grandpa and grandma don’t have a family farm anymore. So you as Farm Bureau and me as a producer have to keep doing this because we’ve got to continue to educate the general public.”

Boger said she hopes people who visit her display walk away with one main takeaway: “That animals are a very, very important part of our life. We can’t live without animals.”

An IFBF display set up right beside the Animal Specialties exhibit included a plastic cow that kids could “milk,” as well as informational posters designed to help inform people about important issues facing the agricultural community, such as the importance of dams.

Since both Farm Bureau and Animal Specialties focus on educating people about agriculture, it made sense to help sponsor the petting zoo, said Tyrel Bingham, IFBF’s regional manager for the Upper Snake River Valley.

“There are a few main things that people come to the fair for: one is the petting zoo,” he said. “We’re grateful for the partnership we have with Connie and the petting zoo and the opportunity that gives us to provide a little taste of agri-



Photo by Joel Benson

Children receive free milk after “milking” a plastic cow at the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation display that was set up during the recent Eastern Idaho State Fair.

culture to all the kids that get to come and see those animals.”

Bingham said the petting zoo and Farm Bureau’s “milking” cow are two guaranteed must-stops for people with children.

“Many of these kids that come here don’t have any idea where their food and fiber truly comes from and this gives us an opportunity to let them know that most of the products they use on a daily basis are agriculture-related,” he said. “It’s important to tie those dots together and help people realize how important agriculture really is.”

Idaho is one of eight states that Boger’s animal display visits each year and Idaho is the only state where she teams up with Farm Bureau.

“I’m trying to promote agriculture,

just like you are, and I think we have to continue to do that,” she said. “I believe in what we’re doing. If I didn’t believe in it, I couldn’t do this because it’s a lot of work and it involves long hours. But it is so rewarding when I see a child’s face light up when they get to pet animals they’ve never seen before.”

She said her ultimate goal is to instill in children, as well as their parents, an appreciation for farmers.

“We need to have an immense appreciation for farmers,” Boger said. “They are the hardest working people in America, bar none. They work seven days a week, they work a lot of hours and they have a lot of variables they don’t have any control over. We need to appreciate our American farmer.” ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

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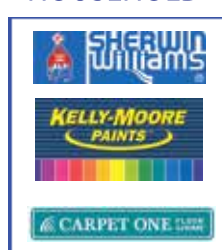
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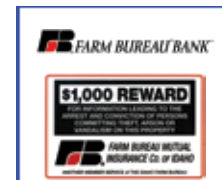
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Mature western spruce budworm larvae.

Idaho Department of Lands photo

Western Spruce Budworm also on the uptick

By Randy Brooks
University of Idaho

Identification

WSB produces one new generation per year. Adults resemble moths and are typically active in July and deposit eggs in masses on the underside of host tree needles. Individual eggs are oval, light green, and about the size of a pinhead, and overlap one another like shingles.

They hatch in approximately 10 days. Young larvae, which are yellow-green with brown heads, do not feed but instead create a structure known as a hibernaculum, or self-made silken shelter, under bark crevices or lichen. They then spend the winter in this structure.

The larvae again become active the following spring as the buds of host trees begin to expand and provide a food source. The full-grown larvae are approximately 1 to 1¼ inches long with a tan or light chestnut-brown head area, and olive or red-brown body with large

My article last month focused on the Douglas fir Tussock moth and how it was defoliating trees in southern and central Idaho.

Well as it turns out, there are also two other defoliating insects working their way through our Idaho forests, one of them being Western Spruce Budworm.

Like Douglas Fir Tussock moth, the tree species that WSB feeds on are found throughout the state so this critter can be found scattered throughout Idaho.

This insect happens to be the most chronic, destructive defoliating insect of conifers in the Northern Rockies.

The other defoliator mentioned above is Hemlock Looper, which was very active in northern Idaho, and is the subject for next month's article.



ivory-colored areas.

These caterpillars feed on the tree buds and flowers for a short period before boring into and destroying the expanding buds.

