

Oregon

Lawmakers approve stricter aerial pesticide rules

Bill creates new test, certification, reforms investigations

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Aerial pesticide applicators will be subject to stricter standards under a bill recently approved by Oregon lawmakers, but environmental groups plan to call for further reforms.

Under House Bill 3549, applicators must pass a test to spray pesticides from aircraft and obtain a special certificate from the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Previously, aerial applicators were held to the same standards

as those who sprayed from the ground.

The bill also creates a 60-foot no-spray zone around homes and schools for forestry applications, doubles fines for violations, establishes a complaint hotline and mandates standard operating procedures for investigations.

To pay for added oversight, HB 3549 raises registration fees for pesticide distributors to generate up to \$2.4 million in added revenues for ODA.

Environmental groups had requested amendments to the

bill that would have required applicators to provide notification of upcoming spray operations and report which chemicals were used, but those changes were not adopted.

"We're not satisfied because we believe Oregon needs to come into the modern day world and offer the protections other states have," said Lisa Arkin, executive director of the Beyond Toxics environmental group.

The 60-foot no-spray zone is a "baby buffer," as it leaves homes and schools vulnerable to pesticide volatilization and drift,

she said. The requirement also only applies to forestry applications, not agricultural sprays.

Even so, Arkin said she's glad the Oregon legislature had taken up the issue, saying the bill "is a good start but does not go far enough."

The legislature's attention was drawn to pesticide due to significant cases of harm to residents, Arkin said.

In future legislative sessions, lawmakers will likely be receptive to additional revisions to pesticide laws, which their constituents see as a critical issue, she said.

Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness group,

doesn't believe that "extra layers of restriction" are necessary, said Scott Dahlman, its policy director.

Other states have different approaches to regulating pesticides so comparing their rules to Oregon's is "really an apples and oranges contrast," Dahlman said.

"We've got the laws on the books to protect people and the environment," he said.

A significant aspect of HB 3549 is that ODA will receive more funding to investigate and enforce allegations of pesticide violations, Dahlman said.

"They've been stretched very thin and haven't had every-

thing they've needed," he said.

While it's likely that environmental groups and some lawmakers will continue to press for more stringent rules, the overall legislature has currently satisfied its appetite for pesticide bills with the passage of HB 3549, Dahlman said.

The bill was passed to improve ODA's ability to respond to pesticide concerns, said Roger Beyer, a lobbyist for several agricultural groups.

"People will still be pushing for stricter requirements, but this should from the legislative perspective, solve the issue until more problems are identified," he said.

Treasure Valley groups explore growing pumpkin seed for snacks



Submitted photo

A pumpkin seed crop grows on a farm in Fruitland, Idaho, in this June 29 photo. Researchers and economic development officials are trying to determine whether the crop can be grown on a major scale in the Treasure Valley area.

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Economic development officials are teaming up with Oregon State University researchers to try to introduce a new crop — pumpkin seeds for the snack market — into the Treasure Valley.

Pumpkin seeds are grown on a four- or five-year rotation and could be inserted right into the traditional crop rotations prevalent in Southwestern Idaho and Eastern Oregon, said OSU cropping systems extension agent Bill Buhrig, who began studying pumpkin seeds in field trials last year.

"They would fit right into that type of rotation," he said.

Buhrig is trying to figure out the agronomic side of the equation, while Kit Kamo, ex-

ecutive director of the Snake River Economic Development Alliance, is working on the unique harvesting and processing requirements for that crop.

Buhrig said the crop is harvested by what can be described as a pumpkin seed combine, which hammermills the pumpkin in the field and unloads the separated seed into a truck.

The seed has to be washed and dried quickly, before the starch solidifies.

Buhrig, as well as a few commercial growers who have planted small amounts of the crop, are trying to figure out which varieties will grow well here and are looking at things like proper planting density, fertility and irrigation programs.

Buhrig's trial, which is receiving funding from the state's

Agricultural Research Foundation, is also trying to determine which growing methods can be used to produce pumpkin seeds organically in this area.

