

People & Places

Small farm grows larger with diversification

John and Becky Klimes broaden their offerings to sell more to their customers

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

BUHL, Idaho — Farming was a natural choice for John and Becky Klimes, who both grew up on farms, but they decided to do it differently.

After meeting while working at the University of Idaho’s Kimberly Research and Extension Center, they married and in 2005 purchased a few acres in Jerome and committed to using organic practices.

The egg business they had started in Kimberly, Snake River Poultry, expanded beyond poultry to include vegetables, fruits, pork and beef, which they sold locally.

Wanting to expand and become certified organic, the couple purchased 20 acres in Buhl and gained certification in 2014. They also added broilers to their production. They market their products through Idaho’s Bounty, Twin Falls Farmers’ Market and direct to customers off the farm.

Their vegetables span



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

John and Becky Klimes check cabbage starts on their 20-acre farm in Buhl, Idaho. The couple raises organic vegetables, eggs, broiler chickens and hogs.

a wide variety, from leafy greens to tubers. They have 150 laying hens and sell 45 dozen eggs a week this time of year. The farm is home to 600 broiler chickens, five sows and about 80 finished hogs a year.

The choice to farm organic is both personal and economic, they said.

Organic is “what food was intended to be and maintains soil health and biodiversity,” he said.

“As a concerned mother, I feel it’s better for my body and the kids, too, and better for the earth,” Becky said.

It’s also a marketing advantage, John said.

“The marketability of product is much higher with organic certification,” he said.

While the Klimeses had used organic practices for years, moving to larger acreage on land that hadn’t been farmed in nearly 40 years came with a learning curve.

Longtime organic farmer and neighbor Mike Heath has been a big help. He is well versed in organic standards and regulations and has the connections to source organic seed and feed, John said.

Networking is important in organic farming, both in sourcing inputs and marketing, he said.

The diversification of the farm allows the Klimeses to sell more food to fewer people. Yields are on par with conventional ag, but quality is higher because products are not held up in transit or sitting on store shelves, he said.

“I’m trying to capitalize on every customer I have. I’m trying to do more for them,” he said.

John said he’s doing what he always wanted and he’s always doing something differ-



Western Innovator

Snake River Poultry

Owners: John and Becky Klimes

Location: Buhl, Idaho

Acres: 20

Status: Certified organic, Animal Welfare Approved

Products: Organic vegetables, dry beans, fruit, berries, eggs, broilers, pork and pastured beef

Education: John has a master’s degree in plant science and bachelor’s in ag education, University of Idaho; Becky has a bachelor’s degree in ag science and technology, University of Idaho

Family: Three children, Elizabeth, 9; Jacob, 7; Kylie, 3.

Affiliation: John, Idaho’s Bounty board of directors

ent because things change on the farm with every season.

With their expanded production, the Klimeses intend to change the company name to Agrarian Harvest, but that will have to wait for the slow season, John said.

Wal-Mart presses meat suppliers on antibiotics, treatment

By ANNE D’INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK — Wal-Mart, the nation’s largest food retailer, is urging its thousands of U.S. suppliers to curb the use of antibiotics in farm animals and improve treatment of them.

That means asking meat producers, eggs suppliers and others to use antibiotics only for disease prevention or treatment, not to fatten their animals, a common industry practice. Experts say Wal-Mart is the first major retailer to take a stance to limit the use of the antibiotics.

The guidelines also aim to get suppliers to stop using sow gestation crates and other housing that doesn’t give animals enough space. They’re also being asked to avoid painful procedures like de-horning or castration without proper pain management.

The push is part of an industry trend responding to shoppers who want to know more about where their food comes from and who are



AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File

Customers walk outside a Wal-Mart store in San Jose, Calif. Wal-Mart, the nation’s largest food retailer, is urging its thousands of U.S. suppliers to curb the use of antibiotics in farm animals and improve treatment of them.

choosing foods they see as more healthy or natural. It comes after activists have reported animal abuse at farms supplying Wal-Mart and other major companies.

Wal-Mart wants its suppliers to produce annual reports on antibiotic use and their progress on animal welfare and post the reports on their own websites. It’s also pressuring suppliers to report an-

imal abuse to authorities and take disciplinary action.

Kathleen McLaughlin, senior vice president of Wal-Mart’s sustainability division, told The Associated Press in a phone interview Thursday that the retailer is not putting deadlines on suppliers and the steps aren’t mandatory.

Still, Wal-Mart’s size gives it outsized influence on its suppliers’ practices, and

changes it pushes can affect products at all stores. For example, when Wal-Mart asked its suppliers to reduce packaging about a decade ago, it spurred innovations in the consumer products industry. For example, Procter & Gamble introduced tubes of Crest toothpaste that could be featured upright on shelves without boxes.

“We think what’s needed is a fresh look at how we can look at producing food. This is an industrywide change. It won’t happen overnight,” she said. “It’s about transparency.” For example, she noted that with antibiotics, “We don’t know a lot about who was using what for what reason.”