As the larvae continue to grow, they leave the buds to feed on the remaining foliage and shoots. Using silk, they web together the tips of branches and feed on needles within that webbing, providing them with protection from predators.

Here they feed in high numbers until most if not all of the new growth is destroyed. Feeding is usually completed by mid-summer.

Mature larvae tie the tips of twigs or foliage together with silk and pupate on the branch tips or elsewhere on the tree. Pupae are about ½-inch long and yellow-brown in color when first formed, later turning to red-brown. Pupation lasts about 10-15 days, followed by emergence of the adult moths.

Adult moths are about ½-inch long, with a wingspan of approximately 1 inch.

Both sexes are similar in appearance, although females may be slightly larger. The wings are variable in color, ranging from gray to orange-brown; however, they also may be banded or streaked, and some individuals may have a conspicuous white dot on the wing margin.

If you are not sure what you have, don't hesitate to bring a sample in to the local University of Idaho Extension office for positive identification.

Damage

The primary hosts of WSB in Idaho forests are Douglas fir, white fir, grand fir, subalpine fir, western larch, and pines during extreme outbreaks.

Young larvae will feed by mining needles or newly swelling buds. Larvae feed mainly on new foliage but will feed on old foliage if all the new foliage has been destroyed. Cones and seeds can also be destroyed.

Larvae and pupae can be seen in silken nests of webbed, chewed needles. Defoliation occurs at tops of trees and outer branches. During a defoliation event, entire stands will have a brown appearance from the needle damage.



Top kill by western spruce budworm.

Idaho Department of Lands photo

Understory trees are most severely impacted. Repeated severe defoliation (4-5 years) can decrease growth, cause tree mortality, or render weakened trees more susceptible to other damaging agents such as bark beetles.

Management

WSB is native to Idaho forests. There is typically some endemic level of WSB activity here every year, but it often goes unnoticed until the population boom.

Western spruce budworm can be managed through silvicultural methods. Be-



Idaho Department of Lands photo

Western spruce budworm adult.

cause larvae disperse on silken threads and often impact the understory more intensively, removing the understory (thinning from below), lowering stand density, and maintaining tree species diversity can help reduce the budworm populations.

If more short-term, direct control is desired, then insecticides can be applied. The microbial insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.) is available and is not hazardous to most beneficial insects, birds, small mammals, and aquatic systems.

Other contact chemical insecticides are also available for budworm management. These pesticides can also kill other non-target insects where they are applied. Generally, these materials must be applied when the larvae are young (their second instar, which usually means mid-June in northern Idaho).

Insecticides become less effective against larger larvae. You may want to touch base with your local UI Extension office or state forestry office for the most specific local recommendations on timing.

Pesticides also present an additional challenge of getting the material to the top of the tree where the insects are. For a homeowner, that usually means hiring someone with the equipment and a pesticide applicators license.

For forest infestations it means hiring an aerial spray service to apply the material with a plane or helicopter. Both options can be expensive, so the costs and benefits of spraying should be evaluated thoughtfully.

Lightly defoliated trees often bounce back no worse for the wear, save for some reduced growth. For landscape trees, supplemental watering and fertilization may help this.

For forest trees, especially those stands that are hit by every cycle of the insect, the best long-term solution is to favor species that are less attractive to the insect, such as pines and larch.

Top kill from WSB defoliation often results in a fork-topped tree as lateral branches compete to become the new top. If you are thinning in such a stand, these dead or forked trees should be removed in favor of trees with single live tops.

Conclusion

Before partial cutting and fire exclusion gave an edge to grand fir and Douglas-fir in Idaho, pines and larch would have dominated most of the sites where WSB cause the most damage.

One can make the case that defoliators are simply nature's way of taking out tree species that are poorly adapted to these sites.

So again, as with so many forest insect or disease problems, the main issue is the favoring the right species for the site. Getting away from pure stands of grand fir and Douglas-fir will reduce your forests' vulnerability to defoliators such as spruce budworm and tussock moth.

It will also reduce problems with root diseases and other insects and disease which plague these tree species in Idaho.

