Report calls for investment in 'Ag of the Middle'

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Ecotrust, a Portland nonprofit, is retrofitting a former ironworks to become a regional food development and distribution hub. The group published a report on infrastructure gaps that hamper medium-sized growers and producers.

More online
Ecotrust: http://www.ecotrust.org/publication/regional-food-infrastructure/

Oregon's medium-sized ag producers churn out high-quality meat, grain and greens, but gaps in the aggregation, processing and distribution infrastructure make it difficult to put on consumers' plates at an affordable price.

A new report from Ecotrust, a Portland non-profit, calls for investment in "Ag of the Middle" producers and the network that can sustain a strong regional food economy.

The report, "Oregon Food Infrastructure Gap Analysis," defines "Ag of the Middle" producers as too big to survive by selling only at farmers' markets or to CSAs, but too small compete in commodity markets.

"It's absolutely the most painful place to be as a producer," said Amanda Oborne, one of the report's authors and Ecotrust's food and farms vice president.

The 250-page study describes a haphazard system in which growers and other food producers spend too much time on the supply chain instead of developing their product. They must cobble together outlets, pick, pack and store things themselves and deliver small amounts to multiple buyers.

Neighborhood grocery stores in Portland, especially those catering to consumers willing to pay more for local, organic or sustainably produced food, are besieged by clusters of delivery vehicles. Some of them amount to a cooler in the trunk of a grower's car. In Portland's increasingly busy streets, getting from store to store isn't easy.

The founder of Portland's Bowery Bagels, which uses Northwest grains, told the report writers he delivers to 114 outlets on weekdays. "I can make more bagels," CEO Michael Madigan is quoted as saying, "but I can't deliver any more."

The report says Ag of the Middle producers often lack branding or marketing strategy and do without communications and strategic planning.

The result is a system that is "highly fragmented, lacking consistent data and information, and dependent on personal relationships," according to the study.

Ecotrust is investing in the solution. The organization is retrofitting a former ironworks building in Portland's eastside industrial area to be a food development, storage and distribution hub.

The building on Southeast Salmon Street — called "The Redd" after the egg nests salmon make in streams — will have 16,000 square feet of development, incubator or processing space for meat, grain and greens. A mezzanine will contain 8,000 square feet of offices and educational space.

A building next door will have cold storage and warehousing space, and a delivery company that uses electric cargo bicycles capable of hauling up to 800 pounds of product to restaurants or other customers. Bowery Bagels is moving into the building as well.

Portland has a reputation as a "foodie" city, but Oborne said Ecotrust and its partners are intent on developing a "food system, not a food scene."

Study: Passions high on all sides in wolf debate

WDFW commissions report to help grasp 'social side'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Courtesy of ODFW

A young female from the Walla Walla pack was fitted with a radio collar on Oct. 21, 2011, in northern Umatilla County, Ore. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officials say groups have unrealistic expectations when it comes to trapping and collaring wolves, according to an assessment of the the state's public confict over wolf management.

OLYMPIA — Ranchers and environmentalists agree that conflicts over wolves in Washington state are intense and polarizing, fed by fear, suspicion and high stakes, according to a report prepared for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A consultant, Francine Madden, interviewed more than 90 livestock producers, conservationists, hunters, wildlife managers and elected officials between January and March for a recently released 43-page assessment on the human-side of wolf policy.

Predation of livestock and the lethal removal of wolves have deepened the clash between interest groups, according to Madden.

"Most people interviewed across all groups felt the conflict has gotten worse in the recent past, with many noting that it has gotten much worse," she wrote. "Some stakeholders feel that the emotions on all sides of the wolf issue are running so high that neither side can really hear each other. This applies, as well, to hearing the science."

WDFW wolf policy coordinator Dave Ware said the report, which cost the department $82,000, revealed deep-seated passions. Ranchers and environmentalists criticized WDFW for purportedly failing to provide strong leadership or playing favorites. Ware said the report can help the agency communicate better. "We really don't have expertise with the social side," Ware said.

Among Madden's observations:

• With few exceptions, most people, regardless of their viewpoint, thought an east-west divide distinguished Washington from other states' wolf conflicts.

• Some WDFW officials said groups have unrealistic expectations about the agency's ability to traps wolves to put on radio collars and to count breeding pairs.

• Ranchers and hunters think Idaho and Montana, which all have wolf hunting seasons, are models for how to manage wolves. Environmentalists see those states as models of what not to do.

• Ranchers felt others had little at stake because wolves won't change their daily lives or jeopardize their livelihoods. Environmentalists felt their interests were being slighted and that they're fighting for healthy ecosystems and what most people want. Both sides say they worry about the next generation.

• Ranchers thought Washington's recovery plan was too ambitious, especially compared to Oregon's. Environmentalists complained about a rush to take away wolves' endangered status under the Endangered Species Act.

• Environmentalists are reluctant to compromise on lethal control because they don't trust WDFW to be a genuine advocate for recovery. Ranchers feel their way of life is under attack and compromise will invite more challenges to their practices.

• Environmental groups were widely perceived, even among their own members, to benefit financially from the wolf conflict. While some issues are hard to grasp, fundraising appeals based on "stop the slaughter of wolves" are easy to understand.

• Some ranchers acknowledged reasonable environmentalists are working toward wolf recovery. Many environmentalists voiced respect for ranchers' respect for wildlife, conservation ethic and hard work.

The agency has retained Madden, executive director of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration, to facilitate a meeting Thursday in Spokane of WDFW's wolf advisory group.

Oregon high school equestrian championship rescheduled

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon's high school equestrian team championship has been rescheduled to June 24-27 due to lingering concern about an outbreak of equine herpes virus.

