

# Molly Jo DelCurto serves as Oregon's Beef Ambassador

By ZANE SPARLING  
Capital Press

The Oregon CattleWomen have named Molly Jo DelCurto as the state's official Beef Ambassador.

The 19-year-old Linn-Benton Community College sophomore will serve as the public face of the industry, interacting with a consumer base that is increasingly concerned with everything from humane slaughter methods to the myriad uses of animal byproducts.

"A lot of people don't know how the process works," DelCurto said. "The biggest (misconception) is thinking that beef is grown on factory farms, when in reality it's grown on family farms."

Appointed to the position in late March, DelCurto has already promoted the interests of ranchers at Salem's Ag Fest, at Oregon State University's Summer Agricultural Institute and through presentations to elementary school children in her hometown of Cove.

She'll also appear at the Oregon State Fair and the East-West Shrine All-Star Football Game, a fundraiser for the Shriners Hospital for Children, in Baker City.

DelCurto was awarded a \$500 scholarship for the ambassadorship after emerging from a crowded field of applicants, according to Oregon CattleWomen President Katharine Jackson.

"I think that Molly is ready to go," Jackson said. "She has a very calm presence and will be able to say what needs to be said."

Growing up on a hobby ranch where her parents raised registered Angus cattle, DelCurto started her own mini-herd when she was 9-years-old.

All it took was a little grit,



Molly Jo DelCurto, 19, of Cove, Ore., is this year's Oregon Beef Ambassador. Courtesy of Maddee Moore

gumption — and a loan from Mom and Dad — and soon the junior rancher had three flowery-named heifers: Rosy, Daisy and Lily.

"My cattle tend to be a little more ornery than normal. They definitely have a mind of her own," DelCurto said. "We spoiled them too much. They got extra feed all the time."

DelCurto moved up the ranks in Cove High School's 70-member FFA contingent. She served as chapter historian and secretary before becoming president in her senior year. She also participated in livestock judging competition in high school and now participates on a collegiate level.

DelCurto is pursuing a major in agricultural business management and a minor in animal science. She hopes to continue to work as an industry spokesperson after she

graduates.

During her educational presentations, she said explaining the beef cultivation process left the young children "amazed."

"They see the animals in the field, and they see what's on their dinner plate, but they have no idea how it got to that spot," she said.

DelCurto will vie for one of five spots on the national beef ambassador team in September. If she wins, she'll be in good company. In 2013, Oregon Beef Ambassador Jacquelyn Brown won a spot on the traveling team.

# Grasshopper, aphid numbers on the rise

WSU researchers recommend monitoring

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Eastern Washington wheat farmers should monitor their fields for grasshoppers and aphids, researchers say.

In the last month, aphid and grasshopper populations have increased, although they're still at relatively low levels, said David Crowder, assistant professor of entomology at Washington State University.

"We thought it could be a really bad year for grasshoppers because it was so dry and warm this spring," Crowder said. "I don't know if it's just been a little bit too hot for them. The population's definitely been increasing, but I don't think we've been seeing major outbreaks."

Crowder and other WSU researchers survey 20 farms, providing weekly updates to farmers online, showing whether pests are present in a growing region, at low levels or problematic densities. Surveys will continue in Lincoln, Adams, Douglas, Spokane and Stevens counties until harvest or there's no insect activity, said Diana Roberts, regional specialist for WSU Extension in Spokane and Lincoln counties.

Crowder advises farmers look for immature grasshoppers, as they are an "early warning" sign for the more ravenous adults, which do more damage.



A grasshopper perches on a stalk of wheat in Allen Druffel's field south of Uniontown, Wash., the morning of July 20. Washington State University researchers are advising farmers to monitor their fields for increased grasshopper and aphid activity. Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

**Online**

<http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/wheat-and-barley-insect-pest-surveys/>

Grasshoppers primarily eat wheat plants, causing major yield losses to spring wheat and other cereals in outbreak years.

Aphids cause direct feeding damage. They also transmit diseases to wheat and other crops, particularly to young plants. Problems have turned up in winter wheat in the Connelly, Wash., area in recent years, Crowder said.

High numbers of aphids can produce a sugary waste product called "honeydew," which can be a habitat for fungal pathogens. Aphid populations aren't up to that level,

Crowder said.

"Overall, the populations are not at particularly alarming levels, although they are increasing, so we're continuing to monitor them," he said.

Growers who find insects should consult their crop consultant or call the research team, Roberts said.

It's the first year for the project. The researchers hope to determine economic thresholds, or the population densities where farmers should treat their fields.