For more information on defoliators, see:

https://www.idl.idaho.gov/forestry/forest-health/20140609_fact-sheet-defoliator.pdf

(Special thanks to Tom Eckberg and Erika Eidson, Forest Health Specialists, Idaho Department of Lands.) ■

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Fruit is quickly devoured by participants of University of Idaho's annual Fruit Field Day, which was held Sept. 6 at U of I's Parma Research and Extension Center.

Rainstorm doesn't spoil turnout for Fruit Field Day

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

PARMA – A major rainstorm didn't stop hundreds of people from attending University of Idaho's annual Fruit Field Day Sept. 6 at the Parma Research and Extension Center.

And although the rain caused the usual four-hour event to be significantly shortened this year, the thousands of pieces of fruit laid out on long display tables disappeared quickly once participants were given the OK to dig in.

The event draws several hundred people from the community and around

the Pacific Northwest and participants include commercial and small fruit growers as well as home gardeners, horticultural professionals, fruit industry representatives, researchers and graduate students.

The rain shortened this year's event but the turnout was about the same as past years.

“We believe in this center; Parma is really important to us. You being out here despite this rain shows you care also.”

— C. Scott Green, University of Idaho President

“What a great event,” new U of I President C. Scott Green said later. “I loved it and thought it was amazing. The fruit was fantastic and I was impressed by the quality.”

Green told event participants who ducked under the cover of tents, trees and umbrellas during a rainstorm, that the university fully supports the Parma station, which, in addition to fruit research, conducts research on a wide variety of field crops, including potatoes, onions, hops, wheat and beans.

He said it was obvious the community supports the Parma station as well, as evidenced by the turnout despite the rainstorm.

“We believe in this center; Parma is really important to us,” he said. “You being out here despite this rain shows you care also.”

Michael Parrella, the dean of U of I’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, which oversees the Parma station, said the fruit field day “is a very special event, as you all know. The job it takes to grow this quality of fruit and the effort it takes to put on this type of event ... is not a trivial thing.”

During this year’s abbreviated event, Green and Parrella applauded fruit researcher Essie Fallahi, who heads the university’s pomology program and oversees the Parma station’s fruit orchard, for the work he has done over the decades in researching different fruit varieties and helping develop best growing practices for Idaho fruit growers.

Fallahi’s pomology program – pomology is the science of fruit growing – conducts research on new and alternative fruit varieties as well as fruit nutrition, irrigation, pest and disease control, production and orchard mechanization methods, pesticide application and new rootstocks and architectures.

Fallahi, who joined U of I in 1990 and founded the university’s pomology and viticulture programs, has developed many of the production methods currently used



Photo by Sean Ellis

New University of Idaho President C. Scott Green, left, samples table grapes during the university’s Fruit Field Day Sept. 6 while researcher Essie Fallahi, who oversees U of I’s fruit research trials, addresses participants during the annual event.

by Idaho’s commercial fruit growers and many of the varieties grown in those orchards were first researched by Fallahi.

Fallahi said his top priority is “to find out what the needs of the growers are and figure out how to address them.”

He said the state’s fruit industry has grown in quality and reputation to the point that “in many countries, they ask for Idaho fruit by name.”

Idaho fruit is exported to more than 50 countries and some of the fruit grown here includes apples, peaches, wine and table grapes, plums and nectarines.

The Parma station’s pomology program is also researching several possible alternative fruits and nuts to see if they can be grown economically in Idaho’s climate and soil conditions. Those include walnuts, almonds, quince, Asian pears, jujube and haskap.

Parrella said the health of Idaho’s fruit

industry “is really a credit to what Essie has done,” and Green said Fallahi “is at the forefront of his industry.”

Fallahi recently received the American Pomological Society’s highest honor, the Wilder Medal.

According to the association’s award presentation letter, Fallahi received the medal because of his contributions in the fields of fruit germplasm, fruit nutrition, rootstock physiology, bio-regulators and blossom thinners.

He has published more than 250 articles and delivered more than 210 lectures nationally and internationally.

