

INVASIVE PEST

FOUND IN IDAHO, AGAIN



Antique Tractors, 8

Maple Syrup in Idaho? 14

Veterans Salute, 38



Coming to the table to modernize milk markets

I got my start in farming helping my dad with dairy cows. I loved it from the start when I was just a young boy, and I stayed in the dairy business for nearly 30 years.

But there were too many mornings when I'd open up my milk check and be shocked by how small it was.

Now, I know that farmers are price takers, not price setters. We all work hard to produce a healthy, safe, and quality product, but to stare at a check that could barely pay my expenses sure wasn't easy.

I tried to understand how milk prices were set, but the system was, and still is, confusing. More than 40 years later, I hear the same frustration from nearly every dairy farmer I encounter across the country.

As I tried to learn more, I realized that many different groups were trying to change the federal milk marketing orders that determined the prices – and they often didn't agree.

I would sit at my table, wishing all the groups would get together and fix the system

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk



Recent election will bring opportunities and challenges

Election season is over and with it came a lot of new faces, both at the city, county, state and national levels. With those new faces also comes new opportunities and challenges.

More than a third of Idaho's 105-member legislature will be completely new to the body when the state's 2023 legislative session kicks off in January.

On the national level, Republicans now control the House of Representatives.

What does that all mean?

No one knows for sure yet, but one thing is certain, all the new faces will need to be educated about the important role agriculture plays in our cities, counties, state and nation, and the important issues facing our industry.

We can't leave that task to others outside of our industry, who may or may not have agriculture's best interests in mind.

It's up to all of us involved in the industry to make sure all of our elected officials, new and incumbent, know how important agriculture

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau



A cause for good

This time of year causes many people to reflect upon the finer points of humanity: peace, thankfulness, joy, charity, and love are a few words that quickly come to mind.

As wonderful as this time can be in softening so many hearts, far too many people continue to suffer despite the season and the good wishes of many.

Russia is still attempting to invade Ukraine, and Putin continues to attack civilians and infrastructure in his despotic attempt for

control.

Mothers in Africa continue to seek relief for their malnourished, starving children as famine in Eastern Africa persists.

Afghanistan continues to suffer as its liberties are rolled back at an alarming clip as the Taliban continues to tighten its control of the Country. At the same time, Iran fights to maintain its grip on its citizens through power, violence, and oppression.

These tragedies are a small sample of the

See **MILLER**, page 7



Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo

Mountain snowpack levels in every Idaho basin are well above normal, but water managers caution that a lot more snow is needed this winter to ensure an adequate water supply for 2023.

Early snowfall welcome, but a lot more needed

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho’s new water year is off to a great start thanks to the recent snowstorms, and mountain snowpack levels in all Idaho basins are well above normal.

But it’s also really early in the water year, which began Oct. 1, and a lot more mountain snow is needed to ensure farmers, recreationists and others who depend on the state’s reservoirs have a decent water supply in 2023.

Idaho’s mountains typically don’t have a lot of snow this time of year so the current snowpack levels amount to a little on top of a little. That can deceptively make snowpack percentages seem enormous when compared to historical levels.

For example, collective snowpack levels in the Willow-Port-neuf-Blackfoot basin were 498 percent of normal on Nov. 14, according to the Idaho SNOTEL report.

In reality, measuring sites in that basins have a handful of inches of snow.

Snowpack levels were 153 percent of normal in the important Snake River basin, which 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.

See SNOWPACK, page 19

COVER: See page 4 for story on possible new infestation of Japanese beetles in Caldwell. These invasive pests feed on and can destroy 300 different crops and plants. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation graphic



Idaho State Department of Agriculture photos

Japanese beetles like the one shown here can damage a wide variety of crops. The Idaho ag department is on high alert after 75 of the invasive pests were detected this year near farmland in Caldwell.

Invasive beetle detected near farmland in Caldwell

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

CALDWELL – An invasive pest harmful to crops that was successfully eradicated from the Boise area has popped up again near agricultural land in Caldwell.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture officials are briefing farm groups about a new infestation of Japanese beetles, a highly destructive plant pest that feeds on more than 300 different agricultural and ornamental plants.

The beetles can cause significant damage to a wide variety of agricultural crops grown in Idaho, including corn, beans, peas, hops, grapes, apples, stone fruit and nursery stock.

“What we love, they love,” said Andrea Thompson, section manager of ISDA’s plant industries division. “They have a voracious appetite for some of our top ag commodities.”

“If left unchecked, the beetles could cause large negative impacts to our top commodities,” Thompson told members of the Idaho Hop Growers Commission Nov. 2.

ISDA is gauging whether the state’s ag industry will support

another large Japanese beetle eradication effort in Idaho.

Members of the hop commission didn't hesitate in saying they would.

"We are 100 percent in support of that," IHGC Chairman Brock Obendorf told Thompson.

Idaho is the No. 2 hop growing state in the nation and the state's fast-growing hop industry brought in \$104 million in farm-gate receipts in 2021, ranking hops as Idaho's No. 9 agricultural commodity in total farm revenue.

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Seed Association Executive Director Roger Batt told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation that industry would support any new eradication effort.

The Southwestern Idaho-Eastern Oregon region is one of the top five seed producing areas in the world and the \$500 million industry could be threatened by the Japanese beetle if it's left unchecked, Batt said.

"Our Idaho-Eastern Oregon seed industry obviously has a concern about what these beetles can do to crops," he said. "I know our association will be on board ... to help eradicate this pest in Idaho."

After dozens of Japanese beetles were detected in Boise in 2012, the ISDA undertook a major eradication effort that resulted in the pest not being detected in Boise the past three years.

Thompson said it was the largest documented Japanese beetle eradication in U.S. history.

ISDA suspects the invasive pest hitchhikes to Idaho, mainly on nursery stock. Rules are in place to try to prevent that from happening but they still pop up in Idaho from time to time.

Idaho has been trapping for the beetles since 1991.

In 2021, one of the beetles was found in a cemetery in Caldwell. This year, 75 were found within a one-mile radius in Caldwell.

Idaho's fruit industry is centered around the Caldwell area.

The fact that they were detected right next to farmland has ISDA and Idaho's farming industry on high alert. The ag department is currently gauging the feasibility of undertaking another major eradication effort.



The Japanese beetle is a highly destructive pest that feeds on more than 300 different agricultural and ornamental plants.

Thompson said that in other areas of the country where the beetle is found in high numbers, growers' only option is weekly chemical treatments during the growing season to minimize damage.

The beetle, native to Japan, was first detected in the U.S. in 1916 and is now found in most states east of the Mississippi River.

Adult Japanese beetles are about a half-inch long and have metallic green bodies

and coppery wing covers.

Adults beetles can leave holes in plants and skeletonize leaves.

"It's an invasive species and we take it seriously," Thompson said.

For more information about the pest, contact Thompson at (208) 332-8620 or by email at Andrea.Thompson@isda.idaho.gov. ■

Continued from page 2

so farmers like me could get a fair price for our milk.

Well, it might have taken a few decades, but a couple of months ago, that finally happened. Farm Bureau brought together farmers with representatives from co-ops, processors, and other milk organizations to find a way forward.

Two years ago, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told me and our state Farm Bureau presidents that USDA wouldn't change

federal milk marketing orders until we could all come together to find a proposal that worked for everyone.

When we gathered in Kansas City, we weren't sure what common ground we might find. But sitting down at the table is what needed to be done if we wanted to make any progress that would help farmers.

After two days of long discussions, we found common ground that could help us modernize milk marketing.

We need to update federal milk marketing orders and make them more resilient, so we don't face the same problems we did at the start of the pandemic.

We also agreed that we must improve price transparency and ensure timely payments to farmers.

We couldn't have made this progress without coming to the table. Just as Farm Bureau has done many times in the past few years, our leadership in bringing folks together delivers results for

America's farmers and ranchers.

When different groups debated the best way forward on federal climate policy, we noticed elected officials didn't want to take sides and pitted us against each other.

But, we knew that if we could stand together, we could help lawmakers create policies that respected farmers and treated us as equal partners in caring for our environment.

We found common ground across agriculture, food, forestry and environmental groups and got together to form the Food and Ag Climate Alliance.

As we worked to bring more transparency and fairness to livestock markets, we sat down with other livestock organizations that have different ideas than we do. We moved past areas where we knew we couldn't agree and tried

'While we work hard with members of Congress to move forward policies that will help America's farmers and ranchers, sometimes we need partners to get it over the finish line.'

to find common ground.

While we work hard with members of Congress to move forward policies that will help America's farmers and ranchers, sometimes we need partners to get it over the finish line.

That's why we must work with others who may not always agree with us. If we can find common ground, we can build on that foundation to ensure American agriculture remains strong for the future. ■

Continued from page 2

is to Idaho and the United States and how farmers and ranchers feel about important issues.

The election-related changes will bring new opportunities as well as new challenges.

We need to engage now in getting to know our newly elected local, state, and national representatives. As the old saying goes, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease."

I recently attended the annual conven-

'Not only do we need to educate others, but we must hold our elected officials accountable.'

tion of the Washington state Farm Bureau. While there, I was part of a discussion with a state legislator from Washington who was asked what he would suggest Idaho do to remain the great state that we are.

His response was, to elect people who align with our beliefs and policies on every level of government, from the local level to

the national level.

