

IRS: 2019's 'Dirty Dozen' list of tax scams

Internal Revenue Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On March 20, the Internal Revenue Service issued its complete annual "Dirty Dozen" list of tax scams. The IRS cautions taxpayers to remain vigilant to these often aggressive and evolving schemes throughout the year.

This year's Dirty Dozen list highlights a wide variety of schemes taxpayers may encounter at any time, although many may peak during tax-filing season. The schemes run the gamut from simple scams to complex tax shelter deals.

Taxpayers are legally responsible for what is on their tax return even if it is prepared by someone else. Consumers can help protect themselves by choosing a reputable tax preparer. See the "Choosing a Tax Professional" page at IRS.gov.

PHISHING

Taxpayers should be alert to potential fake emails or websites looking to steal personal information. The IRS will never initiate contact with taxpayers via email about a bill or tax refund. Don't click on emails claiming to be from the IRS. Be wary of emails and websites that may be scams to steal personal information.

PHONE SCAMS

Phone calls from criminals impersonating IRS agents remain an ongoing threat to taxpayers. The IRS has seen a surge of these phone scams in recent years as con artists threaten taxpayers with police arrest, license revocation, deportation and more.

IDENTITYTHEFT

The IRS, working in conjunction with the Security Summit partnership of state

tax agencies and the tax industry, has made major improvements in detecting tax return related identity theft over the last few years.

The IRS continues to aggressively pursue criminals who file fraudulent tax returns using someone else's Social Security number.

RETURN PREPARER FRAUD

Be on the lookout for unscrupulous return preparers. The vast majority of tax professionals provide honest, high-quality service, but there are some dishonest preparers who operate each filing season to scam clients.

INFLATED REFUND CLAIMS

Taxpayers should take note of anyone promising inflated tax refunds. Those preparers who ask clients to sign a blank return, promise

a big refund before looking at records or charge fees based on a percentage of the refund are probably up to no good. To find victims, fraudsters may use flyers or word of mouth via community groups where trust is high.

FALSIFYING INCOMETO CLAIM CREDITS

Con artists may convince unsuspecting taxpayers to invent income to erroneously qualify for tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. This scam can lead to taxpayers facing large bills.

ABUSIVETAX SHELTERS

Abusive tax structures including trusts and syndicated conservation easements are sometimes used to avoid paying taxes. The IRS is committed to stopping tax avoidance schemes.

The vast majority of tax-

payers pay their fair share, and everyone should be on the lookout for people peddling tax shelters that sound too good to be true. When in doubt, taxpayers should seek an independent opinion regarding complex products they are offered.

FALSELY PADDING DEDUCTIONS ON RETURNS

Taxpayers should avoid the temptation to falsely inflate deductions or expenses on their tax returns to pay less than what they owe or potentially receive larger refunds. Think twice before overstating deductions, such as charitable contributions and business expenses, or improperly claiming credits, such as the Child Tax Credit.

EXCESSIVE CLAIMS FOR BUSINESS CREDITS

Avoid improperly claiming the fuel tax credit, a tax benefit generally not available to most taxpayers. The credit is usually limited to off-highway business use, including use in farming. Taxpayers should also avoid misuse of the research credit.

Improper claims often involve failures to participate

in or substantiate qualified research activities or satisfy the requirements related to qualified research expenses.

FAKE CHARITIES

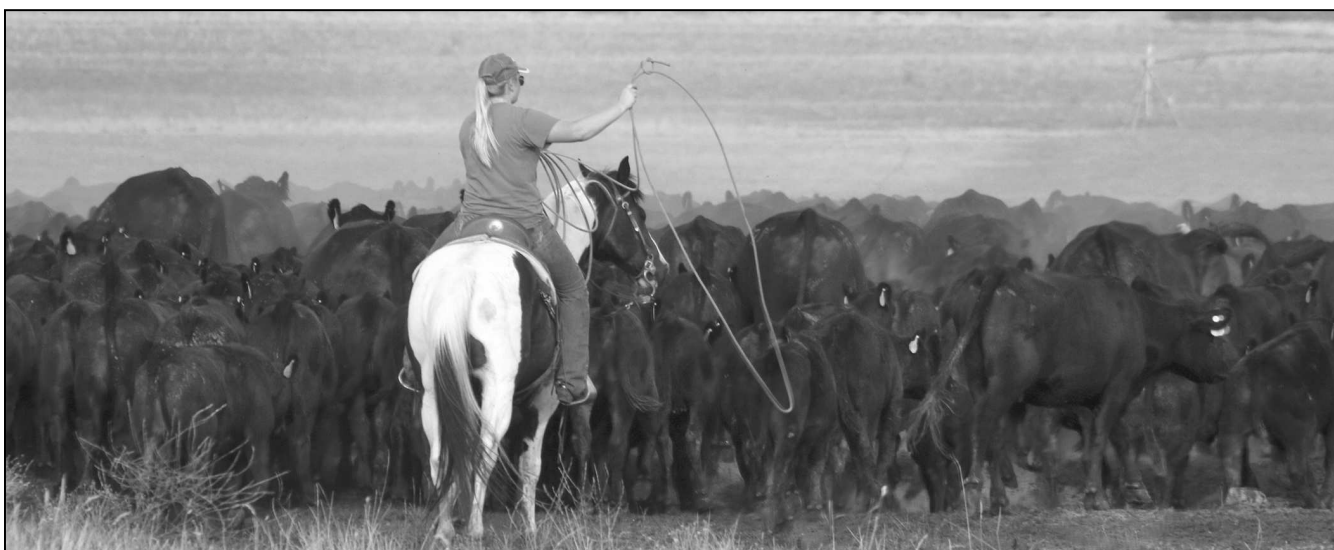
Contributors should take a few extra minutes to ensure their money goes to legitimate charities. IRS.gov has the tools taxpayers need to check out the status of charitable organizations.