"Before we do the processing and economic development part of it, we have to get a lot of the agronomic questions answered, and that's the goal of my trial," Buhrig said.

"I know the farmers here can grow the crop, but it has to be financially viable," said Kamo, whose group covers Washington and Payette counties in Idaho and Malheur County in Oregon.

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture recently awarded SREDA a \$91,000 specialty crop grant for the bi-state project.

Kamo said the idea was first planted in her head two years

ago when she was approached by several seed companies that wanted to know if pumpkin seed could be grown in the area. Those companies currently get most of their product from China but want to significantly increase the amount grown in the United States, she said.

She said the five companies that have approached her about the idea need a total of 5 million pounds of pumpkin seeds per year.

"It's a fabulous opportunity for farmers in this area," Kamo said. "It's an exciting project."

In last year's trial, the crop faced pressure from squash bugs, powdery mildew and fusarium and a lot of questions still have to be answered before pumpkin seeds take root as a major crop in this valley, Buhrig said.

PGG marketing deal intends to sweeten pot for co-op members

Partnership to provide more competitive bids

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

When it comes to marketing and selling wheat, Pendleton Grain Growers is banking on greater strength in numbers.

PGG recently announced it will join a growing alliance of Northwest grain cooperatives to improve their overall market access and fetch more competitive bids for members across Eastern Oregon and Washington.

The agreement with McCoy Grain Terminal LLC, a trading company based in Colfax, Wash., lumps PGG's 10 million to 17 million bushel grain crop under one partnership that will market 50 million to 60 million bushels.

At that volume, wheat can be blended and offered to exporters in larger packages for potentially more money, said Jason Middleton, director of grain operations for PGG.

"By that, we're able to go out for a better bid," Middleton said.

A better bid means a better bottom line for the co-op, which gets passed down to members, Middleton said.

McCoy Grain Terminal started as a joint venture in 2012 between Cooperative Agricultural Producers of Rosalia, Washington, and Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative of Genesee, Idaho. Together, they built and co-own a \$17 million grain handling facility just outside Rosalia, a small farm town in the Palouse region of Washington.

Last year, McCoy Grain Terminal added Mid-Columbia Producers of Moro as a partner to boost marketing capabilities. Now with PGG in the fold, the company can market grain from more than 70 countryside elevators and eight river terminals — three on the Snake River, and five on the Columbia River.

Bud Riedner, general man-



EO Media Group

Pendleton Grain Growers recently announced it will join a growing alliance of Northwest grain cooperatives to improve their overall market access and fetch more competitive bids for members across Eastern Oregon and Washington.

ager of McCoy Grain Terminal, said the agreement with PGG provides better collaboration during the 2015 harvest season, which is already expected to be a down due to hot, dry weather.

Indeed, Middleton said the partnership should pull together the most complete information about markets and conditions throughout the region, from The Dalles to Pendleton and Eastern Washington and

Idaho up to Canada.

"Information is the most valuable thing you can have in the grain business," Middleton said. "It's definitely a bonus to have all that information at our disposal so we can see what's going on."

PGG will continue to provide marketing services at their grower trading desk in Pendleton. The marketing department can be reached at 541-278-5018.

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Courtesy of ODFW

A 100-pound adult male wolf was GPS radio-collared in the Mount Emily unit on May 25, 2014.

Wolf pack blamed in Oregon sheep attack

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Three sheep died and a fourth was injured in what state wildlife officials said was a wolf attack.

A shepherd working on private land in the Weston Mountain area of Northeast Oregon found three injured sheep July 2. One died shortly after being found, one was euthanized due to its injuries and the third was treated. A dead lamb, partially consumed, was found the next day

in the same area.

Based on the size of bite marks and the nature of wounds inflicted, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife investigators concluded one or more wolves were responsible.

An ODFW news release said the site is within the home range of the Umatilla River pack, which has attacked sheep in the past. No radio collar or GPS tracking information was available, but investigators believe the attack was done by sub-adult members of the pack.