

Oregon

Doverspikes carry on ranching tradition

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

BURNS, Ore. — Mark and Susan Doverspike and their son Steven run a cow-calf and yearling operation on a ranch that has been in the family for 128 years.

“Steven makes the fifth generation and we have a sixth generation coming on,” said Susan Doverspike.

“My great-great-grandfather and his two sons came to California from the East, then rode horseback through Oregon to Washington,” she said. “They picked out places near Burns and Lakeview to settle. Our side of the family ended up in Burns.”

The ranch sells some calves in the fall and holds some to sell as yearlings in July when the price is usually better, Mark Doverspike said. The cattle are Hereford-Angus crosses.

The region has good summer grass but winters are long. Native meadow grass is baled for winter feed, and regrowth provides fall pasture. In March the cattle go to sagebrush hills for calving, a healthier environment for the calves than wet meadows.

In late April the cattle go to Bureau of Land Management pastures that weren't grazed the year before.

“We rotate between pastures every other year and are allowed to stock these pastures a little heavier because there's more feed with a combination of the new grass and the old,” said Steven Doverspike.

“After that the cattle go up into forest pastures until late fall. Then we use a mountain ranch with native meadows where we rake-bunch hay for fall feed,” he said.

“When we rake-bunch hay into piles it preserves the protein level,” Susan said. “It's more like a bale of hay than a windrow and not as subject to weathering.”

The cattle have the pastures and rake-bunch piles



A cattle drive in progress. Mark and Susan Doverspike run the cattle ranch in Harney County, Ore., that has been in the family for 128 years.



Mark Doverspike represents the fourth generation to run his family's cattle ranch in Harney County, Ore.

eaten by the time it snows, she said.

“Down at Burns we generally get about 2 feet of snow,” said Steven. “On the higher mountains the fences are covered. Usually we are feeding hay from December until late April.”

In spring, the yearlings are sent to one of their ranches near Riley, about 40 miles west of Burns, to graze and are ready to market in July. The good feed and genetics make it work.

“Susan does a great job with the genetics, picking out bulls that are growthy with good carcass and maternal traits,” said Mark. Most of the

calves are crossbred.

It's an interesting challenge, selecting genetics to fit environmental conditions.

“In this high desert we can't have cows too big, or too high on milk production or they won't stay in the herd,” Susan said. They may raise big calves but won't breed back.

“This is a harsh environment. Our range pastures are rated as about 15 acres per cow per month,” Steven said.

Cattle move from pasture to pasture to higher elevation as summer progresses. The ranch meadows are over 4,000 feet and the range pastures go up to 6,000 feet.

The calves are sold through niche markets such as Country Natural Beef.

“Our oldest son, Donald, works for Western Video Market and Shasta Livestock Auction, so he helps with the marketing,” Susan said. “Our youngest son, Daniel, went to college at Eastern Oregon University, majoring in ag business.”

The Doverspikes value education and experience.

“One of the rules Mom and Dad set up for us boys was that in order to come back to the ranch we had to get an education — bachelor's degree or higher,” Steven said. “The second rule is that we have to go work for somebody else for at least two years, to see if we really want to come back to the ranch or have a job we like better someplace else.”

He worked for JBS Five Rivers Feeding Co. and brought back a lot of feeding knowledge and experience.

“We've tweaked our feeds, and tried different things to see if we can do a better job of feeding the calves when we wean them, until they are shipped,” he said.

It's been beneficial to expand their horizons and take advantage of additional knowledge, they agreed.

Weed and predator funding on chopping block at ODA

Oregon Department of Agriculture plans for program cuts

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Funding for weed biocontrol and predator control is on the chopping block at the Oregon Department of Agriculture as the state prepares for a budget shortfall.

The agency plans to eliminate state funding for USDA's Wildlife Services program, which kills coyotes and other predators that attack livestock. The move would save more than \$460,000.

The Wildlife Services program would still be administered by USDA in Oregon, but counties and landowners would need to pay more to maintain the current service level, said Lauren Henderson, assistant director at ODA.

A biocontrol staff position aimed at finding insects that consume invasive weeds would also be eliminated under ODA's 2017-2019 biennial budget recently recommended by Gov. Kate Brown.

That position was vacated when the ODA's previous biocontrol expert retired several months ago, so leaving it unfilled would save more than \$250,000, said Henderson.

“We left that vacant in anticipation this might happen,” he said.

Dairies and other “confined animal feeding operations” would also face higher fees to compensate for a \$250,000 cut to ODA's CAFO inspection program.

The ODA and other state agencies are planning for program cuts because Oregon government is facing a budget deficit of more than



Capital Press File

The Oregon Department of Agriculture faces a tight budget as state legislators deal with a projected revenue shortfall.

\$1.8 billion due to increasing pension and health care costs for state employees.

The changes were discussed at the Oregon Board of Agriculture's Dec. 1 meeting in Wilsonville, Ore.

Under Brown's recommendation, ODA's total biennial budget would increase from about \$111 million to \$117 million.

However, the portion of ODA's budget that comes from the general fund, which pays for specific programs, would drop about 5 percent, to \$23.4 million.

Because the agency would need \$25.8 million to maintain its current service level — due to increases in wages, pensions and health care costs — that leaves the ODA \$2.4 million short of what's needed to pay for the general fund programs.

While several agency programs are facing cuts, ODA expects to pay for others — including food safety and pesticide response programs — from fees it collects for services, rather than from the general fund.

The agency also plans to shift some programs from general fund dollars to money it receives from the federal government, though this scenario assumes the new presidential administration will provide the support, Henderson said.

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