OFFSHORETAX AVOIDANCE

Successful enforcement actions against offshore cheating show it's a bad bet to hide money and income offshore. People involved in offshore tax avoidance are best served by coming in voluntarily and getting caught up on their tax-filing responsibilities.

FRIVOLOUSTAX ARGUMENTS

Frivolous tax arguments may be used to avoid paying tax. Promoters of frivolous schemes encourage taxpayers to make unreasonable and outlandish claims about the legality of paying taxes despite being repeatedly thrown out in court. The penalty for filing a frivolous tax return is \$5,000.



Rider Felicia Bias herds cattle at the Dinsdale Farms near Grants Pass

Timothy Bullard/WesCom News Service

Beef Quality Assurance

Shelby Felley
The Associated Press

It is vitally important to have a safe and sustainable supply of food in the United States and elsewhere. This includes high-quality beef that is humanely raised in an environmentally sound manner.

The US Department of Agriculture has rules and laws that govern how this is done. However, beef producers take it a step further because they have a vested interest and sincere desire to make sure their cattle, land, and products are treated with the utmost

regard. This extra step includes a national program called Beef Quality Assurance where individual beef producers take the training and receive certification.

The BQA program started in the early 1980s when producers wanted to ensure practices were safe and would pass the scrutiny of consumers. The USDA audited the cattle feeding segment of the industry to look at various practices and how they impacted meat quality. Since then, National Beef Quality Audits have been done every five years and

include all segments of the beef production system — Cow-calf, Stocker, Finishing and Packer. Each year top issues to focus on are identified and improvements are sought.

Beef producers participate in BQA because it's the right thing to do, it protects the beef industry from additional regulation, improves sale value of marketed beef cattle, demonstrates commitment to food safety and quality, safeguards the public image of the beef industry, upholds consumer confidence in valu-

able beef products and enhances herd profitability through better management. The BQA guidelines focus on what is fed, records for animal health and husbandry practices for the animals.

Wholesome feeding practices, veterinary-guided health care, low-stress livestock handling and care for the aging animals in the herd are some of the topics addressed in the BQA program. Additionally, ranchers are kept up to date on animal genetics for breeding excellent beef cattle.

HAPPENINGS

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Attention ranchers: BLM seeks bids for new pastures

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Bureau of Land Management is seeking contractors for off-range pastures to provide a free-roaming environment and quality care for wild horses and burros removed from Western public lands. The BLM will award multiple contracts that can accommodate at least 200 head, with a four-year or nine-year renewal option. All contracts require supplemental feed for a minimum of four months to ensure animals maintain a quality body condition throughout the dormant months. The new pastures will provide free-roaming environment for animals in overpopulated herds. Bids will be accepted through May 3 from states including Oregon (excluding the area west of the Cascade Mountain Range).

Applicants who are new to conducting business with the government must first obtain a Duns and Bradstreet number at www.dnb.com and then register at www.sam.gov/ to respond to the solicitation. No fee is involved.

The solicitation describes what to submit to the BLM and where to send it. To obtain the contract solicitation: Go to www.fedconnect.net; click on "Search Public Opportunities"; under Search Criteria, select "Reference Number"; enter the solicitation reference number 140L0119R0002; then click "Search" and once the solicitation's information appears, download the information on the right.

For assistance, contact Kemi Ismael at 202-912-7098 or kismael@blm.gov. A list of frequently asked questions is available at www.blm.gov/whb.

Baker City hosts first-ever Startup Weekend

BAKER CITY — Baker City will host Northeast Oregon's first-ever Startup

Weekend April 12-13. A hallmark event in metropolitan entrepreneurial communities, startup gatherings bring together entrepreneurs and startup enthusiasts to share ideas, form teams and learn what it takes to launch a business venture.

"This is an exciting new milestone for our region's economy. Baker City entrepreneurs and stakeholders are exceptionally eager and willing participants, and it's a credit to them that we can endeavor to host this event," said Fred Warner, city manager.

On the first day of Startup Weekend Baker City, participants gather to pitch business ideas then vote on the best pitches and form teams based on which project they want to work on. On day two, teams will learn from local mentors as they develop a prototype of their business.

The event concludes that night when teams present their projects to the audience and a panel of experts. The event is sponsored by Grocery Outlet, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, Hen House, Business Oregon, Launch Pad Baker, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District and Techstars.

Startup Weekend tickets may be purchased at www.eventbrite.com/e/techstars-startup-weekend-baker-city-april-2019-tickets-56934628005 and will include four meals, benefits and discounts, expert speakers, networking opportunities, and unlimited internet and coffee. For more details, contact Bryan Tweit at 541-519-5377 or Lisa Dawson, executive director of the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District, at 541-426-3598.

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