

Washington

Washington free of bird flu quarantines

WSDA urges bird owners to keep their guard up

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

For the first time since early January, Washington state has no bird flu quarantines, though the highly pathogenic virus could re-surface, according to the state Department of Agriculture.

WSDA on Wednesday lifted the final two quarantines in Okanogan County.

Quarantines had previously been removed in Benton, Franklin and Clallam counties. The quarantines restricted the movement of eggs, poultry and poultry products within about 6 miles of infected premises.

A quarantine in Deschutes County near Tumalo in Oregon remains in place. Bird flu there struck a 90-bird non-commercial

flock that included chickens, ducks and turkeys in mid-February.

No flocks have been infected in Washington since early February, when bird flu was found in a 100-bird non-commercial flock in Oroville in Okanogan County near the Canadian border. A few days earlier, a 5,000-game bird farm was infected in Riverside, about 40 miles away.

Both flocks were euthanized, and the virus apparently did not spread beyond the two flocks, according to WSDA.

U.S. Department of Agriculture and WSDA veterinarians visited numerous locations in the quarantine areas and tested samples from several birds. All samples tested negative for avian influenza.

Until Wednesday, there had been restrictions on the movement of poultry or poultry products somewhere in Washington since Jan. 7 because of an unprecedented outbreak of highly

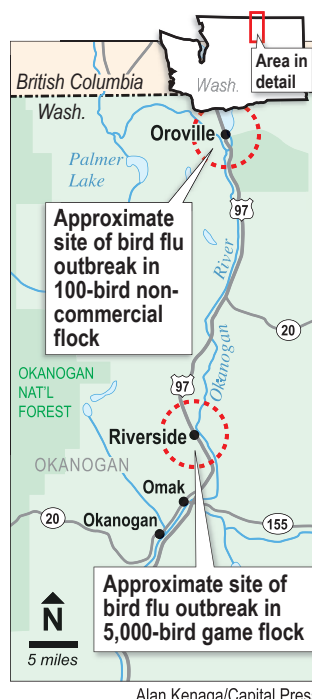
pathogenic bird flu in the West.

The virus has appeared in six Western states and British Columbia, Canada, since the beginning of December.

The virus has surfaced in various combinations of Eurasian and Northern American strains, but no human illnesses have been reported.

Bird flu has hit two commercial poultry farms in California and 11 commercial operations in British Columbia. The virus also has been found in six backyards flocks, the game bird farm and in more than three dozen hawks, eagles, falcons and wild ducks, according to a USDA count.

New cases continue to be reported in Asia and Europe, with the virus potentially crossing over to other species. Chinese authorities reported Wednesday that two Bengal tigers in a zoo died of highly pathogenic H5N1 bird flu.



Alan Kenagal/Capital Press

Because migratory waterfowl can carry avian influenza, WSDA continues to urge bird owners to protect their domestic birds from contact with wild birds.

Avian influenza does not affect poultry meat or egg products, which remain safe to eat, according to WSDA.

Deaths or illness among domestic birds should be reported to the WSDA Avian Health Program at 1-800-606-3056. For wild birds, contact the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-606-8768.

In brief

Apple maggots threaten Spokane yard waste recycling

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A new rule to protect Washington apple orchards from a pest could derail the yard waste recycling program in Spokane.

The Spokesman-Review reports Spokane officials were surprised to find they are affected by the rule intended for western Washington.

The state Department of Agriculture last month said that counties under an apple maggot quarantine cannot ship compost to counties deemed free of the pest.

Spokane County is the only county in eastern Washington under the quarantine. Its composting facility is in Lincoln County.

Details of a possible mitigation process are still under discussion.

Skagit Valley flowers blooming early

LA CONNER, Wash. (AP) — After a mild winter, fields of yellow daffodils near La Conner are blooming already and Skagit Valley tulips could flower early too.

Tulip bulb growers tell the Skagit Valley Herald their fields will likely be full of color before the end of the month — in advance of the month-long tulip Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in April.

Organizers expect there should be plenty for visitors to see and do during the festival in the Mount Vernon area. This year, the La Conner Chamber of Commerce organized a Daffodil Festival in March to lead into the 32-year-old tulip festival.