In a support letter, fellow fruit researcher Desmond Lane called Fallahi “a true, international ambassador for the science and practice of pomology ... The American Pomological Society is better because of him and he has left an enduring mark.” ■



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Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are harvested in a field in Bingham County, Idaho, last year. The total value of Idaho's 2018 potato crop has been valued at \$1.03 billion.

Value of Idaho's 2018 potato production hits \$1 billion

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Idaho's total potato production in 2018 has been valued at \$1.03 billion, a 5 percent increase over the 2017 total of \$975 million and the second highest total ever.

According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, which released that data Sept. 6, Idaho spud farmers harvested 14.2 billion pounds of potatoes in 2018, up from 13.5 billion pounds in 2017.

Idaho potato yields averaged 450 pounds per acre last year, up from 435 in 2017.

The marketing year average price for Idaho potatoes in 2018 was \$7.25 per hundred-weight (cwt), up 2 cents from 2017.

Last year was the first time since 2013 that the total value of Idaho's potato production exceeded \$1 billion and it was only the third time that has happened.

The Idaho record for total potato production value, set in 2011, is \$1.04 billion.

Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Frank Muir said last year's total was a positive development for the state's iconic

potato industry.

"It's a great thing," he said. "Any time you sell over \$1 billion worth of anything, you've done well."

He said that when production increases, as it did between 2017 and 2018, that usually results in depressed prices, but the average price for Idaho potatoes remained largely unchanged during that time and actually increased slightly in 2018.

"Prices weren't suppressed because demand is strong," he said.

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Ben Eborn said that as of right now, it appears the total value of Idaho's 2019 potato production will be close to the 2018 number and maybe a little bit higher.

"I think it will be up just slightly," he said. "Acreage is a little higher this year and prices haven't changed that much."

While the total value of Idaho's 2018 potato crop was put at \$1.03 billion, not all potatoes are sold. Some are lost through shrinkage and some are used on-farm or as seed.

When those factors are considered, NASS data showed that Idaho potato

farmers sold \$959 million worth of spuds last year, a 5 percent increase over the 2017 total.

The state's sales total in 2018 is also the second highest ever, behind only the \$969 million total from 2011, when potato prices averaged \$8.10 per cwt.

The total production value and sales of Idaho potatoes has risen significantly over the last 15 years.

In 2004, NASS put the total value of Idaho's potato crop at \$561 million and total sales were \$510 million that year, when Idaho farmers produced 13.2 billion pounds of spuds.

"We have basically doubled our annual revenue in the past 15 years," Muir said.

He said there are several factors that account for those increases but the commission's promotional and marketing efforts to increase demand are a big reason. The commission spends millions of dollars per year promoting the famous Idaho potato brand.

"As a commission, we've done a lot to change the demand trend," Muir said. "You only increase your total revenue if you're selling more product." ■

Futures, futures and futures

Fall wheat for the most part is planted, the potatoes are in and the beets are now in the process of being harvested. It won't be long until we will be looking at marketing the 2020 wheat crop.

For those of you that used the futures market to hedge your 2019 crop this strategy should have worked well for you.

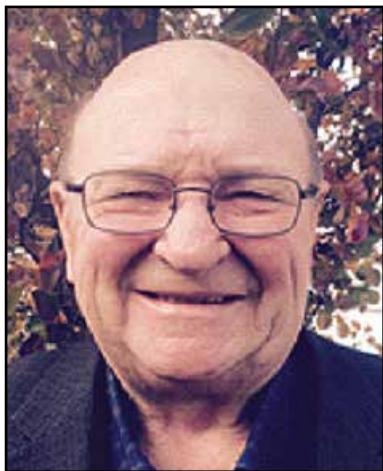
There were opportunities for you to sell Chicago December 2019 futures at levels that would have gave you the opportunity to price your soft white between \$5.30 and \$5.60 per bushel for delivery at this time frame.

[At the time I wrote this article the cash bid for soft white in southeast Idaho was \$4.70.]

