

Washington

FFA chapters help in aftermath of Chelan wildfire

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

KENNEWICK, Wash. — The Kennewick High School FFA chapter had a \$2,000 grant from the National FFA Foundation for an alfalfa research project.

"Then everything broke loose up there and I asked the foundation if we could switch

it to an environmental emergency grant," Kennewick FFA advisor Dan White said of the August Chelan wildfire.

"So now we're taking 52 kids for the day on Nov. 14 to help with cleanup and rebuilding in Chelan," he said.

The 52 FFA students from Kennewick, Kamiakin, Columbia Burbank, Pasco and New Horizons high schools

will join about 50 Lake Chelan High School FFA members.

Among the jobs they'll do is repairing FFA livestock pens at Chelan FFA advisor Rod Cool's house, which was destroyed in the fire. There's also landscape and brush work to be done there and at Jan Pierson's house and orchard. Her late husband, Walt, was Lake Chelan High School FFA ad-

viser before Cool.

Cascadia Conservation District is also helping at her property.

Another project for the day will be helping Tom Ryan, a longtime FFA supporter, rebuild corrals and deer fence around his orchard in Antioine Creek north of Chelan.

Cool is trying to line up more projects. The owner of a

vineyard in Royal City is donating trellis posts for deer fencing. RDO Equipment Co. of Pasco is donating use of a tractor.

Half the \$2,000 grant will be used to bus the students from the Tri-Cities to Chelan and back. The other half, White said, will buy fencing supplies.

"This is the best kind of learning," White said. "These kids see something in their own

back yard and learn each and every one of us can make a difference."

The FFA state officers will also participate, as they did recently in a FFA service day in Louisville, Ky., just before the Oct. 28-31 national FFA convention, said Abbie DeMeerteer, executive director of the Washington FFA in Pullman.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Patricia Talcott, WSU veterinary diagnostic toxicologist, answers questions from Ronald Gross, Post Falls, Idaho, after her talk at the Washington State Weed Association's annual conference in Wenatchee, Wash., Nov. 4.

Animal laboratory gets more calls on toxic plant

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory received more phone calls about a plant toxic to horses in the past year than it has in the previous 12 years combined.

People are probably recognizing Hoary alyssum more and it's probably spreading, said Patricia Talcott, a Washington State University associate professor and veterinary diagnostic toxicologist at the lab.

She spoke to some 500 people attending the Washington State Weed Association's 65th annual conference on Nov. 4.

The number of calls, now dozens, may be increasing "because a lot of us in the plant world are talking about it more," Talcott said.

Hoary alyssum, listed as a noxious weed in some states, can be found in alfalfa and is toxic to cattle and horses but is more of a problem in horses, she said.

At 10 percent of a horse's feed, it can increase foot temperature, which causes swelling from the knee down in one or more legs and can turn into laminitis, a crippling disease for which there is no specific treatment, Talcott said.

Detection and removal of feed containing Hoary alyssum can lead to recovery but laminitis can also lead to euthanasia, she said.

The specific toxin is not known, she said. The USDA

ARS Poisonous Plant Laboratory in Logan, Utah, might study it if it were more widespread and a concern to people, she said.

Talcott also talked about several other weeds and a couple of pesticides harmful to horses and cattle.

Yellow starthistle and Russian knapweed, in large quantities, impair the part of a horse's brain that controls swallowing and can lead to euthanasia, she said.

Both weeds are common in the West.

"Usually we see it with people who move in from other states. They buy a place and think all the purple and yellow flowers in the pastures are beautiful and put horses out on it and it kills them," she said.

By far, the most common toxicology problems involve acute nitrate poisoning from pigs weed and lambsquarters, she said. A steady diet of tomato vines can kill pigs and mustard plants and false dandelion are problematic, she said.

Paraquat and 2,4-D are the two most common household and farm pesticides that if spilled or used improperly can be poisonous to dogs and other animals, she said.

Fresh and spent hops are also toxic to dogs, but poinsettias are not to be feared, Talcott said.

"Of 22,000 calls about exposure of poinsettias to cats and dogs, 21,000 had no signs," she said. "The others had mild vomiting."