We must work each day collectively as a Farm Bureau organization to educate and surface individuals who will represent us.

Our elected officials also need to be informed or reminded about the various policies Farm Bureau's grassroots members have adopted on many issues that farmers

and ranchers deem important to agriculture.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 83rd annual meeting wrapped up on Dec. 8 and grassroots farmers and ranchers from around the state voted on proposed changes, additions, and deletions to IFBF's important policy book.

It is important to remind people that all the policies included in the book have been thoroughly debated and eventually adopted by bona fide farmers and ranchers at the grassroots level.

It is not IFBF board members or professional staff that create these policies. It's producers at the local level that introduce and accept or reject proposed policies.

This policy book sits in or on the desks of a good number of state legislators. That's great, but it's up to us to make sure they understand the various policies included in the book and why they are important to our industry.

IFBF's professional and volunteer members will do their part to ensure that happens, but we need our organization's grassroots members' help in that effort.

I would encourage every farmer and rancher in the state to strike up a professional relationship with their local elected officials and make sure they understand the major issues our industry faces.

It's better they learn about the issues important to agriculture directly from those

involved in the industry.

There is no better way to do that than to directly communicate with our elected officials and make sure they understand why certain issues are important to our industry.

Not only do we need to educate others but we must hold our elected officials accountable.

Now that Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's new policy book has been adopted, it's time to buckle down and work to implement those policies.

IFBF staff and volunteer members stand ready to work with all of you to accomplish that. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

suffering many of our fellow human beings are experiencing, even during this season of joy, thanksgiving, love, and peace. So, what can be done to help our better angels flourish despite the many deprivations of mankind?

In "A Christmas Carol," Scrooge learns that he neither met his needs nor avoided suffering for others in seeking his interests. Once Scrooge realizes his happiness is intertwined with all those around him, he can find his inner happiness.

Agriculture is often called a noble profession, and I believe it is.

Food is so simple and usually an afterthought. However, without it, very little in life can be done, and any form of human happiness is tough to achieve in the absence of food.

Thinking about Scrooge after his great awakening and realizing he still had time, I like to believe that he still went to work and made money.

I don't think work or profits were Scrooge's villains. I believe his heart, not efforts, needed correction.

We may be unable to stop the effects of nature or some men's devils as individuals. Such things are probably beyond each of our grasps.

However, if we do our best to expand our talents with charity and love in our hearts, that may mean more milk in the tank, wheat in the bin, sacks in the potato cellar, or weight on the calf.

If in our spheres, we do all we can to take care of ourselves and those closest to us, we can do more to help others who have less than ourselves—what a sweet pathway to peace through charity.

This time of year, the greatest story that comes to mind is that of the Christ Child. He did not stop the tyrants. He did not remove wicked governments or people.

His birth and life showed us that it is not foolhardy to love and give. He showed us through his perfect example that he provides

peace and love.

The most significant cause for good we can be is to follow the example of Jesus and try a little harder to be more like him.

That may be in magnificent miracles or our small humble efforts. Just like Scrooge, it is not the effort but the heart that can be the greatest cause for good. ■

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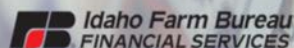
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Simplot antique tractors are like national treasures

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – The novelty or fun factor associated with the 50 antique tractors that are built into and around the JUMP facility in downtown Boise is not wearing off.

The JUMP facility opened in December 2015 and the tractors were incorporated into the design of the facility.

“They’re more popular than they ever were,” says Rob Bearden, the curator of the JUMP facility’s tractors, whose title is literally Tractor Doctor. “The more we promote them, the more and more people show up and see them.”

Jack’s Urban Meeting Place is a \$70 million community gathering center funded by the family of the late J.R. “Jack” Simplot, who was known as “Mr. Spud” because of his role in putting Idaho potatoes on the map.

The tractors that adorn the JUMP facility are among 110 pieces of antique agricultural equipment Simplot purchased during an auction in 1998 from an agricultural museum owned by Oscar Cooke, a Montana farmer who died in 1995.

Bearden says Cooke had the largest collection of tractors and farm implements in the world at the time and Simplot bought the best of the best.

The 110 pieces of farm equipment Simplot purchased in themselves form one of the world’s premier collections of antique and oddball tractors, he says.

Some of them almost look like they could have come out of a Dr. Seuss book.

Others, such as Kerosene Annie, a 1909 Rumely prototype, are literally one of a kind.

Some are the last of their kind, such as a 1910 Olmstead, a four-wheel drive articulating tractor that is the only one left of 28 made.



Photos by Sean Ellis

Rob Bearden, aka the Tractor Doctor, talks about some of the 60 pieces of antique farm equipment that J.R. Simplot purchased from an auction in 1998. The other 50 pieces are built into the JUMP facility in downtown Boise.

“The average American is now at least three generations removed from the farm, so having this connection to agriculture in an urban setting open to the public, helps to bridge that gap.”

- Britany Hurst Marchant, Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director

The collection includes a 1923 Avery Track Runner, which is only one of two left in the world.

The tractors located inside and outside the JUMP facility are a popular attraction and people from all over the U.S. and

world come to visit them, Bearden says.

He says the tractors, which date from the 1890s to 1939, border on being national treasures because they tell the story of the evolution of machinery and agriculture.

“They’re far beyond just antiques,” Bearden says. “Antiques are just a bunch of old stuff. These are more than that. Some of the history involved in these things, the national history and the tractor itself, just makes them very special.”

“You see the whole evolution of tractors here at JUMP,” he says. “We’ve got it all.”

Given enough time and money, all of the tractors could be used on a farm again, Bearden says. He recently got Kerosene Annie running again and drove her Sept. 5 in the Western Minnesota Steam Threshers

Reunion in Rollag, Minn.

“It was awesome; the first fire was crazy,” he says. “It was the first time I ever plowed with a tractor with a five-bottom plow and it happened to be a 1909 factory prototype with chain steering on it.”

Bearden won’t say whether he has a favorite tractor among the collection; he says doing that would be like choosing a favorite child.

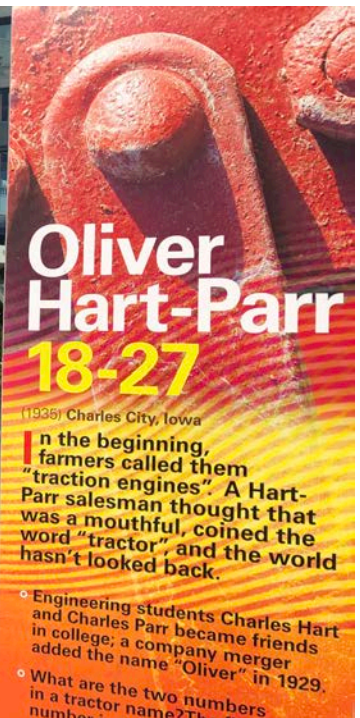
“Every one of them is just unique in its own way and a little fragment in the evolution of tractors,” he says. “Each one is a little piece of time.”

He says they are incredibly popular not just among farmers but also the general public.

“Pretty much everybody likes old tractors,” he says.

Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Britany Hurst Marchant says the tractor collection is a nice testament to the state’s agricultural roots and a great learning experience for members of the public who know little nothing about farming.

“The average American is now at least three generations removed from the farm, so having this connection to agriculture in an urban setting open to the public, helps to bridge that gap,” she says. “It’s neat to have a community center in downtown Boise that helps tell the story of Idaho and American farming.”



This is one of 50 antique tractors built into and around the JUMP facility in downtown Boise. They are among 110 antique pieces of farm equipment J.R. Simplot purchased from an auction in 1998. The other 60 are located in an undisclosed location in the Boise area.

Bearden says he is constantly learning something different about the tractors, often from farmers.

“Every day’s a school day around here,” he says. “You’re learning something new every day here.”

The beauty of the JUMP facility, Bearden

says, is that the public can stop by any time and view the antique tractors.

“You can see them any time; just show up,” he says. “They aren’t going anywhere. They are right here in downtown Boise, Idaho.”

For more information about the tractors or to schedule a private tour, visit the JUMP webpage: jumpboise.org, or email Bearden at rob.bearden@jumpboise.org

The other 60 pieces of antique farm equipment Simplot purchased are located at an undisclosed site in the Treasure Valley and there are some beauties there, too, Bearden says.

“You wouldn’t believe the stuff that’s out there,” he says.

Bearden says it hasn’t been decided exactly what will happen with those antique pieces of equipment yet.

“There will be something happening with them; we’ll just have to see what happens,” he says. ■

These are some of the 60 pieces of antique farm equipment that J.R. Simplot purchased from an auction in 1998. The other 50 pieces are built into the JUMP facility in downtown Boise.





Lavender

A scent-sational boutique crop grows in popularity

Photo by Cindy Singleton

Carla and Chris Ketchum near Rupert bundle their lavender and also offer u-pick.

By Dianna Troyer
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Idaho's lavender farmers joke that working in their fragrant fields is more like an aromatherapy session than a chore.

Recognizing Idaho's diverse microclimates and soil are ideal for raising lavender, farmers have made the state a mecca for the boutique crop during the past decade with fields cropping up statewide.

They say their clients seeking Idaho-grown gifts buy lavender bundles and handcrafted health and beauty products.

Increasingly popular, lavender is low-maintenance and profitable on small acreage. A hardy, pest-resistant perennial shrub, it requires minimal watering and fertilization.

