

People & Places

Researcher helps onion growers tackle major issues

Stuart Reitz helps navigate food safety rules, manage thrips

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Less than four months after starting his new job as an Oregon State University Extension cropping systems agent in Malheur County, Stuart Reitz was tasked with helping the local onion industry tackle one of the biggest challenges it has ever faced.

He started in September 2012 and in January 2013 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration released its proposed produce safety rule, which included strict irrigation water quality standards.

The rule limits how much generic E. coli bacteria can be present in irrigation water. That's a major issue for the region's \$1.3 billion onion industry because virtually none of the irrigation water in the area can meet those standards.

"My role here is to try to address whatever concerns growers have and that (FDA rule) rose quickly to the top of my list of priorities," said Reitz.

Reitz helped other researchers at the nearby OSU experiment station conduct trials that eventually showed E. coli bacteria pose no risk in onions.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Oregon State University Extension agent Stuart Reitz discusses the results of a thrips field trial with onion growers July 8 at OSU's Malheur County experiment station. Reitz is helping the local onion industry address some of its biggest challenges.

Western Innovator Stuart Reitz

Occupation: Oregon State University Extension cropping systems agent, Malheur County

Education: Ph.D. in entomology, Clemson University

Age: 52

Born: New Orleans, raised on the Gulf Coast

Family: Wife, Katherine; and two sons, Isaac, 14, and Colin, 8



FDA eventually revised its produce safety rule to include a die-off provision that would

allow onion growers and other farmers to sidestep the water quality standards if they can

present scientific evidence that shows bacteria die off their commodity quickly after harvest.

The OSU research has proven that for onions but Reitz is also looking at possible ways growers could meet the proposed FDA irrigation water standard if the die-off provision for some reason doesn't pan out for them.

That includes applying a copper fungicide over the top of onions to eliminate bacteria, treating ditch water with a copper sulfate compound or injecting chlorine dioxide through

drip irrigation tape to kill bacteria.

Reitz is also conducting field trials aimed at helping onion growers tackle their persistent thrips problem. Thrips are a vector for iris yellow spot virus, which can significantly affect onion size and value.

He is trying to develop an integrated pest management system to control thrip populations that uses biological controls such as beneficial insects and resistant host plants in conjunction with insecticide treatments.

He previously studied biological control agents in a variety of vegetable crops at Clemson University, and performed research on insect vectors and plant pathogens at the USDA's Agricultural Research Station in Tallahassee, Fla.

"I've always been interested in looking at integrated pest management systems where we can use biological controls and mix in other management tactics as well ... to give growers the best approach to try to manage their crops' pest problems," he said.

Reitz's new job has been kind of a trial by fire but the work he has done and is doing with onions is critically important to the region, said fellow OSU researcher Bill Buhrig, who grew up farming in the area.

"Stuart came in at the same time the (FDA) rules came out and he picked it up and ran with it," Buhrig said. "The work he is doing in those areas is incredibly important for local growers."

45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up chugs into town

By ZANE SPARLING
Capital Press

BROOKS, Ore. — The 45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up will take over Antique Powerland for the next two weekends, putting a spotlight on yesteryear's finest mechanical marvels.

"You walk in, and pretty much the first thing you see is a tractor. And then the second thing you see is a tractor as well," said Pamela Vorachek, the executive director of the Steam-Up.

She said the two-weekend festival is an amalgamation of three Ts: Trains, trolleys and, you guessed it, tractors.

At the Steam-Up, you can stroll past the ticket counter of a restored 1920s-era Southern Pacific depot and take a ride on a vintage trolley; watch chaff and wood chips fly as volunteers operate a steam-powered sawmill and thresher; or even duck for cover as a World War II tank fires (blanks) to start each day's tractor parade.

This year's featured tractor — and there are about 40 of them — is the Minneapolis Moline.

Marketed as a "comfort tractor," the Moline was the first of its kind to offer operators a fully-enclosed cab. Advertisements from the period promised farmers they could plow their fields, then drive it to church, according to Vorachek.

Before that, "by the time you got done plowing a field, well you took a bath, and you left as much mud in that bathtub as dirt was out in the field," show manager Evan Burroughs said.

Back then, a thresher was an infernal, steam-powered contraption that sat in one place and cost a small fortune to own — maybe \$5,000. Instead of a single combine practically flying over fields, 20 or 30 men might share the work, piling their crops to a single mound in front of the roving contractor's thresher.

When you were ready to move the thresher, you needed



Courtesy of the Great Oregon Steam-Up

Steam-powered tractors are among the many featured attractions at the 45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up, which will be July 25-26 and Aug. 1-2 at Antique Powerland in Brooks, Ore.

a team of mules.

The job was dirty, hot, messy and loud, according to Burroughs.

"Take a modern combine, strip out the mobility components, and the guts of the thing are virtually the same as the 1880 to 1920s threshing machine," Burroughs explained.

"The technology changes, but

it's nice to know if everything goes gunny bag with the computer, we can back up a step and do it mechanically."

The Steam-Up is hosted on the grounds of Antique Powerland, a 62-acre park in Brooks, Ore., that features 12 permanent mechanical and agricultural museums.