WDFW proposes shifting crop loss expense to farmers

Farm Bureau stokes opposition

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Farmers who lose crops to elk or deer would pay up to \$600 to file a claim under a policy that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will consider Nov. 13.

According to written administrative rules, the state will pay for an adjuster to assess damages. In actual practice, wildlife managers have for several years required the farmer to split the adjuster's fee with the state, with the farmer's share capped at \$600, WDFW's game division manager, Mick Cope, said.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission voted two years ago to bring the written code in line with the department's practice. Cope said the change was never made because of a technical error.

Cope estimated 15 to 30 farmers were charged for adjuster services over the past two years. WDFW will reimburse those people, he said.

The policy, though adopted in 2013, will come before the commission again as part of an overhaul of rules related to compensating farmers and ranchers for wildlife damage.

The Washington Farm Bureau sent an email to members Nov. 5 rallying opposition to the adjuster-fee policy.

"The department might argue that this \$600 will not actually be paid by the farmer since it will be deducted from the final damage claim check issued by the state. But in very real terms it is an automatic \$600 deduction off of each reimbursement check a farmer receives," according to the farm bureau.

Cope said splitting the fee discourages frivolous claims, which could cut into the pot of money WDFW has to pay legitimate claims. The compensation program has not been running out of money, he said.

Farm Bureau director of government relations Tom Davis said filing a claim is a "hassle" for farmers, who must provide tax records and document yields in previous years.

"To me, it's an unnecessary slap to a farmer," he said. "It doesn't hurt the program



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife proposes to split the cost of assessing crop damage from deer and elk with farmers filing the claim. The state now pays for the assessment.

(for the state) to pay the full cost of the assessment."

Farmers who have signed damage-prevention agreements or followed a WDFW checklist for preventing crop losses are eligible to apply for

up to \$10,000 in compensation. The damage must be at least \$1,000.

The commission meeting will begin at 8 a.m. Nov. 13 in the state's Natural Resources Building, room 172, 1111

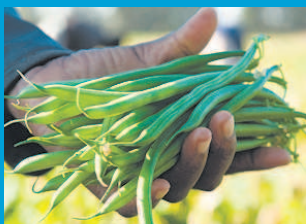
Washington St. S.E. in Olympia. The commission is scheduled to take public comments at 8:15 a.m. The commission is scheduled to take up the wildlife interaction rules at 10:30 a.m.



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Afghanistan ag minister touring West

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Afghanistan's minister of agriculture is touring the West to learn more about the U.S. extension system and irrigation practices.

Minister Assadullah Zamir's tour included a Ritzville, Wash., wheat farm; a Pasco, Wash., potato processing facility; Washington State University's Irrigation Research Station in Prosser; the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland and the University of California-Davis. Traveling with him is his secretary, strategic communications adviser and a senior adviser.

Last week they met with officials from USDA, the U.S. Agency for International Development and others in Washington, D.C. They return to Afghanistan Nov. 13.

The tour was part of a project involving WSU, UC-Davis, Purdue University and the University of Maryland to build an extension service in Afghanistan.

"There are a lot of similarities between our state and provinces in Afghanistan where we work — the cropping systems, rainfall and general climate," said Kim Castelin, project specialist for WSU's International Research and Agricultural Development office.

Castelin offered to demonstrate how to raise wheat in low rainfall zones and the productivity achieved in irrigated agriculture.

Other Afghanistan government employees have toured the U.S., Castelin said, but Zamir is the highest-ranking official.

"Having him here in the states to see the land-grant sys-

tem we have on the ground is really important in understanding the extension system we are recommending and working on improving over there," she said.

Program demonstrations have resulted in some yield increases.

"Impact is kind of an inherently tricky thing to measure," Castelin said. "Afghanistan is a tough place to work, it's a really hard place to collect data from. It really depends on who is measuring and how they're measuring."

The tours help develop partners willing to work with the project, Castelin said.

The project is funded for the next two years. Castelin hopes to see Afghanistan's ministry and state-level officials start to take over administration of the extension services in that time.

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