Thriving in full sun and well-drained soil, each plant lives about 10 years.

For centuries worldwide, lavender has been prized for cooking, floral arrangements, and as an ingredient in health and beauty products.

Studies suggest lavender benefits those with depression, insomnia and anxiety, and that its oil has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties.

Promoting lavender's many uses, Bill and Wendy Southerland host an annual summer festival at their farm, Red Chair Lavender, founded in 2011 in southwestern Idaho near Eagle.

They grow 6,000 plants of 32 varieties on a little more than 2 acres.

In southeastern Idaho near Rupert, Chris and Carla Ketchum

started Ketchum Hollow Lavender in 2015 as a way to maintain a robust lifestyle during retirement.

In northern Idaho at Blooming Fields Lavender near Athol, Stacey and Nitin Aggarwal, in their early 30s, launched their farm in 2018, seeking an outdoor occupation to replace their corporate jobs in Seattle.

Their 3,500 plants on 11 acres represent 14 varieties.

Red Chair Lavender

The Southerlands distill two-thirds of their lavender into oil. The remainder is cut and hung to dry and sell, or the buds are removed for culinary use or for health and beauty products. They also harvest their bees' lavender honey.

"One of our markets is assisted living facilities, where it's used in memory care," Bill said. "Using essential oils, especially like lavender, is becoming mainstream because it helps reduce some residents' agitation levels without resorting to medication. Plus, staff members say they like being around it."

Bill, 72, said he noticed the trend during his 25 years of developing small-scale personalized assisted living facilities.

Visitors at Red Chair Lavender, named for a favorite outdoor chair, often ask for advice about starting a lavender farm.

"It's a crop that can be lucrative on a small piece of land, but you have to make a plan of how you'll market it," Bill said. "For us, probably 60 percent of our annual income comes from our festival. You also need to do research to see whether local planning and zoning regulations will impact your farm."

Every July, the Southerlands host their Lavender Harvest Festival with lavender distillation demonstrations, crafts, food and beverages, musicians and artists.

They established their farm after attending a lavender festival outside Pendleton, Ore.

Their fresh and dried bunches are popular for weddings, bridal and baby showers, and other family celebrations. Customers may also pick their own bunches. Their farm also provides a studio for a local photographer.

"Our small shop at the farm is open year-round for people to buy gifts, ranging from bath and body products to food and decoration," said Wendy, 65. "We want folks to enjoy the benefits and beauty of lavender as much as we do."

Ketchum Hollow

At age 60, Chris and Carla Ketchum launched their half-acre, u-pick lavender farm seven years ago.

"I did some research and realized our sandy soil and climate are suited to lavender, which happens to be one of Carla's favorite plants and aromas," Chris said. "We wanted to do something we would enjoy that would also put some beauty in the world."

It took them six weeks to plant 1,200 seedlings. They installed a dripline, weeded by hand, and wondered about their first harvest.

"We had 80 bundles," Carla said. "By our third and fourth years, we were cutting about 3,700 bundles with each bundle having 80 to 90 stems."

Although the plants are hardy, the Ketchums have lost some to unusually harsh winters and alfalfa mosaic, a disease which yellows the stems and eventually kills the plant.

During their three-week harvest in late July and August, the



Photo by Dianna Troyer

Lavender grows along the sidewalks at the Idaho Capitol.

average yield from 700 plants is about 2,000 bundles.

They grow three varieties.

Grosso is prized for its scent. Hidcote Giant grows about 30 inches tall and is popular for floral arrangements. Munsted, with its floral and sweet flavor, is used for cooking.

See **LAVENDER**, page 16



Photos by Kathy Corgatelli Neville

Savannah Hoff Fratto, left, and her mom, Darla Hoff, get started bringing baby dinosaurs to life on some straw bales at the Al and Karen Goldman farm south of Idaho Falls.

Dinosaur straw bale art

Pre-historic attraction ahead – prepare to smile

By Kathy Corgatelli Neville
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

When Darla Hoff and daughter Savannah Hoff Fratto transform ordinary straw bales into extraordinary works of art, it never disappoints.

Their latest creation, Baby Dinosaurs, is now on full display at the Al and Karen Goldman farm a few miles south of Idaho Falls on Hitt Road.

The roadside attraction has been a tradition for over a decade now. And through the years, it's become a must-see destination as daylight hours shorten and temperatures dip, signaling a brand new season.

This year a bright, orange Triceratops, painted by Savannah Fratto, and an equally bright, lime green, Brontosaurus painted by Darla Hoff, guarantees to evoke smiles on the outside and on the inside of every visitor, regardless of age.

"We had a lot of options but we tend to lean toward bright colors and happy, cute subjects," Darla Hoff said. "This is one of the few times we haven't followed the latest kids' movie theme."

Savannah Fratto has helped from the very beginning, only taking a few years off when she was away to college.

"It's always been a great bonding project for my mom and I for the last decade or so," she said.

And over the years, how happy and cute their creations have been. There's been Star Wars, Thomas the Train, the ever-popular and always entertaining Minions, the loveable, UNscary Monsters from the Monsters Inc., and a giant, cuddly teddy bear, just to name a few.

Overall, the teddy bear remains Karen Goldman's favorite. Making it even more fun was when Savannah Fratto finished it off with a great big bow tie, Karen Goldman said.

That creation found a larger audience when Karen Goldman entered a picture of it in the annual Steiner Tractor Calendar contest and it was selected as October's picture in the company's 2016 calendar.

In the picture, the teddy bear is the backdrop for a 1948 Allis Chalmers G tractor that Karen Goldman learned to drive as a young girl on her parents' farm and was restored by Al Goldman and their son, Chad Goldman.

Karen Goldman keeps a picture diary of each straw bale creation.

“The teddy bear is my favorite and the dueling tractors is James Hoff’s favorite, but overall, most people like the Minions the best. They have been the biggest hit. It’s just all fun,” Karen Goldman said.

Like all things, the art and its purpose evolved. It grew from Darla’s clever advertisement directing potential customers to her pumpkin patch, a few miles south of the Goldman’s.

Once Al Goldman harvested and placed a single round straw bale in their yard, Darla painted it to resemble the face of a huge, smiling, orange and black, jack-o-lantern.

After several years, when Darla quit raising pumpkins, the tradition continued the very next year with an owl sitting on a tree limb.

The towering, three-large round bale teddy bear required a total of 11 bales to build, rivaling the number needed to build the dueling green John Deere and red Case tractors.

Lots of paint and time were needed and the project involved practically everyone in the close-knit farming neighborhood. The project quickly became the focus of die-hard John Deere fans, like Al and Karen Goldman and Case tractor fans, like neighbor Steven Longhurst.

The owners of the Blackfoot John Deere dealership even got involved by contributing some green paint.

Karen Goldman makes sure there’s plenty of paint and other supplies on hand and can be counted on to head to town to get more if needed.

Once Darla designed the dueling tractors and calculated the number of bales needed, the guys stepped up. But instead of using simple, single spray cans of paint, like the gals, they put a little, or rather, a lot of power, behind their efforts with a heavy-duty air compressor.

Like in years past, the images are often enhanced with ordinary items. This year, Darla Hoff used a lime green pool noodle for the tail of her dinosaur. It was used last year for one of the arms of Mike Wazowski’s, the one-eyed character in the *Monsters Inc.* movie.

They’ve even re-used straw bales. This



The latest straw bale art by Darla Hoff and her daughter, Savannah Hoff Fratto, is on display at the Al and Karen Goldman farm south of Idaho Falls. The Hoff and Goldmans have displayed straw bale art for over 10 years in an effort that involves numerous farm families.

year’s display was made from the same four round and four square straw bales used last year.

“We just turned them around and used the other side,” Darla Hoff said.

Another contribution were several old tail pipes used for the smokestacks on the dueling tractors creation.

The projects typically take an average of about four to five hours to paint and this year the mother-daughter duo used about 20 cans of spray paint.

To help out with expenses, sometimes visitors leave monetary donations or to express appreciation for their talent and time spent, they’ll write and leave sweet little notes of thanks.

The art has been the site of several school field trips, or men with marriage on their mind and “Honey will you marry me?” on their lips.

Their creations have been featured in *Country*

Magazine and in numerous area newspaper articles, they’ve been photographed by professionals, and have been the main subject of lots and lots of selfies like the one Aleece Reid and daughter Olivia Reid, 5, of Firth recorded during their recent

visit.

“I grew up just down the road from the Goldman’s up at the Idaho Falls Country Club,” Aleece Reid said. “There are only two ways to town and I’d always ask my mom to go past the cute hay bales. It was always something that made our day just a little better when we drove by them.

“Now married and living out in Firth, my daughter Olivia is now asking me when we make the trek to the ‘big city’ if we can go see the cute hay bales! We both really look forward to making the drive into Idaho Falls and stop to say hello to this year’s creations!”

When 5-year-old Olivia Reid saw them, she was more than just a little impressed.