The event offers plenty of

45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up

When: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 25 and 26, and Aug. 1 and 2

Tickets: Adult tickets are \$12, \$20 for a weekend pass or \$30 for a one-day family pass. All children under 12 are admitted free; Oregon National Guard members and their families are admitted free with valid military ID on the second weekend.

Website: <http://www.antique-powerland.com/html/steam-up.html>

food. The Knights of Columbus will sell sesame garlic chicken and mashed potatoes, while the Kiwanis will serve burgers. Other fare includes German sausage, pie, Reuben sandwiches, root beer floats and biscuits and gravy.

Fan-favorite featured artist Wayne Richards and Southern Nights will also return for another year.

Rooftop farm thrives at Boston baseball stadium

By RODRIQUE NGOWI
Associated Press

BOSTON — There's more green at Fenway Park than the infield or the monster wall.

The Red Sox are growing vegetables and herbs in a rooftop garden. The produce is used in food and cocktails sold at the concessions, at nearby restaurants and in the team's flagship restaurant that prepares meals for about 40,000 people during home games.

The 5,000-square-foot garden on the third-base side of Fenway has turned a previously unused part of the historic stadium into the largest of a handful of farms that have sprouted up in Major League Baseball stadiums, said Chris Knight, manager of facilities services and planning for the Red Sox.

The sight of a lush, green garden on the third level of the stadium excited Sox fan John



AP Photo/Elise Amendola

In this photo taken June 16 fans Michael Moore and his son, Henry, pause to look at a rooftop garden on the third-base side of Fenway Park in Boston. Produce grown in the 5,000-square-foot garden is used in food and cocktails sold at the concessions, at nearby restaurants and in the team's flagship restaurant that prepares meals for about 40,000 people during home games.

Bunker, who recently travelled from his home in Palermo, Maine, to see the team in action and make a pilgrimage to the rooftop farm.

"This is great because al-

though a lot of people love to come to Fenway and eat a hot dog, some people don't want to eat a hot dog, they want to eat something else — maybe a salad or a wrap with vegetables

in it," Bunker said.

The garden is unique because the crops are grown in milk crates, which make it possible to move the farm if needed, said Jessie Banhazl, whose company, Green City Growers, is responsible for planting and maintaining the garden.

Growers use intensive methods, including drip irrigation and planting fresh crops right after others are harvested. That's enabled the garden to yield more than 2,000 pounds of tomatoes, cucumber, eggplants, all sorts of peppers, rosemary, basil, dill, parsley, tarragon and kale in the first three months, Banhazl said.

"So we're growing a little bit of everything," she said. "It's our first year doing the farm and so we thought we'd try out a bunch of different varieties to see what the kitchens were using, and also to just kind of experiment with what

people liked."

Starting a farm at the iconic ballpark required checking the structural integrity of the roof and using lightweight soil, Banhazl said.

Growing crops atop a stadium packed with screaming fans can be distracting. Some, surprised to see a garden on the roof, wander over to ask questions.

"But we actually really enjoy that part of it. Being able to engage with the public is a huge reason why we do what we do," she said.

Determining what's grown involves consultations with chefs at the Red Sox flagship EMC Club restaurant.

"I've been here since 2006 and along with that came that farm-to-table mentality," said Rob Abell, senior executive chef at Fenway concessionaire Aramark, who oversees food preparations at the restaurant.

Calendar

Saturday-Sunday, July 25-26

The 45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up, 7 a.m.-6 p.m., Antique Powerland, Brooks, Ore. 971-600-2275. Watch Oregon's agricultural and mechanical heritage come to life. Demonstrations include trolleys, a steam-powered sawmill, blacksmithing and a tractor parade.

Hood River County Fair: Noon-10 p.m. Hood River County Fairgrounds, Hood River, Ore.

Wednesday, July 29

North Willamette Research & Extension Center Community Open House, 4-7 p.m. Oregon State University North Willamette Research & Extension Center, Aurora, Ore.

Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 1-2

The 45th annual Great Oregon Steam-Up, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Antique Powerland, Brooks, Ore. 971-600-2275. Watch Oregon's agricultural

and mechanical heritage come to life. Demonstrations include trolleys, a steam-powered sawmill, blacksmithing and a tractor parade.

Sunday, Aug. 2

"Rise Up Country" Music Festival, 1-5 p.m. Antelope Church lawn, Antelope, Ore. 541-395-2507. Don't miss the "Rise Up Country" Music Festival kicking off at 1 p.m. with Joni Harms, followed by a Chuckwagon Barbecue and the

harmonies of Central Oregon's Mud Springs Gospel Band. Headlining the festival will be Susie McEntire, a multi-award winning entertainer.

Tuesday, Aug. 4

Spotted Wing Drosophila Workshop, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Eugene Unitarian Universalist Church, Eugene, Ore. 208-850-6504. Topics include understanding SWD biology, behavior and seasonal needs; management tools and practices;

monitoring; identification and fruit sampling demonstrations.

Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 15-16

Harvest Fest, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Yamhill Valley Heritage Center Museum, McMinnville, Ore. 503-434-0490. Tractor parade, threshing, binding and baling oats using antique farming equipment and horses. Pioneer kids area, agricultural displays, music and food.

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To Reach Us

Toll free 800-882-6789
Main line 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff

N. California
Tim Hearden 530-605-3072

E Idaho
John O'Connell 208-421-4347

Idaho
Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise
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Central Washington
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