

Will usage of H-2A workers continue to grow?

H-2A from Page 1

Growers are evaluating whether they can afford \$12.42 per hour based on how well they did with their 2014 harvests, he said. But he predicted usage of H-2A workers will continue to grow by double digit percentages in Washington, California and Oregon for the foreseeable future regardless of AEW and immigration reform.

Central Washington tree fruit growers have used more

H-2A workers in recent years to offset labor shortages. When the 2015 AEW was announced a month ago, some said they will continue to hire more H-2A workers because they can't afford not to.

Most pickers make more than the AEW anyway on piece rate because of their speed of picking. Still the increase in AEW causes piece rates to go up, said Tom Riggan, general manager at Chelan Fresh Marketing.

The U.S. Department of Labor approved 9,077 H-2A workers in 2014 for Washington, up from 6,221 in 2013 and 4,546 in 2012. Of the total, about 94 percent were in tree fruit and 6 percent in other crops. About 80 percent are recruited for growers by WAFLA.

California had 6,043 H-2A workers in 2014, up from 4,200 and Oregon had 238.

"I think California will be explosive in the next cou-

ple of years because it needs more labor and the only guaranteed way is H-2A," said Lee Wicker, deputy director of the North Carolina Growers Association.

Historically, California and the West Coast haven't needed H-2A workers because of an abundant supply of illegal immigrants crossing from Mexico, Wicker said.

The Southeast has struggled with farmworker shortages longer because it is far-

ther away from the Mexican border, he said. Now fewer cross the border because it is expensive and dangerous, he said.

Washington is surpassed in H-2A workers only by North Carolina at 14,502, Florida at 13,544 and Georgia at 10,387.

North Carolina's AEW increased 45 cents to \$10.32 for 2015. Florida dropped 7 cents to \$10.19 and Georgia stayed at \$10.

North Carolina's usage

of H-2A workers in tobacco, fruits and vegetables has been increasing at 18 to 20 percent a year and there's no indication of slowdown, Wicker said.

"We have growers calling every day saying send me an application package," he said.

The AEW in North Carolina has increased an average 3.7 percent a year for the past 25 years, Wicker said. This year it went up 4.6 percent.

Bird flu barrier forces Washington hatchery to kill healthy chicks

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A Bellingham, Wash., hatchery was forced to euthanize 22,000 healthy chicks Jan. 9 because of trade restrictions imposed by Canada after bird flu was found in non-commercial flocks in south-central Washington.

Canadian authorities relaxed the ban Jan. 13 and allowed 65,000 imperiled chicks to be delivered to a Chilliwack, British Columbia, poultry farm owned by the same parent company, K&R Poultry.

"It was a big sigh of relief," said Harvey Pelleboer, manager of the hatchery, Rock Creek Farms.

Pelleboer said he was shocked to learn Jan. 7 that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency wouldn't let the chicks across the border. The hatchery produces about 100,000 chicks a week, he said.

The next day, the agency announced all birds, raw meat and poultry products raised, processed or shipped from Washington and Oregon would be barred until further notice.

The ban was a response to highly pathogenic avian influ-



Courtesy of USDA AARS
Young chicks are seen in this file photograph.

er was uncertain whether he would have to euthanize the 65,000 chicks and 20,000 more chicks due to hatch by week's end.

"It was a nightmare," he said. "Here I am, sitting with 65,000 chicks."

On the afternoon of Jan. 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said it had resolved the problem. By 5:30 p.m., Pelleboer's chicks were able to cross the border.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Washington Department of Agriculture worked with the Canadian agency to resolve the issue, according to USDA spokeswoman Joelle Hayden.

Canadian authorities have now limited their restrictions to parts of Benton and Franklin counties, the vicinity of the two infected non-commercial flocks. The hatchery can now ship chicks to Canada, she said in an email.

Efforts to obtain comment from CFIA were unsuccessful.

Pelleboer said he tests regularly for bird flu and credited the USDA with intervening on the farm's behalf.

"They're doing a phenomenal job, trying to help us," Pelleboer said.

enza showing up in two backyard flocks in Benton County, Wash., and one in Douglas County, Ore.

Previously, a wild duck and captive falcon near Lynden, about 27 miles from Bellingham, were found to have had bird flu. The virus struck 11 B.C. poultry farms and one non-commercial flock between Dec. 1 and 19.

But it was the cases of bird flu that struck 290 miles away in the southern end of Washington that caused problems for Rock Creek Farms, which has no way to feed or water the chicks.

For several days, Pellebo-

'The quarantine will only be in place long enough to tell if we have successfully contained the virus'

FLU from Page 1

of eggs, poultry and other poultry products from the zone, according to WSDA.

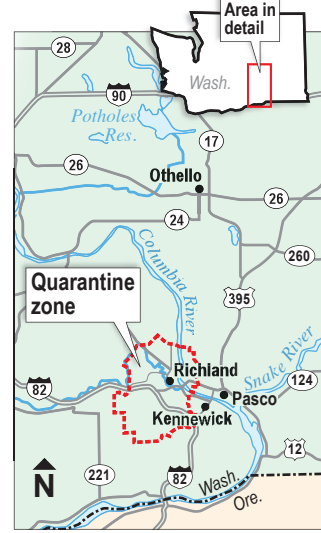
Exemptions will be made for operations that obtain permits from the WSDA.

"The quarantine will only be in place long enough to tell if we have successfully contained the virus, so we could lift it in a matter of weeks," WSDA spokesman Hector Castro said.

The quarantine will not prevent anyone selling eggs inside the zone to continue to do so if customers come to them, he said. "The risk is with the movements between the properties."

A 140-bird flock near Benton City was identified Dec. 31 with the virus, the first time highly pathogenic bird flu had ever been diagnosed in domestic birds in Washington. About a week earlier, ducks from that flock had been transferred to another backyard flock 9 miles away. Some 500 birds in that flock were euthanized Jan. 6.

A backyard flock next to the first flock was tested



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

but is free of bird flu, Castro said.

WSDA and U.S. Department of Agriculture are disinfecting both sites.

Castro said the owner of the first flock occasionally sold birds. He said he didn't know of any business activity by the owner of the second flock.

The outbreak of bird flu here is part of the global spread of highly pathogenic H5N2 and H5N8 viruses. Officials believe the virus is being transmitted to domestic birds in Asia, Eu-

rope and North America by migrating waterfowl. The wild birds are able to survive the virus, which has been deadly to a variety of domestic birds.

A die-off of domesticated guinea fowl in Douglas County in Southern Oregon in mid-December led to the discovery of an infected backyard flock.

Wild ducks in Whatcom County, Wash., and Butte County, Calif., were found infected by H5N2.

The appearance of highly pathogenic bird has caused some countries to impose restrictions, particularly on poultry and poultry products from Oregon and Washington.

U.S. officials say the virus has not been found at commercial operations and that the virus has not caused any human illness.

Highly pathogenic H5N2 forced 245,600 birds to be culled at 11 British Columbia, Canada, poultry farms in December.

See www.agr.wa.gov/lawsrules/rulemaking for the complete WSDA quarantine rule and a map of the quarantine zone.

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	4 Air Induction (AI/AIC)	Single	Very Coarse VC to Extremely Coarse XC	2,4-D/Roundup®/Dicamba
	5 Air Induction Turbo TwinJet (AITTJ60)	Twin	Very Coarse VC to Extremely Coarse XC	Roundup®/Dicamba
	6 Turbo TeeJet Induction (TTI)	Single	Extremely Coarse XC to Ultra Coarse UC	Roundup®/Dicamba

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