Wal-Mart’s moves won praise from various groups.

Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States, called it “game-changing progress and signals to agribusiness that the era of confining farm animals is ending.”

“Battery cages, gestation crates and veal crates—along

with other long-standing practices that immobilize animals—have a short shelf life in our food system,” he said.

Dr. Gail Hansen, a former practicing veterinarian and a senior officer of Pew Charitable Trusts’ antibiotic resistance project, called Wal-Mart’s move to curb the use of antibiotics a “big deal.”

She noted the Food and Drug Administration keeps data on how much antibiotics are used in farm animals, but there’s no record of how they are being used. Concerns are growing that misuse can lead to antibiotic resistance in bacteria, making human and animal disease more difficult to treat.

“This will help us understand how antibiotics are being used in the food production,” she said.

The guidelines, which apply not only to suppliers to Wal-Mart stores but also to Sam’s Club, are part of the company’s pledge to make its food system more eco-friendly and improve food safety.

Bird flu crisis slows in Minnesota, focus now on recovery

By STEVE KARNOWSKI
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota notched six straight days without a new case of bird flu, and though state officials aren’t ready to say the outbreak is over, they’re beginning to stand down.

The first case of H5N2 in the Midwest was confirmed in early March at a Minnesota turkey farm, and the virus then spread to 88 farms in the country’s top turkey producing state, affecting

nearly 8 million birds, mostly turkeys. But new cases have fallen off sharply and the focus is turning toward getting poultry farms back into production.

“I wouldn’t go out on a limb to say that we’re done for the season, but I would say it’s over, they’re beginning to stand down.”

The first case of H5N2 in the Midwest was confirmed in early March at a Minnesota turkey farm, and the virus then spread to 88 farms in the country’s top turkey producing state, affecting

egg producer in the U.S., has reported 11 new probable outbreaks last week alone, raising its total cases to 63 and toll to over 25.5 million birds, mostly chickens. But no other Midwest states had reported new cases as of Thursday. Across the Midwest, the U.S. Department of Agriculture puts the loss at nearly 39 million birds.

Things have settled down enough that Minnesota’s Board of Animal Health stopped issuing daily updates unless it has new cases or other news. The

state’s emergency operations center, which helped mobilize agencies to respond to new cases, is just partially activated now. While an incident manager remains on duty, the center is “certainly not as busy as it was,” said Bruce Gordon, spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety.

And federal personnel assigned to the state’s crisis have fallen. Many came from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which had 139 responders in Minnesota last

month; that was down to 40 by Wednesday, spokeswoman Jodelle Hayden said.

Hahn said the first Minnesota farm that was affected, in Pope County, could resume production in a few weeks, with others following a few weeks later. The barns must get a thorough cleaning and disinfection and if all tests are negative, the barns go into 21 days of downtime as a precaution. Officials will then work with producers to determine when it’s safe to restock, Hayden said.

Calendar

Wednesday, June 3

California Hot Wage & Hour Issues, noon-1 p.m. Sutton Hague Law Corp., Fresno, 559-325-0500. Useful for employers of all sizes, owners, managers, accountants, attorneys and human resource professionals. The monthly webinars address a variety of issues facing employers. Participate from any touchtone phone and submit questions during the program.

Frozen Assets: How we can and why we should save the world’s frozen water, 7-9 p.m. Walla Walla Public Library, Walla Walla, Wash. 509-943-0705. Mountaineer and climate scientist Steven Ghan takes us on a visual journey along the

crest of the North Cascades, showing evidence of glacier retreat and shares solutions to prevent global ice melt and how to preserve our snowpack.

Thursday, June 4

Nevada Hot Wage & Hour Issues, noon-1 p.m. Sutton Hague Law Corp., Fresno, 559-325-0500. Useful for employers of all sizes, owners, managers, accountants, attorneys and human resource professionals.

Wednesday, June 10

Oregon State University Extension Sherman Station Field Day, 7:30 a.m. Sherman County Extension, Moro, 541-565-3230. Twelve speakers are

scheduled to talk on topics that include wheat diseases and screening for resistance, soil pH and maximizing yields, soil-borne pathogens and Clearfield wheat trials.

Friday, June 12

Forestry Shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics. Register by June 5.

Saturday, June 13

Rickreall Gun Show, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Polk County Fair Grounds, Rickreall, Ore. 503-623-3048.

Sheep in the Foothills, 10 a.m.-1

p.m. Boise Foothills Learning Center, Boise.

Sunday, June 14

Rickreall Gun Show, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Polk County Fair Grounds, Rickreall, Ore. 503-623-3048.

Friday, June 19

Forestry Shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics.

Sunday, June 21

Washington Potato and Onion Association Annual Convention, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights.

Monday, June 22

Washington Potato and Onion Association Annual Convention, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights.

Tuesday, June 23

Washington Potato and Onion Association Annual Convention, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights.

Friday, June 26

Forestry Shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics.

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