

S. Oregon wildfire scares away cattle

Ranchers believe livestock OK, plan for recovery of grazing land

By CRAIG REED
For The Capital Press

ROSEBURG, Ore. — When the Stouts Creek Fire in Southern Oregon flared up in early August, several dozen mother cows with their calves scattered ahead of the advancing flames and smoke.

About a month later, the 25,500-acre fire was finally corralled and contained, but the livestock were still on the loose.

Ranchers Rex Fuller of Tiller, Ore., and Charlotte Stauch of Drew, Ore., said they were missing about 15 pairs each, but were hopeful they were safe because none of the firefighting crews in the area had reported finding any burned animals.

"I really haven't had time to go look for them, and if I did find them and brought them back, there would be no grass," said Fuller who has ranched in the Tiller area for 33 years. "I'm not too concerned about their right now."

"I'm sure those animals were just trying to move away from the smoke and activity," said Stauch, who has lived on her family's Drew area ranch for all of her 61 years.

"It's terrifying every time this happens," she said of fire. "There's always upheaval in people's lives. Fortunately it didn't take any lives."

Stauch said she wasn't too concerned about her cattle because they are used to coming home in the fall when the weather turns colder and wet and hunters increase the activity in the woods.

Besides scattering some livestock and forcing other livestock to be loaded up and hauled several miles west to



Rex Fuller, a rancher in the Tiller, Oregon, area, lost corrals and fence lines in August in the Stouts Creek Fire in Southern Oregon. The fire was finally contained at about 25,500 acres, but not before the ranch structures along with some pasture land, hay ground and young and mature Douglas fir trees were burned.

Courtesy of Mike Sullivan

greener pastures, the Stouts fire burned several miles of fence line, a couple corrals, some bridges, a few hundred acres of pasture and hay fields and several thousand acres of both young and mature Douglas fir timber.

Both Fuller and Stauch said they will have to feed hay from their winter supplies to keep their cattle fed until the fall rains arrive and green grass shoots up through the black soil.

Woody Lane, a forage and livestock nutrition specialist in Roseburg, Ore., said fire has been used as a tool in managing hillside pastures for several decades, but ranchers plan and budget for those controlled burns a year or two in advance. He explained that fire is like a reset button, sanitizing the ground to give new seedings of ryegrass and subclover an equal chance to grow against weeds and other less nutritious forage.

Lane said if a rancher decides to reseed a burned area, it would be best to do it before the fall rains and while the ground still has some summer warmth.

"It's best to germinate in warm ground," he said. "Between now and mid-October

would be the best time to get seed in the ground.

"It just depends on the economics of the ranch," he added of the expense of reseeding.

Lane said if the burned pas-

ture isn't reseeded, then when the rain does fall, low yield and low quality grasses and other unwanted species would be more prevalent.

"A wildfire like this forces

you to make a choice," he said. "You either let it come up on its own and get what you may not want or you put improved seed on the ground. The latter is an expense you may not

have been prepared for."

Fuller said he'd like to reseed his burned ground with ryegrass. He said he was undecided on whether he would use a tractor on his moderately sloping hillsides or seed by airplane.

"We've got a burn we have to take care of," the rancher said. "We'll make the best of it. I'm sure it is going to look a lot better next spring than it does right now."

Fuller and Stauch said there'll also be the expense of buying fencing and corral materials and then the labor to rebuild those structures.

"Fire just causes a lot of extra stuff you don't need," Fuller said. "Now you have to deal with the mess. I think the land will recuperate fairly quickly, but there's other stuff you have to rebuild. It'll take time."

"You always think this is not going to happen to you, and then when it does, it's pretty painful."

Weather helps E. Idaho avoid wildfire outbreak

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Frequent showers have helped Eastern Idaho avoid major wildfires amid a 2015 fire season that's been among the most severe in recent memory elsewhere in Idaho and throughout the Northwest.

Just over 300 acres have burned in Eastern Idaho this season, compared with the region's 20-year average of 77 fires scorching 67,000 acres, said Bureau of Land Management fire information officer Jesse Bender.

"We've had an incredibly below-average fire season in East Idaho," Bender said, adding that every fire in the region has been suppressed during the first day. "That has been a bit of a blessing. Because we haven't been very busy, we've been able to support all of these folks who have been super busy."

Bender said Eastern Idaho fire crews have been free to assist with fighting

fires in Canada, Alaska, California, Oregon, Washington, the Boise area and Northern Idaho.

Though 36 Eastern Idaho fires have been reported this season, Bender said only two grew to a notable size. On April 20, the Bischoff Fire burned 100 acres of private land near Montpelier. On June 29, the Indian Creek fire burned 147 acres of rangeland and sage grouse habitat near Dubois.

"It's mostly been the weather patterns. We've been getting thunderstorms and lightning, but it seems like every time we do, it comes with rain," Bender said.

In Northern Idaho, by contrast, fire crews have been so swamped, they say they've had a hard time even keeping up with naming their blazes.

When a lightning-caused fire was first reported within a nondescript, forested ridge about 20 miles east of Coeur d'Alene on Aug. 20 after 2 a.m., crews couldn't delay updating lists of information on the region's active fires, explained Kjell Truesdell, fire warden with

the Cataldo Forest Protective District. So personnel quickly dubbed it the Not Creative Fire. Not Creative spread to 135 acres of Idaho Department of Public Lands property and has been contained, Truesdell said.

"It's going back to 1926 since we've had this kind of a dry spell in this particular area," Truesdell said. "It's definitely been a busy year."

Statewide, 422 fires have burned 363,000 acres this season.