For you hard white producers the hedged cash price was between \$6.50 and \$5.50 with the current bid at \$4.65. Will we have these same opportunities this year? I don't know. Only time will tell but I do know that there will be opportunities to hedge your wheat at good levels for the 2020 crop.

What we all need to do is be proactive and be ready to take advantage of these opportunities when they present themselves.

One of the reasons you are producers is that you are independent. You are not sheep. The point I am making is that you plant your own commodities, grow them, harvest and market



them independent of what others may be doing.

You may be tired of hearing me same this but futures, futures, futures should be a part of your marketing plan. If you still feel that using futures as a tool in hedging your commodities doesn't work, it's because you hav-

en't studied them and then used them.

There are two components that make up your cash price and they are the futures and the local basis. You would lock in the basis side early if you feel that the basis will weaken between the time you lock it in and the time you will deliver.

Historically, the basis strengthens as we move from spring and summer into late fall and early winter. Keep this in mind when basis contracts are being offered in the spring for delivery in the O,N,D time frame.

On the other hand we see the futures strengthen as we see weather related rallies in the spring. We also look at the carry in the futures markets for opportunities to lock in the futures.

Let's take a look at the hard white market for an example. Right now the carry into the December 2020 Kansas City futures market is 63 cents per bushel from December 2019. If the current basis level is where we are next year, your hard white price would be \$5.25 per bushel compared to the

current bid of \$4.65.

I wouldn't necessarily recommend you sell your futures at this time but can you see just how this will help you market your wheat? While I am giving you my opinion, remember these three things: First, don't buy options, second, don't buy options and third, don't buy options.

If you would like to know why, simply get in touch with me and I will be glad to explain it to you.

I know that there are those that believe buying options is the way for producers to manage their price risk in the market. That is OK, I am just not one of them. I believe that hedging with futures and then trading the basis is a far better way to manage your price risk.

Now is probably not a good time frame to hedge your 2020 crop. After the first of the year we historically see the futures trend higher as the commodities compete for acreage and we experience the weather-related markets.

This is when we will see the opportunities to hedge your wheat as well as your barley. And while I am thinking of this, the answer is, yes, you can hedge your malt barley.

For information on how the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation could assist you in hedging your commodities simply contact the Farm Bureau office in Pocatello.

Clark Johnston is a grain marketing specialist and owner of JC Management Co. of Ogden, Utah. He can be reached at clark@jcmanagement.net. ■

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Hundreds of Idaho potato farmers and shippers attended the Idaho Grower Shippers Association's 91st Annual Convention Aug. 28-30 in Sun Valley.

Potato growers, shippers briefed on intermodal facility, other projects

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

SUN VALLEY — A proposed intermodal facility and a complimentary 280,000-square-foot cold storage project in Pocatello could be a big benefit to the state's agricultural community if they come to fruition.

That was one of the main topics discussed during the Idaho Grower Shippers

Association's 91st Annual Convention, the Idaho potato industry's premiere event.

IGSA serves growers and shippers of the state's famous potatoes and the annual convention Aug. 28-30 attracted hundreds of people involved in the industry.

The convention included updates on the intermodal facility and cold storage project, which are separate but would both be located at the Pocatello airport and compliment each other.

Both would focus on the state's agricultural industry.

The intermodal facility could potentially help reduce transportation costs for ag shippers and provide them a way to get their products to market quicker.

The cold storage project could help ag shippers better leverage what they are already doing, said Kenneth Brown, a managing partner in LionChase Holdings, which is proposing that project.

The cold storage facility could enable shippers to add value to their existing products by providing services such as light processing, flash freezing, packaging and pathogen detection, he said.

"In other words, it would give you something else you can offer your customers," Brown said.

Brown said good progress has been made on that project and it could be built in about once months once some final details are wrapped up.

"We're working on a few more things to happen and then it (would go) up right away," he said. "We're very excited about it moving forward."

The intermodal facility is still in the economic feasibility stages but "it has gained some real momentum as we talk more about it," said Brig Skoy of Savage, which is proposing that project.