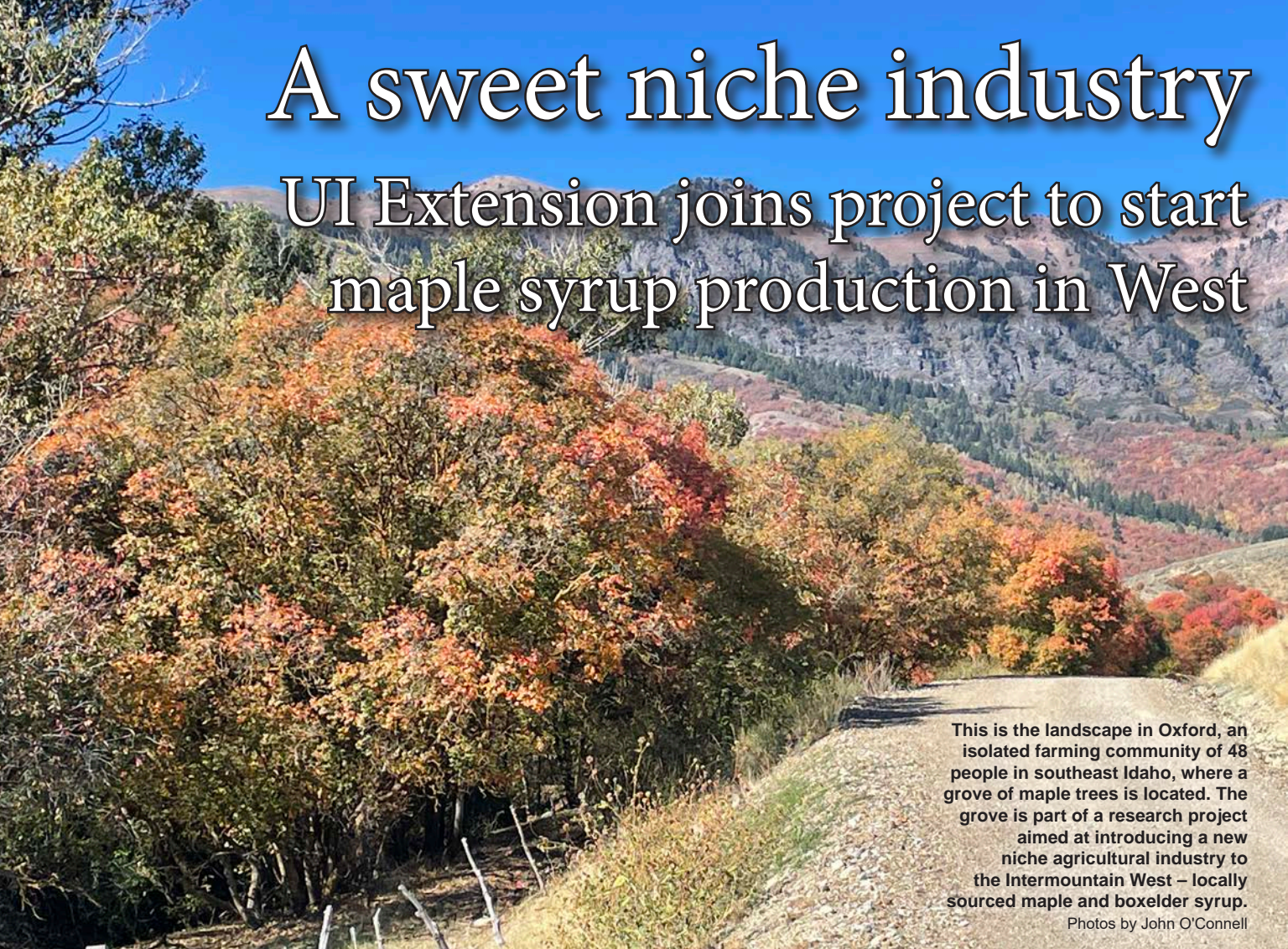
“Just look at these HUGE, cute dinosaurs,” Olivia said. “The orange one looks super nice. Big, but nice.”

If have time to visit, stay a little while and while you are at it, check out all the subtle little touches, the mark of true artists.

“A little dimension gives the eyes a little glimmer and a little mischief, too. And this color of blue,” Darla said while holding up a can of bright blue spray paint, “it reminds me of Karen’s pretty, blue eyes.” ■

A sweet niche industry

UI Extension joins project to start maple syrup production in West



This is the landscape in Oxford, an isolated farming community of 48 people in southeast Idaho, where a grove of maple trees is located. The grove is part of a research project aimed at introducing a new niche agricultural industry to the Intermountain West – locally sourced maple and boxelder syrup.

Photos by John O'Connell

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

MOSCOW, Idaho – On a steep hillside beneath a canopy of scarlet leaves, University of Idaho Extension educator Bracken Henderson, Franklin County, searched for the perfect copse of bigtooth maple trees.

About 25 yards uphill, his collaborators – Paul Harris, a research technician with Utah State University's Center for Water-Efficient Landscaping, and USU plant sciences graduate student Jesse Mathews – evaluated trunk circumferences within another grove.

The researchers are in the first year of a project aiming to introduce a new niche agricultural industry to the Intermountain West – locally sourced maple and boxelder syrup.

USU received a three-year, \$500,000 grant through the Acer Access and Development Program under USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to test the feasibility of commercial syrup production in parts of Idaho, Utah and Wyoming.

From these funds, U of I received a \$50,000 sub-award to assist in the effort, focusing on the foothills near Oxford, an isolated

farming community of 48 people in southeast Idaho.

On that crisp, early October morning, the trio selected 30 of the largest maples they could find on a sufficient grade and within proximity to one another.

They set up a network of rubber piping connecting the trees to a central vessel at the base of the hill. In the spring, the researchers will tap the trees to collect sap, which Henderson will boil and reduce to make syrup.

They hope to demonstrate to landowners that the profits they stand to make by selling syrup are worth their time and effort.

"Whatever we come up with is better than anyone has done in the state of Idaho," Henderson assured Harris as they discussed the optimal configuration for their network of tubing.

"Or in the West at all," Harris added.

Henderson is working with two Oxford agricultural producers who are seeking a new way to diversify their operations and pad profits.

Landowner Clark Cox has both dairy and beef cows that graze his maple forest, and he also raises hay and grain. He's optimistic maple syrup production will provide him a small revenue stream from a perennial resource.

“There’s not a lot of research out there about maple syrup in the West. Most of these trees they wouldn’t tap in the East. They want 8-inch trunks and larger, but we don’t have those here.”

- Bracken Henderson, University of Idaho Extension educator

“I hope to utilize the maples in another way rather than just for firewood,” Cox said. “We’ll leave them standing for beautification but also utilize what they produce.”

Henderson believes landowners could save time and cut costs by pooling their sap, boiling it together and marketing it under a common label. He’s also curious about reverse osmosis as a means of removing much of the water from sap to reduce boil time.

Henderson experimented last season by tapping several trees, collecting the sap in buckets. His finished bigtooth maple syrup had a similar sugar content as syrup made from sugar maples in the East, and he was impressed by the flavor.

Using buckets, he collected about 30 liters of sap per tree throughout the single season – roughly half the yield of operations in major production states such as Vermont.

He had to boil 40 to 50 liters of sap to make a single liter of finished product.

The U.S. Forest Service estimates Idaho has at least 2.1 million bigtooth maple trees of sufficient size to be tapped, with the best stands spanning throughout eastern Idaho.

“There’s not a lot of research out there about maple syrup in the West,” Henderson said. “Most of these trees they wouldn’t tap in the East. They want 8-inch trunks and larger, but we don’t have those here.”

USU yielded a similar volume using buckets last season. The researchers, however, are optimistic they’ll fare better this season with hoses.

It takes about 30 trees growing close to-

gether on a slope with a 30-foot elevation difference from the top tree in the group to the vessel at the bottom to maximize tubing capacity.

Rather than relying solely on gravity to extract sap, as is the case with buckets, the tubing system creates a vacuum to suck out additional sap, which should boost sap yields.

“I’d love to see a Utah or Idaho maple syrup company, but we’ll see,” Mathews

said. “So far, it’s taken a lot of time and effort for what we’ve gotten out of this, but this is our first year trying a tubing system, so that may be the way to do it.”

In addition to the Oxford properties, University of Wyoming will collaborate with test locations in the Cowboy State, and USU is evaluating three sites in Utah’s Cache Valley.

At one of those locations in Spanish Fork, Utah, discussions are underway about starting a community maple syrup festival.

The principal investigators of the project, Youping Sun and Kelly Kopp, both with USU’s Department of Plants, Soils and Climate, envision western syrup enjoying strong demand at farmers markets and other locations specializing in locally produced food products.

“I think there’s really great potential,” Sun said. ■



RIGHT: University of Idaho Extension educator Bracken Henderson sets up rubber tubing to collect maple syrup in the hills near Oxford, Idaho, in early October.

LAVENDER

Continued from page 11

Carla adds lavender to pancake mix, shortbread cookies, lemonade, and honey. She also puts it in soups and uses it in a savory meat rub.

Outside the kitchen, she makes lavender wreaths, wands, sachets, bouquets, a powdered laundry booster, hand sanitizer, bubbling bath salts, and a room spritzer.

“Studies have shown lavender is calming and helps alleviate depression and insomnia,” she said. “It’s even helped some people with PTSD.”

In hindsight, Carla said, lavender was serendipitous for her health. Diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer in 2015, she relied on its scent throughout her treatment. She kept a sachet in her car and purse.

