

'Stuck' with wolves, rancher says he'll make the best of it

WDFW touts range-riders as cattle protectors

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

CLE ELUM, Wash. — An Ellensburg rancher who lost a cow to wolves in Central Washington says he still believes his cattle can co-exist with the returning predators.

"I'm not excited about it, but it doesn't matter whether I'm excited," rancher Sam Kayser said Tuesday. "We're stuck with them. I want to think there's room for all of us."

Kayser lost a yearling Angus in mid-July to the Teanaway pack in Kittitas County, the state's western-most pack and one of its best tracked. Three wolves in the pack, which may have as many as six members, have been fitted with collars transmitting their locations.

Kayser's range-rider, Bill Johnson, gets updates three



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Range-rider Bill Johnson, left, and Ellensburg rancher Sam Kayser field questions Aug. 4 at the Teanaway Community Forest in Central Washington about their efforts to protect cows in a wolf pack's territory. A cow in Kayser's herd was killed this summer by wolves. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife arranged for Johnson and Kayser to talk to the media.

times a day. He said the attack showed the difficulty of protecting 400 cows grazing over 40,000 acres from predators that he called "incredibly smart."

"I don't think it could have been prevented, no way," he said.

Kayser and Johnson met

with the media at the Teanaway Community Forest, near where the depredation took place on state grazing land. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife arranged the meeting with Kayser and Johnson as part of a presentation on how the agency is managing wolves.

The forest is about 100 miles east of Seattle and is the western edge of the gray wolf's dispersal since being reintroduced to Idaho and Wyoming in 1995.

Because the Teanaway pack roams in the western two-thirds of Washington, it's protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. If Teanaway pack wolves continue to prey on livestock, shooting them isn't an option, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Four cows were killed in early July by the Dirty Shirt pack in northeast Washington, where wolves have only state protection. The WDFW has indicated that if the pack kills one more cow, the agency will offer the rancher a permit to shoot up to two wolves.

WDFW hopes it won't come to that. Range-riders are WDFW's No. 1 preventive measure, but they have not been universally embraced by ranchers.

In an interview Wednesday, Stevens County rancher

Scott Nielsen agreed human presence can keep away wolves, but the wolves may merely move toward somebody else's livestock.

"Show me the evidence a range-rider has prevented one single attack," he said. "It plays well in the press, but I'm just highly skeptical."

Johnson has been riding for Kayser for 18 years. For the past three years, his wages have been partially funded by the environmental group Conservation Northwest.

He described himself as "pro wolf" and said he hopes ranchers will adapt to wolves. He acknowledged managing wolves won't be easy. They don't seem to be afraid of him, and they know where the livestock are, he said. "It doesn't matter where we run the cattle, the wolves have a way of knowing."

The Teanaway pack was documented in 2011 and one depredation is "not the end of the world," said Kayser, who has been compensated by the state for his cow.

"One is a lot different than five or six," said Kayser, noting the next depredation may occur in 10 years or next week. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he said. "So far, we've been successful. But we have enough habitat for the wolves we have."

Kayser said he sympathizes with northeast Washington ranchers, who graze livestock on ranges with more wolves. "I think there's a real problem up in the northeast corner of the state," he said. "The northeast part of the state is carrying too much of the impact."

WDFW has contracted with five range-riders and Conservation Northwest has shared costs with ranchers to employ seven more.

Budget constraints and the difficulty of recruiting people for the seasonal work have limited the number of range-riders, WDFW wolf policy coordinator Donny Martorello said. "I think we have a need for more."

Hop output to increase despite ongoing drought

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

MOXEE, Wash. — U.S. hop production will be up 5 percent this year despite heat and drought in the Yakima Valley where 70 to 80 percent of the nation's hops are grown.

The increase is due to more acres in production, but the crop still "will be very short relative to demand" from the craft brewing industry, said Doug MacKinnon, president of 47 Hops, a Yakima hop dealer.

The U.S. crop was estimated at 74.5 million pounds at the International Hop Growers' Congress in Germany the week of July 27, according to Hop Growers of America and the Washington Hop Commission, both in Moxee. That's up 3.5 million pounds from 2014 but short of the record of 94.7 million pounds in 2009.

German and other European crops are down 10 to 20 percent. The world crop is estimated at 198.2 million pounds, down from 211 million in 2014.

MacKinnon, who attended the congress, said German production, which is approximately 40 percent of world production, is a mixed bag.

"Above average temperatures and lack of rain have taken what was a beautiful crop with enormous potential just six short weeks ago and turned it into a crop that has the potential to be the worst in recent memory," he said.

Drought and winds are damaging the German crop, estimated to be 16 percent



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Hop cones are shown in summer growth in Yakima, Wash. The Yakima area is the nation's leading region in hop production. Acreage is expected to keep increasing this year.

short of 2014 in yields, but it could be far worse without significant rain in the next few weeks, MacKinnon said. Some German growers at the congress said yields could be down 25 percent or even rival 2003 when the German crop was short 50 percent, he said.

Most of the European crop is not irrigated. Most of the Yakima Valley crop is. Yakima growers largely switched to drip irrigation in recent years to save water.

The U.S. is second to Germany in world production and

brewers have been concerned drought will reduce the Yakima crop.

Some aroma varieties in the Yakima Valley may drop 10 to 15 percent below average in yields, Hop Growers of America said.