Zillah woman killed in collision with farm tractor

ZILLAH, Wash. (AP) — The Washington State Patrol says a Zillah woman was killed in a collision with a farm tractor on the Yakima Valley Highway.

The patrol says 55-year-old Vickie A. Goodno was speeding Sunday evening when her car collided with the John Deere tractor and overturned.

The Yakima Herald-Republic reports she was not wearing a seat-belt and died at the scene near Zillah.

The tractor driver was not hurt.

WSDA manure bill slips away

Farm groups seek funding for classes on applying nutrients

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A Washing-

ton State Department of Agriculture proposal to regulate manure like pesticides has

stumbled, tripped up by a lack of support.

In the place of new rules, however, farm groups advocate tucking more than \$500,000 in the state budget to show farmers how to keep manure runoff from polluting streams or groundwater.

The new approach — education over regulation — has emerged as a way lawmakers can address concerns over manure runoff contaminating shellfish beds in Whatcom and Skagit counties, and groundwater in Yakima County.

WSDA last fall proposed a new licensing program to oversee manure applications on 20 acres or more in those three counties. Gov. Jay Inslee's budget proposal included \$680,000 to fund the program.

Much-anticipated legislation was never introduced, however. WSDA spokesman Hector Castro said it became apparent a bill couldn't win approval.

"I think clearly we need to have more conversations with our partners in the agriculture industry and other interested parties out there," Castro said.

Agricultural groups had complained that WSDA developed the outlines of a manure bill without consulting them.

They said the proposal unfairly singled-out farmers for watershed pollution and that WSDA hadn't shown regulating manure would improve water quality. Another concern was that the bill would discourage farmers from fertilizing with manure.

"I think it didn't have support because it had a lot of problems," Washington State Dairy Federation's director of governmental relations, Jay Gordon, said.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Logan James inspects bottles of Spire Mountain Cider on Feb. 24 at the Fish Brewing Company in Olympia. Cider makers propose breaking away from the Washington Wine Committee to lead their own marketing campaign.

Wash. cider producers seek split from wineries

Legislation would exempt cider makers from wine assessments

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Hard cider makers are lobbying to break away from winemakers and form their own marketing association.

Washington's 30 or so cider producers currently pay a mandatory 8 cents per gallon assessment to the Washington State Wine Commission. That amounted to \$25,230 in the last fiscal year.

It was a fraction of the \$4.33 million the commission collected from wineries and grape growers, but cider makers say their fledgling industry can't waste money financing a competing beverage.

The message is going down smoothly with lawmakers. At

a Senate hearing, Spokane Republican Michael Baumgartner jokingly referred to the issue as "trendy beers vs. bow ties."

"I can assure you, we're finding you very persuasive," Baumgartner told cider makers.

If legislators exempt them from wine assessments, Washington cider makers say they will voluntarily unite to champion their beverage. The industry, though growing, is too small to support a full-blown commission with mandatory assessments, cider makers say.

The wine commission neither opposes nor supports cider makers breaking away, commission spokeswoman Michaela Baltasar said.

Cider makers were lumped in with wineries when there were only a few. "No one really cared," said Seattle cider maker Colin Schilling, co-owner of Schilling Cider. But the number of Washington cider producers has roughly tripled in the past five years, according to those in the industry.

The emerging cider indus-

try has enjoyed support from Eastern Washington lawmakers from apple- and pear-growing areas and Western Washington lawmakers from where much of the cider is made and sold.

Schilling said roughly 10 pounds of apples go into a gallon of cider. He estimated 1 million gallons of cider will be made in Washington this year and predicted rapid growth.

"As we grow, we'll be increasing the demand for those apples," he said.

Cider makers buy all kinds of apples, Schilling said. "We use what we have."

With an alcoholic content of up to 7 percent, cider is competing for a place with the state's craft beer and wine industries. Cider makers resist being lumped in with beer, and they say they have even less in common with wine.

Cider is served in pints at pubs and drinkers don't connect it with wine, said Max DeJarnatt, marketing manager for Spire Mountain Ciders in Olympia. "It's fun. It's boisterous."

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