“Before every appointment, I inhaled the aroma and it calmed me,” she said. “My daughter made me a cream with lavender oil that I used during 33 radiation treatments, and I never burned. I give credit to God and medical and natural doctors for healing me. God put lavender in my life at the perfect time when I needed it most.”

In the fall after their harvest, the Ketchums prune their lavender, shaping it into a uniform mound.

“We look forward to spring, never taking for granted how beautiful the first blossoms will look and smell,” Carla said.

Blooming Fields

Running a vertically integrated farm, the Aggarwals grow lavender in their greenhouse, plant and harvest it, distill the oil, make health and beauty products, and teach classes on making home décor such as wreaths.

“We do it all right here,” Stacey said. “It’s really satisfying to see the entire cycle from the cuttings in the greenhouse to the finished oil and products. It’s been a great startup that the two of us can manage.”

Seeking an alternative to their 9-to-5 jobs, the couple researched lucrative boutique crops that could be grown on small acreage.

“We wanted to work outside, to have a connection with the natural world instead



Photo by Dianna Troyer

After harvest, lavender bushes are pruned into a mound in the fall.

of having corporate careers,” said Stacey, a science writer who earned a Ph.D. in molecular pharmacology in 2018. Nitin was an industrial engineer for Boeing.

“We had visited lavender farms, and I’ve always loved the scent,” Stacey said. “We liked northern Idaho and were confident a lavender farm would do well there. The plants are hardy and can withstand winter.”

They bought varieties from nurseries throughout the Northwest and also learned to propagate lavender from cuttings.

“We wanted half the varieties to be culinary and the other to be ornamental, so we could provide options,” she said. “In cooking, people generally think of using it in desserts, but it’s also really good as a savory herb with meats and vegetables.”

Another appeal of lavender as a crop “is that in the future we can scale up at our own pace,” Stacey said. ■



Photo courtesy of Ketchum Hollow Lavender

Bundles of lavender retain their fragrance for months.



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SNOWPACK

Continued from page 3

That sounds like a huge amount of snow. But again, most measuring sites in the Snake River basin actually only had several inches of snow on Nov. 14.

That's a long way from what the Snake basin will need when Idaho's typical mountain snowpack season ends April 1, said Tony Olenichak, watermaster for Water District 1, which is Idaho's largest and encompasses the Upper Snake system.

He said he usually doesn't pay much attention to snowpack levels until about the first part of January but at the same time, this year's early snowfall is certainly a good start.

"It really is too early to use the current snowpack as an indicator of how next year's water supply will look ... but it's better than not having any at all," Olenichak said.

Upper Snake reservoirs are very low right now and the basin will need an above-average snowpack this winter, he said. A wetter-than-average spring, which would delay the need for irrigation water to be released, would also help, he added.

"That's the combination we're looking for to have an average water supply next year," Olenichak said.

Snowpack in the Boise River basin was 269 percent of normal on Nov. 14.

That's certainly welcome news but the snow has to keep coming this winter to ensure a decent water supply for irrigators in 2023, said Bob Carter, manager of the Boise Project Board of Control, which provides water to five irrigation districts in southwestern Idaho.

"It's an earlier start than normal, which is good," he said. "We just need it to keep coming."

Southern Idaho, where most of the state's agricultural production occurs, is mostly a desert and farmers and ranchers there are dependent on Idaho's reservoirs to get by during the hot, dry summer months.

Rainfall is great for improving soil moisture levels but it's mountain snow that fill the reservoirs, which are the lifeblood of agriculture in southern Idaho.

During the Nov. 9 Idaho Water Supply Committee meeting, water experts said most basins in southern Idaho will need at least 100 percent of normal mountain snowpack this winter to fill nearly empty reservoirs. The driest basins will need 120-150 percent of normal snowpack.

The Boise basin is an exception and bright spot, they said, because Boise River system reservoirs ended the 2022 water season with good carryover. Because of that, the Boise reservoir system could potentially fill with at least 70 percent of normal snowpack this winter.

The Upper Snake reservoir system is currently at 19 percent capacity.

"The Snake (basin) will need 120 percent of normal snow to fill the system," said Jeremy Dalling, a hydrologist with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Burley office. ■

Notice of Annual Meeting of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho

To all policyholders: The 2023 annual meeting for policyholders of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho will be held on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the company's home office at 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, Idaho. You are invited to attend.

Tom Lyons, Secretary

Notice of Stockholders Meetings

The following annual stockholders meetings will take place Friday, Feb. 3, 2023, at the Idaho Farm Bureau home office, 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, Idaho.

The board of directors for each company will be elected at these meetings.

10:45 a.m. - Farm Bureau Marketing Association of Idaho

11 a.m. - FB Development Corporation of Idaho

Zak Miller - Executive Vice President, CEO

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Managing the effects of *ROAD SALTS* on roadside vegetation



Idaho's
Private
Forest

Adobe stock photo

Plants are particularly susceptible to salt damage because they lack the ability to excrete excess salts.

By **Audra Cochran**
University of Idaho

Winter driving in Idaho can be a treacherous experience depending on road conditions. Idaho's mountain passes and curvy roads covered by snow and ice can create hazards for even the most experienced drivers.

To help keep drivers safe, many states utilize spray de-icers and road salts to reduce ice accumulation on roadways.

In correlation to the increased usage of road salts, the Idaho Transportation Department reports that "fatal and serious-injury crashes have declined significantly during the last decade ... overall, crashes have been drastically reduced, from 1,966 to 643."

While there is no question that the usage of road salts and de-icers have proven to be effective tools at making highways safer, there is some concern around their effects on roadside vegetation.



University of Idaho Extension photos

Brown patches from road salt damage typically first appear on the tips of the roadside tree needles.

What is in de-icers?

Most commonly, salt brines, a mixture of rock salt and sand, or chloride products (magnesium) are applied to roadways and sidewalks leading up to or following a weather event.

Application densities vary greatly depending on region, temperature, and application timing. While salt usage is proven effective, timely and prudent application is key for effectiveness.

How road salts affect vegetation

Plants are particularly susceptible to salt damage because they lack cellular mechanisms that help them excrete excess salts. Plants can obtain root or foliage damage when the snow/salt mixture is sprayed onto vegetation by passing cars or plows.

As this salt laced mixture comes in contact with the foliage and soil, salt is able to enter the plant's system.

The damage can be either acute (immediate) or chronic (long-term). Acute damage is seen within in the same growing season and often presents as browning (burnt) patches on the foliage.

These brown patches typically first appear on the tips of the roadside foliage and work their way toward the stem.



TOP: Snow/salt mixture is pushed from the roadways by snowplows and can settle on nearby tree branches.

ABOVE: Young trees near roadways are often more at risk from road salt damage.

Chronic damage is often harder to determine, as it typically takes a few growing seasons for symptoms to appear.

Often, you will see all foliage turn brown, stunted growth, branch die-back and subsequent insect or disease infestation, due to overall low vigor or stress of the plant.

Sodium chloride (rock salt) has been found to be most effective at reducing ice buildup, but it can also be the most damaging to surrounding vegetation, according to ITD.

Due to this, many regions have moved to using magnesium chloride sprays for de-icing.

How to mitigate roadside vegetation losses

You have little control over the berm of snow left behind by the snowplows. However, with a few management efforts you can help your roadside vegetation combat the excess salt loads during winter.

- If able, move the snow berms away from area roadside vegetation on your property.
- Use salt-tolerant plants near roadways and walkways. Deciduous plants are found to be more salt tolerant as they shed their foliage on an annual basis, whereas conifers do not.
- Increase soil permeability near roadside vegetation most likely to be affected. This can be accomplished by aerating the soil, adding organic matter or drainage materials depending on soil type, or adding other soil amendments. Your local county extension or soil district can help you determine the best course of action for your property.
- Construct temporary barriers or snow fences for the vegetation nearest the roadways. This can help reduce the amount of salt/snow mix that accumulates on the vegetation.
- Rinse the foliage in the spring as the snow begins to melt and flush the nearby soils with water. This will help dilute the salt concentration and remove the salt from settling on the leaf area surfaces.
- If you are wanting a more permanent solution, you can thin your roadside vegetation. “Daylighting” the roadway reduces the shaded areas on the road, lessening snow and ice accumulation and ultimately reducing the need for de-icers. Reducing stocking density can also help lessen resource competition among plants, allowing for remaining plants to have better establishment going into winter. This can help make the plants more resilient to winter woes.
- If you have control of the roadway or sidewalk, you can opt to use alternative products such as sand or other grit type products. These have been seen to have fewer negative effects on vegetation and can aid in soil permeability.

As stressful as winter driving can be for us, the usage of road salts can be equally as stressful to our roadside trees and plants.

Judicious usage and a basic understanding of plant maintenance can help keep us all safe and happy this winter. ■

Audra Cochran is a University of Idaho Extension educator in Lewis County. She can be reached at audrac@uidaho.edu.

More than 200 attend first statewide farm stress conference

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – More than 200 people attended Idaho's first-ever statewide conference dedicated to farm stress.

The inaugural Idaho Farm and Ranch Conference was held Oct. 24-25 in Boise and included a host of discussions and presentations centered around farm stress and financial management.

The first day included panel discussions and presentations on topics such as improving farm management strategies, taxes on the farm, marketing, accrual accounting, and farm transition and estate planning.

The second day was dedicated to discussing farm stress, mental health and the high suicide rate among agricultural producers.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould, a rancher and farmer, told participants that national studies show farmers die by suicide at a rate several times the national average.