Several large fires remained uncontained as of Aug. 28 in Northern Idaho. The Parker Ridge Fire, burning 6,252 acres 20 miles northwest of Bonners Ferry, was 27 percent contained. The Clark Fork Complex, burning 12,405 acres near Clark Fork, was 25 percent contained. The Tower Fire Complex, visible from Priest Lake and burning 13,854 acres of Washington and Idaho, was 10 percent contained. The Grizzly Complex, burning 12,137 acres between Enaville and Murray, was completely uncontained.

OSU ag college hiring for multiple positions by fall 2016

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Flush with a splash of money from the Legislature after multiple lean years, Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences plans to hire up to 40 people by the fall of 2016.

First on the list are an Extension dairy specialist to work in the mid-Willamette Valley and a livestock and rangeland specialist to work in Morrow and Umatilla counties.

The two are among 19 faculty positions that will be filled by 2016; some positions are new and some involve replacement hires. Up to 21 full- or part-time support staff positions will be filled as well.

The hiring is due to the Oregon Legislature approving a \$14 million budget increase for the College of Agricultural Sciences for the 2015-17 biennium. The funding increased the college's budget to \$118 million, according to OSU.

Dean Dan Arp said being

Online:

The College of Agricultural Sciences job listings are at https://jobs.oregonstate.edu/applicants/jsp/shared/search/SearchResults_css.jsp

able to hire faculty is a welcome change from the past few years. The college will undoubtedly be competing against other schools for the best talent, he said.

Both positions are assistant professorships within the college's Department of Animal and Rangeland Sciences.

The Willamette Valley dairy position hasn't been filled for several years, Arp said. The fact that it's one of the first to be filled with the additional funding coincides with the rebuild of the dairy program on campus.

In 2012, the dairy was shut down after cow manure leaked into a nearby creek. The program was fined nearly \$7,000 and was forced to sell its herd of 120 animals while making repairs.

The dairy is back up and

running, however, and among other things sells milk to the fermentation center on campus, which makes cheese.

The dairy search committee is headed by Troy Downing, an Extension dairy specialist based in Tillamook County on the Oregon Coast. Downing said he's "thrilled" to see OSU add someone to work with dairies in Marion, Polk and other Willamette Valley counties.

Other OSU staff work with dairies as part of their duties, but due to attrition, Downing said he is the only full-time dairy specialist.

"The dairy industry has been served with very few people," he said. "Really what's been missing is someone to focus energy on the substantial dairy industry in the Willamette Valley."

Wolf suspected in attack on cattle dogs

By KATHLEEN ELLYN
EO Media Group

TROY, Ore. — Two herding dogs belonging to Buck Matthews of the Anchor Bar Ranch near remote Troy, Ore., were attacked Aug. 26 as they worked cattle. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife officials say it was probably a wolf.

Matthews and his ranch hand, Josh Markeson, were heading out to round up 300 cows trapped between fires on nearby Eden Bench when they found the two dogs.

A 10-year-old border collie-kelpie named Scooter and 2-year-old border collie named Tom were injured in the attack.

"Scooter could hardly stand up and was in shock," said Buck's wife, Chelsea. "Tom was limping and moving slow."

Neighboring rancher Collin Cunningham took the dogs to the veterinarian nearly 60 miles away in Enterprise, so the men could continue rounding up cattle.

Wallowa County Sheriff's Deputy Fred Steen met them at the Double Arrow Veterinary Clinic in Enterprise and

took the report.

"The vet report is that they were attacked by a very large canine, bigger than a coyote," said Chelsea Matthews. "At this point Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is calling it a 'probable' wolf attack."

Scooter took the brunt of the attack and was "roughed up top to bottom," said Double Arrow veterinarian technician Darcy Moncrief. The dog suffered a long puncture wound to his shoulders that required stitches, and now sports three drainage tubes.

Young Tom had injuries to his face and elsewhere on his body and was sore.

Neither Tom nor Scooter, when they're well, will go back to looking for cows on Eden Bench in any case, as Buck has decided there is too much risk of their paws getting burned.

Chelsea Matthews said they've twice seen a wolf within a half-mile of their home place since the attack.

"(Rancher friend) Todd Nash and Buck saw the wolf the morning of the attack when they went up on the home place (on Grouse Flats) to gather cows for shipment," Chelsea Matthews said. "My sister-in-law, Mona, and I saw him up on Bartlett

Bench about a half-mile from our house when we went to meet the semis that were hauling out the cattle. He's black and big."

The wolf is most likely a survivor of the Wenaha pack, displaced by the fires. ODFW East Region Manager Bruce Eddy said the Wenaha Pack had most likely escaped the fire.


"My guess is they are so incredibly mobile they can get out of the way of fire," he said.

Many of the wolves in the area are black, State Wolf Program Coordinator Russ Morgan said.

"But we could have a wolf from anywhere. We just don't have enough data on the Wenaha area wolves to know them. ... They're the least visible pack," he said. "That wolf could be a wolf traveling through or even a Washington wolf."


The Matthewses have evacuated cows from the home place and continue to search for the cows that had been grazing on Eden Bench when the fire swept through the area.

"Most of the home cows have been shipped," said Chelsea Matthews. "We've found 70 head out of the 300 out on Eden Bench. Buck is still finding them."



SAGE Fact #116

Construction of the John Day Dam began in 1958 and was completed in 1971. The John Day Dam was the final dam built on the main stem of the Columbia River.



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The National Dairy Producers Organization, Inc.
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To All Those Yet To Be Bankrupt By Co-op Mismanagement

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