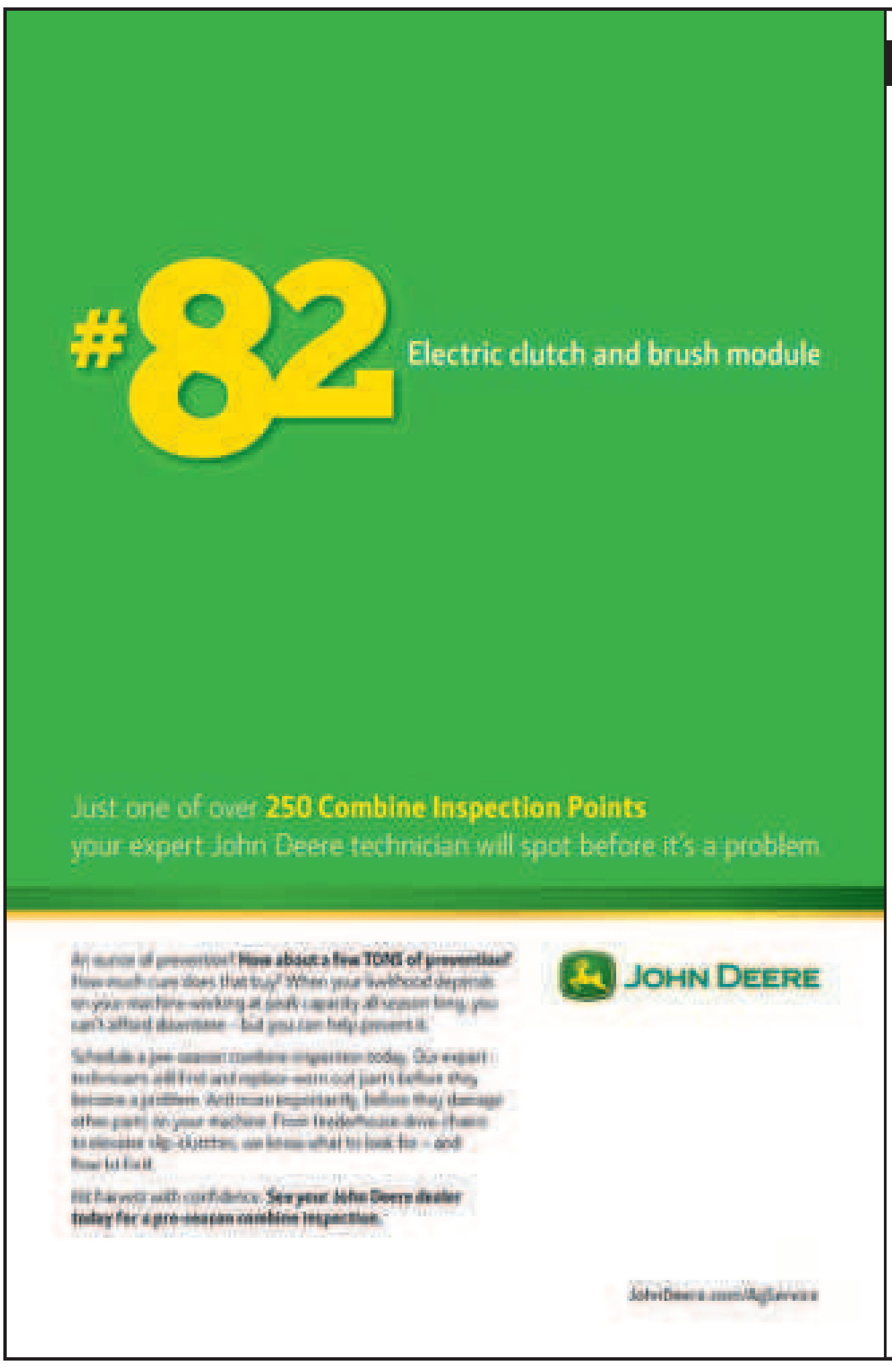
The event will be held at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds in Redmond. Approximately 550 riders from 100 schools will compete in events over the four days.

The championship event was postponed after nine horses became ill following high school meets in April. Multiple horses were quarantined as the disease ran its course. Two horses were taken to Oregon State University's veterinarian hospital but responded to treatment and have been returned home.

Equine herpes virus, called EHV-1, is a common virus among horses and may lie dormant until activated by stress or other factors. It can cause respiratory or neurological problems and in severe cases can kill horses.

Symptoms can include fever, poor coordination, nasal discharge, urine dribbling, loss of tail tone and hind limb weakness. Horses may lean against a wall or fence to avoid falling, or may not be able to rise.

The illness is spread by horse-to-horse contact, equipment, clothing or human hands.



John Deere Dealers
See one of these dealers for a demonstration

Belkorp Ag, LLC
Modesto, CA

Campbell Tractor & Implement
Fruitland, ID
Homedale, ID
Nampa, ID
Wendell, ID

Evergreen Implement Inc.
Coulee City, WA
Moses Lake, WA
Othello, WA
Ritzville, WA

Kern Machinery Inc.
Bakersfield, CA
Buttonwillow, CA
Delano, CA

Papé Machinery
Bonners Ferry, ID
Four Lakes, WA
Madras, OR
Merrill, OR
Moscow, ID
Ponderay, ID
Tangent, OR
Tekoa, WA
Walla Walla, WA

Washington Tractor, Incorporated
Chehalis, WA
Ellensburg, WA
Lynden, WA
Quincy, WA

JOHN DEERE
21-4/#4N