One of the keys to reducing that rate is openly discussing the issue and the factors that lead to it, Gould said.

"So here we are trying to begin important conversations about tough topics," she said at the beginning of the conference.

Gould said ag producers have typically felt a stigma around seeking help but according to American Farm Bureau Federation research, there has been a 22 percent increase over the last three years in the percentage of farmers and farm workers who would be comfortable talking to friends and family about their mental health.

"That's why we are doing this," she said. "First and foremost, we want to reduce the stigma around mental health care in agriculture."

The conference – "Cultivating a Brighter Tomorrow" – included farmers, ranchers,



Photos by Sean Ellis

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould addresses people who attended the Idaho Farm and Ranch Conference, Idaho's first-ever statewide conference dedicated to farm stress.

leaders of state farm and ranch organizations, and experts in the area of farm management and transition planning, as well as mental health experts and leaders in the financial and insurance sectors.

"This is the first-ever statewide conference of this size on farm stress and mental health in agriculture," said ISDA Deputy Director Chanel Tewalt.

She said the ag department plans to make the conference an annual event.

"This conference was awesome," said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, who attended along with about 10 other Farm Bureau volunteer leaders and professional staff.

Tools and advice that help ag producers deal with financial issues and farm-related

stress is something that is needed by all farmers and ranchers, big or small, he said.

"It's about helping people get through the challenging times like what we're facing today," Searle said. "We look forward to next year's conference."

The conference was free to attend and financed through a \$500,000 grant ISDA received as part of a COVID-relief package.

It was hosted by ISDA's Idaho Farm and Ranch Center, which was created in 2021 to provide Idahoans with the financial tools and other resources they need to remain on the farm or ranch or get into agriculture.

The IFRC website – farm.idaho.gov – features resources such as financial



More than 200 people attended the Idaho Farm and Ranch Conference, Idaho's first-ever statewide conference dedicated to farm stress.

management trainings, guidebooks and videos on succession planning, tools and tips for managing a family business, and a calendar of events.

The recent conference is an extension of what ISDA is trying to accomplish with the Idaho Farm and Ranch Center, Tewalt said.

A big focus of the conference was speaking openly about farm stress and suicide in order to help remove the stigma about the issue, she said.

"Really, you are reducing the stigma by talking about it in a forum like this," Tewalt said. "You heard a lot of courageous stories (during the conference), people talking candidly about their farm operations, talking about things that work well, transitions that didn't work well, things that they struggle with and how they deal with it."

One of the featured speakers, Lesley Kelly, a Canadian farmer, spoke frankly about her family's battles with mental health issues

and how addressing them openly helped them deal with it.

She said that "creating an open and honest and gentle culture within our farm has brought ... our family closer together because of it."

She stressed that one conversation can break barriers and possibly save a life.

"Our biggest resource is each other," Kelly said. "Breaking barriers is having one conversation. One conversation at a time can save or change a life."

She said the key to her family addressing its mental health challenges "is that we brought the love."

She added, "Sometimes it's a text, sometimes it's a phone call, sometimes it's a, 'Hey, how are you doing? Can I ride in the tractor with you, go for a walk or be in that pickup truck with you? Or give you a big hug?'" ■

Idaho ag department awards \$1.85 million to 16 projects

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho's specialty crop farmers stand to benefit from 16 projects recently awarded specialty crop grants by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

The ISDA will award a total of \$1.85 million this year to 16 projects designed solely to help the state's specialty crop industry.

The money is used for research, promotion and marketing activities and other projects designed to benefit specialty crop growers in Idaho.

ISDA awards money each year through its specialty crop block grant program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The program is designed to benefit specialty crops, which include vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery and



The Idaho State Department of Agriculture will award a total of \$1.85 million this year to 16 projects designed solely to help the state's specialty crop industry. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation graphic

horticulture crops.

Since the program was created in 2009, the ISDA program has awarded 181 projects a total of \$18.35 million.

The grant money has been especially helpful to some of Idaho's smaller farm commissions, which are funded by growers and have limited budgets.

The Idaho Bean Commission, for example, has used specialty crop grants to help fund several research projects that seek to benefit dry bean farmers in the state.

The bean commission was awarded \$102,000 this year for a project that seeks to establish field studies to find ways to use fall-planted cereal cover crops to lower weed pressure and reduce reliance on herbicides while not impacting bean plant yields.

IBC Executive Director Andi Woolf-Weibye said the grants have been extremely important to the state's dry bean industry and have helped propel it forward by funding projects that have provided answers to some challenging agronomic issues.

"These invaluable specialty crop grants allow smaller commodity commissions like the bean commission to be able to complete valuable research that would be near impossible for us to do all on our own," she said. "We are incredibly thankful to be able to utilize these opportunities to help further research for the Idaho bean industry."

The Idaho Wine Commission has also received several specialty crop grants through the ISDA program over the years that have helped promote awareness of the state's growing wine industry both within Idaho and around the nation.

The IWC received two grants this year, including a \$190,000 grant to continue to drive awareness of the Idaho wine industry.

IWC Executive Director Moya Shatz-Dolsby said one of the main focuses of this grant is to reach the recent newcomers to the state, many of whom come from other wine-producing states but don't yet know that Idaho has its own flourishing wine industry.

Most of those newcomers have located in the Treasure Valley, which is the center of Idaho's wine region.

"One of the things we want to focus on is reaching all those people who have moved to Idaho recently," she said. "How do we capture all of these new people's attention and let them know we exist and that there are wineries 10 to 15 minutes away from them?"

The wine commission was also awarded a \$150,000 grant to help fund a project that seeks to determine the impacts of soil amendments on plant health and yield, soil health and populations of pests and beneficial soil fauna.

The Idaho Apple Commission received a \$64,000 grant for a project that seeks to build awareness of and demand for Idaho apples through retail promotions and the use of national media and social media.

The Idaho Cherry Commission received a \$20,000 grant for a project that will use social media and in-store demonstrations to drive sales of Idaho cherries.

The Idaho Hop Growers Commission was awarded a \$48,000 grant for a project that seeks to create awareness of and demand for Idaho hops through tours, social media, domestic promotions and conventions.

"These invaluable specialty crop grants allow smaller commodity commissions like the bean commission to be able to complete valuable research that would be near impossible for us to do all on our own."

*- Andi Woolf-Weibye, Idaho Bean Commission
Executive Director*

The Idaho Nursery and Landscaping Association was awarded \$136,000 to use for a project that, according to the grant application, aims to provide "marketable, superior native plant products to enhance the plant palette offered to consumers by the Idaho landscape nursery industry"

The Idaho Potato Commission received a \$160,000 grant for a project aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of fresh, frozen and dehydrated Idaho potatoes in Mexico.

Idaho Preferred, an ISDA program that helps promote Idaho agricultural products, received a \$282,000 grant to continue to promote Idaho specialty crops.

Idaho State University was awarded a \$130,000 grant for a research project that seeks to improve the competitiveness of Idaho potato growers by, according to the grant application, "developing and implementing technology-based methods to improve in-season potato crop pest sampling, tissue sampling and soil moisture measurement practices in Idaho..."

ISDA awarded the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee an \$89,000 grant to fund a project designed to build demand and awareness of onions in Idaho and eastern Oregon through the use of social media, marketing and trade missions. Through this project, according to the grant application, the IEOCC will look for new markets and build on existing markets.

The IEOCC also received a \$99,000 grant for a research project conducted in conjunction with the University of Idaho to develop tools to predict and stabilize onion yields and quality during extreme weather conditions.

Northwest Nazarene University's Robotics Vision Lab received a \$101,000 grant to improve the harvesting performance of a robotic fruit picking platform known as OrBot (orchard robot) that university researchers have developed over the past several years.

An organization called the Sunnyslope Wine Trail received a \$40,000 grant to expand its advertising reach beyond its immediate location south of Caldwell, where many of the state's wineries and vineyards are located. According to the grant application, "We will reach new consumers by using new avenues of advertising, attracting them to our winery tasting rooms."

The University of Idaho was awarded a \$145,000 grant to develop best management practices for managing bacterial rot diseases in potatoes.

The U of I also received a \$96,000 grant to develop new diagnostic tools to enhance the quality and market potential of Idaho grapevines. ■

Late start but strong finish for Idaho wine grapes

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Idaho's wine grape growing season got off to a late start this year because of a cool, wet spring, but warm summer temperatures that lasted into late fall resulted in a strong finish.

"It's been a very good year," said Caldwell winemaker Martin Fujishin, owner of Fujishin Family Cellars. "I'm pleased with how things came in and yields were definitely up."

Idaho's grape growing season was delayed because of the wet, cool spring, but warm temperatures that lasted through much of October helped fruit continue to ripen, said Idaho Wine Commission Executive Director Moya Shatz-Dolsby.

That resulted in higher-than-average yields, she said.

"It's going to be a great vintage," she said. "The harvest is great."

Even though most of southern Idaho experienced a very hot summer, the weather was consistent for much of the growing season, and the state's typical cool nights helped, Shatz-Dolsby said.

"Even though it was hot, it was consistent and consistency is a good thing for wine grapes," she said.

The hot summer delayed harvest, Fujishin said. He typically starts harvesting his first grapes around late August or mid-September but didn't start until Oct. 4 this year.