"A lot of these questions, we don't have the full answers to them right now," Crowder said.

"We will be putting our heads together after the season to figure out what to do next," Roberts said.

# Wash. confirms summer's first case of equine West Nile virus

A 5-year-old Quarter horse gelding in Kennewick, Wash., is the first equine in the state to contract West Nile virus this year, the state Department of Agriculture reported Tuesday.

The horse, which was not vaccinated for the disease, has not left the owner's property recently. The horse's status is improving, according to WSDA.

The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Pullman, operated by Washington State University, reported the positive test results to the state veterinarian Friday.

Washington had five confirmed cases of horses with West Nile virus last year. The horses were in Benton, Franklin, Grant, Okanogan and Yakima counties.

West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. The disease sickens people, horses, birds and other animals, but it does not spread directly from horses to people or other animals.

The disease is fatal to horses in about one-third of the cases in which the illness is apparent, although most horses do not become ill and show no symptoms.

Symptoms include loss of coordination and appetite, confusion, fever, stiffness and muscle weakness, particularly in their hindquarters.

State Veterinarian Dr. Joe Baker recommended vaccinating horses against West Nile virus in the spring. Horses may still benefit from first-time vaccinations or annual booster shots.

Besides vaccinations, horse owners can limit exposure to mosquitoes to reduce the risk their animals will catch the virus.

Veterinarians who learn of potential West Nile virus cases in horses or other animals should contact the State Veterinarian's Office at 360-902-1881.

Last year, the USDA recorded 134 equine cases of West Nile virus.

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## IN FOCUS: PRIVATE CAPITAL FOR NEW WATER SUPPLIES

Twenty-first century water resources management will be best served by engaging the power of private sector capital and respecting viable project economics. For the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA), this means acting on sound technical and financial information, and conveying honesty by not attempting to deceive others, or worse, deceive yourself.

Two water projects affecting Eastern Washington's future wellbeing bear witness to CSRIA's call to advance private sector capital and economic prudence.

First, a recent attempt to legislate new, statewide taxes to pay for the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Supply Plan lacked targeted focus and ignored the plan's multi-billion dollar costs — nor did legislators place adequate responsibility on those who receive the benefits versus those paying the costs.

Two parts of the integrated plan that adhere to economic reality — district-specific water efficiency improvements and gaining access to Upper-Basin reservoir "dead" storage — are doable via private capital funding.

The CSRIA submitted a substitute bill requiring 50 percent of the plan component costs to be paid by the direct beneficiaries (irrigators), and the remainder funded through permit charges by issuing new Columbia-Snake River water rights. Combined, both funding mechanisms could access about \$600 million in private sector capital, relying on direct private lending and market-value payments for new water permits. The private capital streams would create two new sources of water supply.

To date, the CSRIA bill has been ignored by the "new tax" priests — trained before the public funding altar that blessed 20th century water projects.

Second, in the water-starved Odessa Subarea, the engineering and water management expertise and financial horsepower of private irrigators is being shunned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District. Working with CSRIA, the irrigators have prepared the engineering and economic studies to proceed with building three water distribution systems, accessing the East Low Canal, where scarce USBR-state funding for canal modifications has already been allocated.

The irrigators have secured \$42 million for immediate construction of the first water distribution system — pumps and mainline from the canal — and have commercial lenders ready to issue about \$100 million for completion of several systems. The irrigators would pay their own direct system costs and do so with private sector lending; and the irrigators would adopt water management practices superior to that used by the USBR. The irrigators' systems would be "turn-key" projects, built by the irrigators, with operational control and operation/maintenance turned over to the district upon construction completion. Private sector capital and experience at work.

But the private sector construction is being delayed by the USBR's refusal to release new water service contracts to the irrigators. This denial is vested in the USBR's cultural inability to work directly with private irrigators and capital, preferring the 20th century "relationship" of working with an irrigation district, even though the district's "plan" is illusory, lacks irrigator support, and possesses no financial backing. The Odessa Subarea wells are running dry, while the USBR and district fiddle away time and other people's resources.

The above water projects are complicated, but the dominant factor impeding both is a 20th century mindset cursed by a zombie-like approach to sucking the financial life blood from a frail public sector body.

New water projects call for an infusion of 21st century private capital and require high-efficiency water management practices. It is time for a culture change.

Ron Reimann is CSRIA Board President  
Darryll Olsen, is CSRIA Board Representative

Read more here: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2015/04/19/3516430/in-focus-private-capital-for-new.html#storylink=cpy>