Heat has "severely affected" several varieties but actually improved the outlook of the Cascade variety, MacKinnon said. Some growers in the Wapato Irrigation Project have been "seriously affected" by lack of water, but most growers have not been affected by the drought, he said.

The bigger concern is another dry winter doing greater harm to the 2016 crop, he said.

In June, the National Agricultural Statistics Service said U.S. hop acreage increased 16 percent. Washington is at 32,205 acres, up 3,347 from last year. Oregon is 6,807 up 1,397 from last year and Idaho is 4,975 up 1,232. The increase is driven by craft breweries projecting 20 percent annual growth through 2020.

Hop harvest in the Yakima Valley typically starts in late August and runs through September.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Washington State Potato Commission executive director Chris Voigt goes through the rules for a potato peeling competition Jan. 27 at the Washington Oregon Potato Conference in Pasco, Wash. Voigt marks his 10th anniversary with the commission in August.

Washington potato leader looks ahead to next decade

Voigt hits 10-year mark with commission

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The biggest challenge of the next 10 years will be educating the public about the science behind farming, the head of the Washington State Potato Commission says.

"There's this constant bombardment of people attacking agriculture, not understanding why farmers do certain things or trying to dictate farm policy," said Chris Voigt, who this month marks 10 years as executive director of the commission.

Farmers are "really confronted with a lot of potential restrictions that will make it very difficult to farm, whether it's labor, pesticide, (genetically modified crops), water — there's this sort of unfortunate basket of doom."

Part of the solution lies in educating legislators, regula-

tors and the public about agriculture, Voigt said.

"The great thing is the science is on our side," he said. "It's hard for an activist to say, 'Climate change is happening, look at the science, you've got to believe it,' and then come out against GMOs."

"We say, 'Wait a minute, (the science) says GMOs are incredibly safe.'"

Farmers support the technology, but Washington won't grow GMO potatoes until its export customers accept them, Voigt said.

Voigt said he hopes to remain with the Moses Lake, Wash.-based commission for another decade.

Industry members say Voigt has had a positive impact.

Warden, Wash., farmer Frank Martinez recently left the commission after serving on the board for 12 years.

"(Voigt) knows the potato industry," Martinez said. "He represents us well across the country, in Washington, D.C. He's just been good all around."

"He's brought a lot of stability and integrity," said Dale Lathim, executive director of Potato Growers of Washington. "He's been a very calming factor. He's gone above and beyond to make the Washington potato industry known locally and nationally."

Asked what his biggest accomplishment has been, Voigt said many people would point to his 60-day, all-potato diet in 2010. It demonstrated the healthfulness of potatoes.

But he disagrees. "All I did was just eat potatoes," he said.

Voigt prefers to focus on the commission's efforts to develop the "Washington Grown" television program to promote agriculture, and solidifying the relationships with Oregon and Idaho potato farmers.

"Ten years ago, Oregon and Idaho were considered our competition," he said. "Being able to go from that adversarial relationship to 100 percent cooperation, we've come a long way."

More water held at Osoyoos Lake

OROVILLE, Wash. — The state Department of Ecology is holding back more water in Osoyoos Lake to help Okanogan County irrigators in the fall.

Ecology received approval for

the action from the International Joint Commission that governs management of the lake that straddles the U.S.-Canadian border.

"This will allow us to store an extra half-foot of water that

can be released at the end of summer if needed to keep the river hydrated for a longer period into the fall," said Al Josephy, Ecology's operations manager at Zosel Dam on the lake.

The Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District will benefit, as will all other irrigators on the Okanogan River to its mouth, said Jay O'Brien, district manager.

The Oroville-Tonasket District serves 1,800 customers on 10,000 acres from the border to just below Tonasket. The region's farmers grow mostly tree fruit and some hay.

The district has been operating normally without water restrictions, O'Brien said.

"We're constantly watching river flows. It's a wait-and-see game as to what the weather does, but at this point we haven't needed to ration," he said.

— Dan Wheat

BERRY BASKETS

NURSERY TRAYS

CALL FOR PRICING AND AVAILABILITY.

Delivery Available **503-588-8313**
2561 Pringle Rd. SE
Salem, OR

ROSE PAPER PRODUCTS, INC.

Celebrating 75 Years Conserving the Idaho Way

LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

Sprinkler Irrigation, No-Till Drills, Fences
Livestock Feeding Operations
Solar Stock Water Pump Systems

2.5%-3.5% Terms 7-15 Years Up to \$200,000

IDAHO CONSERVATION LOAN PROGRAM

swc.idaho.gov | 208-332-1790

34TH ANNUAL PIONEER POWER SHOW & SWAP MEET

Hosted by: CENTRAL WASHINGTON ANTIQUE FARM EQUIPMENT CLUB

August 15th-16th, 2015

Fullbright Park • Union Gap, Washington

EVENTS HAPPENING BOTH SATURDAY & SUNDAY!

8:00am-4:00pm • FAMILY FUN!!!

- Farm Equipment Displays Vintage Trucks & Engines
- Farm Tractor Pulls
- Lawn Tractor Pulls (tractor provided for kids - safe & fun)
- Wheat Threshing & Binding
- Petting Zoo
- Kid's Crafts & Games
- Kid's Treasure Hunt - Prizes!

ADMISSION \$5.00 per person.
Children under age 12 admitted FREE with Parent.

Like us on Facebook (509) 942-2100