Beautiful fall weather allowed the grapes to finish ripening and resulted in high yields and great quality, Fujishin said.

"We were very fortunate to have the good fall weather we had that allowed us to get everything in," he said.

Cellular development in grapes occurs during the spring and this year's cool spring led to bigger berries and more fruit, said Jake Cragin of Skyline Vineyards in Nampa.

"With the warm summer and fall, the grapes were able to bake in the oven just right for really great quality," he said.

Idaho has 70 wineries and 1,300 vineyard acres planted. Though grapes are grown across the state, Idaho's wine industry is concentrated in southwestern Idaho around the Caldwell area.

Wine harvest in Idaho normally begins between the end of August and Labor Day but this year, much of the harvest occurred during the last few weeks of October, Shatz-Dolsby said.

Wine grape yields look good this year, said Jay Hawkins of Lanae Ridge Vineyard outside Caldwell.

"We harvested three weeks behind normal, but the incredibly nice fall enabled us to leave the fruit hanging and not rush the pick," he said. "We are probably 20 percent higher in tonnage compared to our historical average and easily double last year's very light crop."



Idaho Wine Commission photo

Wine grapes await harvest at Indian Creek Winery in Kuna earlier this year.

Kris Martin of Emerald Slope Vineyard, which supplies grapes to a number of Idaho wineries, said yields on some varieties were 10-12 percent higher this year.

Winemakers in North Idaho also experienced delays this year due to cool weather and had fewer hot days overall compared to 2021, Shatz-Dolsby said.

"So far, the harvest is greater than last year's," said Kelsie Dyell, assistant winemaker at Lindsay Creek Vineyards near Lewiston. "Lower temperatures than last year created a longer growing season." ■

Take a deep breath and remember the reason for the season

December is just a great month, isn't it? There is always an excitement in the air as we anticipate and prepare for Christmas.

It is also good to look back and remember years past, those family parties, the acts of kindness that were shown to us as well as those that we did for others.

I'm not talking about money as much as the small acts of kindness that we have an opportunity to give.

This is the time of year when we can say Merry Christmas right from the heart so others may feel the kindness and love we have for them.

Small things like a simple smile and taking just a few minutes out of our day for a personal visit to someone that may not receive all that many during the week or month. We will all be amazed at how just a small act of kindness is appreciated by those we come in contact with.



When I was a young man, I was blessed to have parents that truly loved their neighbors. My father was always giving produce out of his very large garden to others and my mother was continually giving a homemade loaf of bread or some chicken noodle soup, and they both would visit a neighbor or family member often.

Now I know that our lives are hectic and at times we are scheduled right to the max even during the winter months.

But, I once heard a talk where the man was telling us about our lives at times and how people were always saying how they needed to get more organized. Then he said something profound when he told us that getting more organized wasn't the solution but rather, simplifying or lives was the solution.

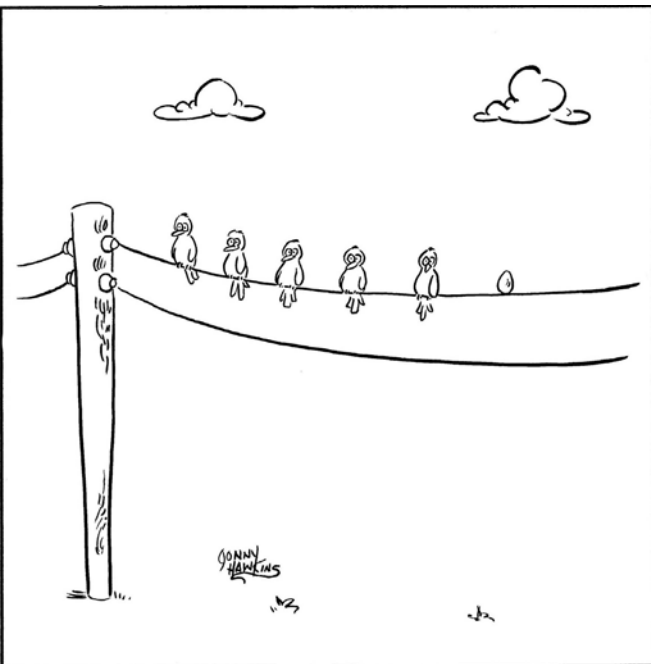
Even though we are in the middle of winter, now just might be a good time to just stop and smell the roses. You never know, this might just become a habit by the time spring work rolls around.

There will be plenty of time for us to visit about marketing beginning in January. For now, let's just take a deep breath and remember the reason for the season.

My Christmas present to all of you is a short message that I hope will help us all. Be safe and have a merry Christmas. ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins





Photos by Glenn Daman

Hay is one of the main crops grown in Benewah County, which produces a wide variety of agricultural commodities.

Benewah County unique with three different ag regions

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

When it comes to agriculture, Benewah County is a unique county that consists of basically three ag regions.

The far western part of the county is Palouse country and has deep soils, where grain, pulse and seed crops are grown.

As you move further east in the county, that region has more timber and shallow soils where grain is still produced but at substantially diminished yields.

“What grows best in these areas are export hay crops, with grain

as mostly a rotation crop,” says Bob Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s regional manager in North Idaho. “A lot of export hay is grown on these timber soils and it grows well with cool nights and ample moisture. Hay exporters prefer the hay from this region because the cool nights make for great quality Timothy hay.”

The rest of Benewah County to the east of the hay growing region is primarily timber, which underpins the county’s economy.

“The biggest crop in that part of the county is timber itself,” says Jeff Bloomsburg, president of the Benewah County Farm Bureau organization. “There is also quite a bit of grazing in areas where grass grows in this part of the county.”

The diverse growing regions in the county have resulted in a wide variety of agricultural commodities being produced there, including wheat, hay, pulse crops, field and seed crops and chickpeas.

There were also 973 cattle and calves, 263 goats, 258 sheep and lambs and 40 hogs and pigs in the county in 2017, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Bloomensburg says the county also has a lot of diverse, small-acreage specialty crop farms that produce a wide variety of commodities, from nurseries to essential oils made from plants, to commercial garlic and goat milk.

“The county is very diversified when it comes to agriculture,” Bloomensburg says.

According to the 2017 ag census, there were 288 farms and 139,944 total acres of land in farming in the county during the 2017 census year.

Virtually all of the farming in the county is done under dryland conditions, which means no irrigation is used.

In 2017, there were 25 farms in the county that were more than 1,000 acres in size and 24 that were from 500 to 999 acres in size. However, there were also a lot of very small farms – 28 were from 1 to 9 acres in size and 95 were from 10-49 acres in size.

Almost 95 percent of the farms in Benewah County are family farms.

The bulk of the ag producers in the county are nearing retirement and there are few younger people who are coming back to

the area to farm, says Keith Daman, who grows wheat, legumes and Timothy hay near Tensed.

That could be a problem for the generational farm transition that needs to occur in the county in the next several years, he says.

“There are a limited number of young people coming back into agriculture in this area,” Daman says. “There are a lot of farmers nearing or into retirement age here and there are a limited number of younger folks to step into those operations.”

Another big challenge farmers in the county, as well as producers across the state and nation, face right now is a substantial rise in farm production costs, Daman says.

“Input costs have skyrocketed for production agriculture and that has had a major impact on the industry,” he says.

High prices for some ag commodities such as wheat have helped soften that impact somewhat for now, he adds, “but looking forward, that could present some real economic difficulties for farmers.”

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 26,256 acres of wheat were grown in Benewah County in 2017, as well as 13,919 acres of hay, 8,955 acres of lentils, 5,303 acres of field grass and seed crops, and 3,242 acres of chickpeas.

The average size of a farm in the county was 486 acres, slightly bigger than the statewide average of 468 acres.

Farmers and ranchers in the county brought in a total of \$19 million in farm-gate revenue in 2017. ■



A wide variety of crops and other agricultural commodities are produced in Benewah County, shown here.

Classifieds

LIVESTOCK

Registered Morgan cremello mare 11 years old 15 hands, foundation bloodlines. She has good feet and solid bone and up to date on shots and worming. Used as a broodmare and threw 2 gorgeous palomino colts. She was saddle broke and trained by Amish horse trainer here in Baker, Idaho. Call Jim 208-756-7700 or email: biker048@centurylink.net.

FARMING/EQUIPMENT

1st, 2nd, 3rd cuttings of Orchard Grass and also Alfalfa hay, small bales @Star Idaho. Covered and no-rain. Contact Blake at 208-859-7102.

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.

ALFALFA SEED \$2.80/LB. Alfalfa seed, \$2.80/lb., Dormancy 4. Tests well with great persistence and winter hardiness. Inoculated in 50lb. bags. Kuna, ID. Contact Dave 208-890-1066 or Jessica

208-761-2720 or email seed@davereynoldsfarms.com.

Camshaft Grinding Equipment for sale. Northern Idaho call for more information 208-826-3240.

AUTO

1984 Corvette classic. 90 90 restored, overhauled engine and transmission. Beautiful gold color and clean interior. California car and fun to drive. Garaged in Salmon. \$8,500 obo. Insured for \$10,000 will consider trade for ATV. Call 858-518-4622.

1928 Model A Ford flatbed truck. This truck is partially rebuilt it has factory bed and single wheels and tires. The rear section of the truck is partially rebuilt. The engine ran years ago (needs rebuilt) \$7,500. Lewiston 208-743-5501.