He said his company has been in talks with people who represent several farm commodities, including potatoes, hay, dry beans and dairy.

An intermodal facility is where shipping containers are switched from truck to train or vice versa. The current nearest intermodal facility to East Idaho is located in Salt Lake City.

Having an intermodal facility in Pocatello would enable shippers in the region to reduce transportation costs as well as help them get their product to market quicker.

The proposed intermodal facility would service shippers in a 150-mile radius around Pocatello, including as far away as Twin Falls, Rexburg and even northern Utah.

"We're excited about the possibility of participating in this facility," Skoy said. "We recognize the value it (would bring) to shippers in Idaho and it could attract new business as well."

The projects are being supported by IGSA as well as the Idaho Potato Commission.

During the convention, University of Idaho Economist Joe Guenther shared the highlights of his updated study that shows Idaho is the best low-cost alternative for a new frozen potato processing plant.

The study, commissioned by the IPC, analyzed production, transportation and other costs for a model frozen potato product processing plant in five U.S. states and three sites in Canada.

That model plant would produce 370,000 tons of product per year and Guenther factored in such costs as plant construction, labor, raw product, energy, packaging and transportation.

His study looked at the total cost of delivering frozen potato products to the 21 biggest markets in the United States, four in Canada and four in other nations.

It found that a plant in Idaho could deliver that product the cheapest to 24 of those locations, a plant in Washington would be the cheapest alternative in four locations and a plant in Alberta, Canada, would be the cheapest for one destination.

In summary, "A facility in Idaho could get product into 24 of those locations cheaper than any of the other states or Canadian sites," Guenther said.

"It shows that it's cheaper to build a processing plant in Idaho and it's cheaper to process the potatoes in Idaho and even

when you include the transportation costs, Idaho is the bargain," he said.

IPC President and CEO Frank Muir said the study "has been very positively received" by major potato processors.

"We've always believed that Idaho is the best place to build the next frozen potato processing plant but we needed to see the facts that support that," he said. "Dr. Guenther's study verifies what we thought was true."

During a separate presentation, Muir told convention participants that the potato commission's extensive marketing and promotion efforts would continue during the next year.

The IPC spends millions of dollars each year promoting the Idaho potato brand around the nation and world. Muir told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation later it's extremely important to keep Idaho's famous potatoes at the forefront of consumers' minds.

The IPC's consumer research shows the commission's promotion efforts are helping accomplish that, he said.

"When you ask people where the best potatoes come from, 90 percent say 'Idaho,'" Muir said.

Beth Bouza, senior director of food and refrigerated sales for Union Pacific Railroad, told convention participants the railroad has made an enormous effort rethinking and reworking its network and Idaho potato shippers can expect upgraded service from UP this harvest season.

"This upcoming season, you will see more consistent, reliable service from us," she said. ■

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Photo by Dianna Troyer

Last year, Cliff Warren's deep orange 763-pound pumpkin placed 10th in the Utah Giant Pumpkin Growers' weigh-off.

Pumpkins entertain long after weigh-in

By Dianna Troyer

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Why are rotund orange vegetables that weigh as much as a small horse so entertaining every autumn?

"Giant pumpkins make people smile because they generate a sense of awe and are so interesting to look at," said Cliff Warren, an expert at growing prize-winning Atlantic Giant pumpkins.

Nearly 20 years ago, the 54-year-old electrical engineer at ON Semiconductor in Pocatello became captivated with raising

them in his one-third acre garden west of town.

"At fairs, you hear so

many crazy theories about how they're grown," said Warren, who sometimes lingers near his blue ribbon winners to eavesdrop on fairgoers' comments. Sometimes he reveals his identity and becomes a myth buster.

No, they aren't fertilized with milk. He uses certain amounts of fish emulsion, seaweed and soil acidifiers.

No, pies aren't made from giant pumpkins because they lack flavor. Instead, he and his wife, Sondra, grow small sweet dessert pumpkins for pies.

Yes, he does cover them up at night with a blanket. How does he move them? Extremely carefully.

"I used to find six or seven friends to help me lift a pumpkin," Warren said.

Several years ago, he started using a tripod and sling. He rolls the pumpkin and slips a sling underneath. Webbed

straps resembling seat belts are attached to a chain hoist supported by a 16-foot-tall wooden tripod made of 4-inch square posts.

"I raise it, then slowly lower it on a carpeted pallet in the bed of my truck," he said.

Every summer, "knowing it's time for my crazy hobby, neighbors and friends at work ask how the pumpkins are doing," Warren said.

To satisfy their curiosity, he posts photo updates to Instagram, @cliffwarren.

"They can grow as much as 20 pounds in a day," he said.

Periodically taking three measurements at various points on a pumpkin, he uses a formula to calculate their weight.



Photo by Dianna Troyer

Cliff Warren covers up the Big Kahuna, his sole survivor of frosty weather this spring and summer. He entered it in the Utah Giant Pumpkin Growers' weigh-off in late September.

"I don't do it all the time because it tends to ruin my day if one isn't as big as I think it should be," Warren said.

He grows several giants and picks the top two to enter in the Eastern Idaho State Fair and the Utah Giant Pumpkin Growers' weigh-off.

"Each pumpkin can be entered in only one contest," said Warren, a member of the Utah growers group.

Even after the Utah contest in late September, his colossal crop still entertains.

Two years ago, he hollowed out his biggest pumpkin – a second-place 992-pound behemoth – and rowed it in a Utah regatta along with dozens of other Halloween celebrants. A Yankees fan, he wore a baseball cap for his costume and

named his pumpkin the Yankee Clipper.

"Managers at car dealerships, banks, and hospitals buy them as a talking point and keep them around as long as possible," he said.

Last year, a Salt Lake City business bought his 763-pound pumpkin for \$763, a deal brokered by a Utah grower and friend.

"An artist carved a detailed city scene in it," he said.

Timeless challenges

Every spring and summer, the same timeless questions confront Warren. Will unpredictable eastern Idaho weather cooperate or conspire against him? He patiently waits until autumn weigh-offs to answer the ultimate question.

Will one of his giants win yet another blue ribbon?

"Every year, I like the anticipation of waiting and wondering how they'll finally do on the scale," he said.

"They're such a challenge to raise because the weather varies so much each growing season. You have to make adjustments with fertilization and keeping them at an ideal temperature."

This growing season, frigid temperatures frustrated him.

"It froze a lot in April and May," he



said. "Most people memorize birthdays, but I can't help but remember the nights it froze – June 9 and June 21, the first day of summer. You cover the entire plant to protect them, but there's only so much you can do."

Only one of his giant pumpkins survived this year. Nicknaming it the Big Kahu-na, he took it to the Utah Giant Pumpkin Growers' weigh-off the last Saturday of September at Thanksgiving Point.

"Most of my friends in Utah lost theirs," Warren said. "For the first time in 15 years, I didn't enter the fair. It was disappointing, but after growing them for years, you learn to be flexible."

Whatever the size of his pumpkins, he said he is satisfied.

"I've made a lot of friends with other growers who like gardening as much as I do," he said. "There's camaraderie among growers. We all like to see each other succeed and share seeds."

In spring, he was cautiously optimistic when he planted seeds from a friend's 1,794-pound pumpkin, envisioning a gargantuan prize-winner.

"The genetics were there," he said, "and I know how to grow them."

He has a winning track record. Last year, his deep orange 692-pounder won a blue ribbon at the state fair in early September. His 763-pound pumpkin placed 10th at the Utah contest.

"In Utah, I'm always happy to be in the top 10," he said.

Gardening intuition

He credits his sister with planting the idea of growing giant pumpkins.

"She gave me a book about them in 2000, and it took off from there," he said. "Some people toy with the idea of growing one, but once they learn how much time it takes, they change their mind."

Warren shared a few time-tested tips.

"It's basically good gardening practices, having suitable soil and the right amounts of moisture and warmth," he said.