PROPERTY

4.9 acres with 7 bedroom and 4 1/2 bath home. Water rights and a 24x30 shop. Close to Rexburg and Hwy 20 access. 208-390-3809.

MISCELLANEOUS

Our Idaho family loves old

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

Down Under tooled leather saddle-\$770; Very sturdy steele frame and springs for trampoline-\$7; Set of 4 tires good condition-\$40 (30x9.50); White swivel armchair \$40; Maple cabinet for stereo and equipment \$50; Kirby G6 vacuum, excellent condition \$200. Rexburg. 208-206-7495.

WANTED

1978 Dodge Adventurer 150 pickup for parts. 208-791-7871.

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

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

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

Wanted old Idaho Patches! Farm Bureau, Farming, Hunting, Idaho Cattlemen Assoc, Idaho Fish and Game. Top Dollar Paid! Call, email or text pics. Rusty Kramer idahotrapguy@hotmail.com 208-870-3217.

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

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

Mail ad copy to:
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P.O. Box 4848, Pocatello, ID 83205-4848
or email Kristy@knindauer@idahofb.org

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University of Idaho photo

This photo shows ring rot symptoms in the field.

New UI Extension bulletin focuses on devastating potato disease, bacterial ring rot

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

MOSCOW, Idaho – University of Idaho Extension has published a new bulletin to help potato farmers recognize the symptoms of bacterial rot and protect their operations from the devastating crop disease.

Idaho hasn't had a ring rot flareup in a few years and the state's last major outbreak of the disease was in 2012.

UI Extension Seed Potato Specialist Kasia Duellman hopes the bulletin will remind commercial and seed potato farmers to main-

tain good sanitation practices and remain vigilant for symptoms.

She warns ring rot is highly destructive and tough to eliminate once it gets a foothold on a farm.

"It can be an existential crisis for a seed potato grower's business if it is found on their farm," Duellman said.

The new UI ring rot bulletin can be found online at: webpages.uidaho.edu/extension-seed-potato/PDF/BUL1021BacterialRingRot.pdf.

Ring rot, which is not a human health issue, is a tuber-borne bacterial disease that can be present in seed while remaining asymptomatic in seed lots throughout several generations of

replanting before symptoms surface.

The bacterium produces a protective biofilm that allows it to survive on surfaces in a dormant state for several years, often contaminating crevices in handling equipment, seed cutters, truck beds, machine belts and storage walls.

The new UI Extension bulletin provides a synopsis of research detailing how 25 different potato varieties exhibit ring rot symptoms in two different growing environments.

The data comes from a study published in June 2019. The study was led by Jonathan Whitworth, a research plant pathologist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, and included Duellman and other scientists from U of I, Idaho Crop Improvement Association and North Dakota State University.

During two growing seasons, the researchers inoculated seed of each variety with ring rot and planted it in both Idaho and North Dakota.

"I took the data from that publication and adapted it into a user-friendly table in this bulletin," Duellman said. "The take-home message is that different potato varieties respond differently to ring rot in different environments."

In North Dakota, dwarfing of plant internodes was more common and occurred early in development. The dwarfing symptom was noted in only two varieties grown in Idaho.

Marginal necrosis occurred consistently across varieties in both locations. Yellowing between the veins was also observed at both locations, as was flagging – leaves wilting and drooping from branches.

The classic tuber symptom of ring rot is a deteriorated vascular ring that secretes a creamy bacterial ooze when squeezed. Tubers may also exhibit growth cracks.

Ring rot may remain latent for a long time.

"The reason we worry about it so much is it can go for several generations of increasing in seed without knowing it's there," Duellman said. "Symptoms often take several generations of increasing potato to develop. Fortunately, our current testing assays are much more sensitive than a decade ago and they can detect latent infections."

"The reason we worry about it so much is it can go for several generations of increasing in seed without knowing it's there...Fortunately, our current testing assays are much more sensitive than a decade ago and they can detect latent infections."

- Kasia Duellman, UI Extension Seed Potato Specialist

Ring rot outbreaks tend to be cyclical, occurring roughly every nine years. Farmers tend to implement strict sanitation practices and follow the proper protocols shortly after an outbreak, thereby controlling the problem.

Too often, however, they may gradually let their guard down, relaxing their sanitation practices in later years to provide an opening for the disease to return.

Duellman suspects that some outbreaks across the country over the years may be related to re-contaminating seed potatoes with the ring rot pathogen by exposing healthy seed to contaminated surfaces such as handling equipment, storages, seed cutters and trucks.

"The defense is two-fold: planting seed free of the pathogen and practicing meticulous sanitation while remaining diligent," Duellman said.

The bulletin advises commercial growers to use certified seed potatoes and avoid cutting or planting infected seed. If a seed lot with suspected infected seed has already been planted, monitor the lot for erratic emergence and carefully collect samples for testing.

Scout fields for foliar and tuber symptoms and submit any symptomatic plants or tubers for diagnostic laboratory testing.

If ring rot is confirmed, the tubers shouldn't be used for seed but should rather be sold commercially as early market potatoes. Avoid storing the harvest from a tainted field, as decomposing spuds with ring rot may create ideal conditions for further losses through soft rot.

When handling a commercial crop that is already planted where ring rot has been confirmed, there are a couple of options for harvesting.

In one scenario, it may be optimal to

harvest fields with ring rot last to avoid spreading the disease on tainted equipment.

Delaying harvest also allows any infected potatoes to decompose in the field. In this scenario, infected tubers should be picked out before piling into storage.

A second option may be to harvest early, for commercial growers who have access to an early market. This option avoids the risk of storing potatoes with bacterial ring rot and consequently contaminating storage facilities.

A third option is to destroy plants in an infected field with a disc plow, enabling a seed potato grower to avoid contaminating other equipment that is far more difficult to clean and disinfect.

Idaho's potato seed certification program requires intensive testing of lots for ring rot. Growers must submit samples comprising at least 400 tubers for DNA-based testing, and there's zero tolerance for any ring rot detection.

A positive test essentially results in the flushing of all seed on a farm. The disease causes tremendous economic loss to a seed potato grower because the seed is no longer eligible for certification.

The bulletin includes instructions for cleaning and disinfecting potato equipment and storage facilities and links to a 2011 Extension bulletin authored by UI Extension Potato Storage Specialist Nora Olsen and Phil Nolte, Duellman's predecessor.

The bulletin advises farmers to thoroughly wash equipment to remove dirt. They should then apply a disinfectant, allowing it to remain in contact with surfaces for at least 10 minutes. ■



Photos by James Gallacci

The 10th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans, which was held at the Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho building in Pocatello Nov. 4, included a special flag ceremony.

400 people attend Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – More than 400 people attended the 10th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans.

The two-hour event, which honors the service of U.S. military veterans, was held at the Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho building in Pocatello Nov. 4.

FBMIC Chief Executive Officer Todd Argall said Farm Bureau is proud to hold the event each year to thank military vet-

erans for their role in protecting the nation and its way of life.

“This is a special event for everyone at Farm Bureau because it gives us the opportunity to say ‘thank you’ to our veterans for your service to our country and for protecting the freedom and liberty of the people of the United States of America,” he told veterans who attended the event.

Veterans from every branch of the U.S. military attended the event, which is held the Friday before Veterans Day to not interfere with the events held on that day

by veterans’ organizations.

“Your sacrifice and commitment to protecting the ideals of this great country are truly respected and cherished by the team members of Farm Bureau,” Argall said. “We look forward to hosting you today and recognizing your significant military service to the United States of America.”

He said there are millions of U.S. military veterans, “both in the U.S. and abroad, and to you, our veterans of the U.S. armed forces, we are eternally grateful. On behalf of the Farm Bureau family, thank



you for your service to our country. We will never forget the commitment and sacrifice that you endured to protect the people of this great country.”

The Salute to Idaho Veterans event includes a flag ceremony, a guest speaker, a free veteran group photo and individual photos for each veteran, and a complimentary Salute to Idaho Veterans coin.

This year’s guest speaker was MSgt. (Ret.) Brian Eisch, who was highlighted in the Netflix/New York Times documentary, “Father Soldier Son.”

In 2010, while serving in Afghanistan, Eisch was shot three times in his legs while trying to save a wounded Afghan policeman. His wounds resulted in amputation of one of his legs.

Eisch said he was especially touched by the patriotic flag ceremony that kicked off the event.

“If the hair on the back of your neck didn’t stand up (during that ceremony), you’re not an American,” he said. “I want to thank Farm Bureau for what

they did today.”

The three winners of Farm Bureau’s Veterans Day essay contest for students read their winning entries during the event.

One of the winners, Ava Paul, a fifth-grader from Kuna, has several relatives who have served in the military.

“I can’t imagine what my life would be like if thousands of people, like my family members, didn’t stand up for freedom,” Paul wrote. “I wouldn’t be able to go where I want, I couldn’t buy what I want or need. It’s crazy what I couldn’t do without freedom. That’s why I’m thankful for Veterans Day, a day to celebrate the countless veterans who risked their lives for my freedom.” ■

ABOVE: About 400 people attended the 10th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans on Nov. 4.

RIGHT: Veterans from every branch of the U.S. military attended the 10th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans, which is held the Friday before Veterans Day.





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