"Probably most important, though, is that you develop a gut instinct

because something unpredictable usually happens every summer with weather."

In early April, he plants seeds indoors from his previous year's winner. A few weeks later, he transplants about four or five with the most potential to his patch and covers them with a hoop house to protect them from the cold. By early June, the blossoms open.

"You generally select a blossom growing about 10 feet from the main vine, so the pumpkin will have room to spread as it grows," he said.

Each plant produces male and female blossoms.

"The females are only viable during the morning of one day," he said. "I'll cross-pollinate by hand, then tie the blossom shut with a tendril, so bees won't get in."

In July, the pumpkins begin gaining weight rapidly, as much as 20 pounds daily.

Relying on a protocol he has developed, Warren fertilizes weekly with a combination of fish emulsion, seaweed, and humic and fulvic acid. He is careful to not allow his pumpkins to grow too quickly.

"If they grow too fast, the skin will crack," he said.

To keep the pumpkins in the ideal temperature range of 50 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit, he covers them at night with blankets and sprinkles them with water during hot weather.

"We joke he tucks them in every night," his wife, Sondra, said.

He waits until the night before a weigh-in to cut the vine.

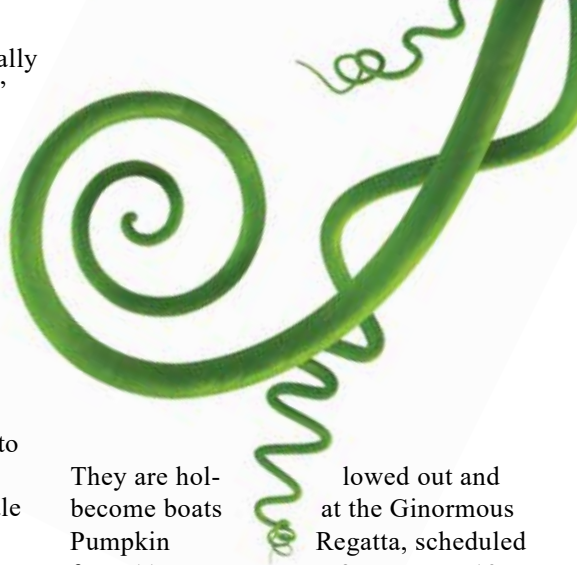
"You leave it on the vine until the last possible moment," he said.

While he is tending to his giant pumpkins, Sondra grows about 100 jack-o-lanterns. In October, they invite their children, grandchildren and friends and neighbors to pick out a pumpkin for Halloween.

"It's a big event for our neighborhood," she said.

Endless entertainment

After the Utah weigh-off, the pumpkins still make fans smile.



They are hol-
become boats
Pumpkin

from 11 a.m.
along the north

lowed out and
at the Ginormous
Regatta, scheduled
to 2 p.m. Oct. 19
shore of Oquirrh Lake
near South Jordan.

"Last year I donated two, so people could have fun in the regatta," said Warren, who was unable to participate due to a scheduling conflict.

"It's best to have a pumpkin with a fairly flat bottom because it's easier to row than a round one," he said, based on his experience with his second-place 992-pounder in 2017. "The smaller 400-pound ones are easier to row than the bigger ones. It's hard to get an 800-pound pumpkin moving because you're trying to pull both yourself and it."

A week after the regatta, another event attracts giant pumpkin fans.

The 11th Annual Giant Pumpkin Drop starts at noon Oct. 26 at HeeHaw Farms near Pleasant Grove, Utah. Pumpkins are hoisted 175 feet and dropped before a cheering crowd. Videos are posted on YouTube.

The giant pumpkin finale, Feast with the Beast, happens from 9 a.m. to noon on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, at the Hogle Zoo. Elephants get to stomp on and chomp on the giant pumpkins.

After Thanksgiving, the Warrens harvest seeds to grow more prize winners.

"Then we spread the pumpkins on the garden or use them for compost, so they feed next year's giants," Sondra said.

"Whatever the weight," Warren said, "it's worthwhile raising them. I'll never get tired of growing them." ■



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