

Canada opens borders to Northwest poultry

Bird flu sanctions in place for other states

Capital Press

Canadian food safety officials Sept. 1 lifted import restrictions on uncooked poultry products from Washington, Oregon and California that were imposed last winter during the early days of the U.S. bird flu outbreak.

Import restrictions are still in place for raw poultry and eggs from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The restrictions apply to live birds and poultry manure.

Canadian officials say the poultry products do not pose a risk to humans. The restrictions are meant to keep bird flu from spreading in Canada.

Highly pathogenic bird flu was detected in a wild duck and captive falcon in Whatcom County in northwest Washington in mid-December, alerting authorities that migratory waterfowl were introducing a strain of the disease never seen in the U.S. before.

The virus appeared in a backyard mixed-bird flock in Douglas County in Southern Oregon, triggering bans



The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has lifted import restrictions on raw poultry, eggs, live birds and poultry manure from Washington, Oregon and California. The restrictions were imposed after bird flu was detected last winter in the three states.

Don Jenkins/Capital Press

on U.S. poultry by several countries. The bans were later lifted or narrowed to specific states or counties.

A non-commercial flock in Benton County in Central Washington was infected Jan. 9. The first commercial opera-

tion to be infected was a turkey farm in Stanislaus County in California in late January. New cases in the West

dropped off after February, but the virus spread rapidly among Midwest poultry farms in the spring. Nationwide, there were 223 bird flu cases. More than 48 million birds were killed or euthanized.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has solicited proposals from manufacturers for bird flu vaccines. The USDA says it wants to have a stockpile of doses if it decides to approve vaccinations.

Bird flu infected 11 poultry farms and three non-commercial flocks in British Columbia, Canada, in December. The virus also hit three poultry farms in Ontario in April.



George Brich/Associated Press

This 1965 file photo shows Cesar Chavez, farm worker labor organizer and leader of the California grape strike, in an office in California. On Labor Day weekend of 2015, hundreds of former and current labor activists, both Filipino and Mexican American, flowed into the Central Valley town of Delano where 50 years ago, they launched the Delano grape strike.

Activists remember the 1965 Delano grape strike

DELANO, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of former and current labor activists, both Filipino and Mexican-American, flowed last weekend into the Central Valley town of Delano where 50 years ago, they launched the Delano grape strike that altered the course of American history.

Among them was Lorraine Agtang, who On Sept. 8, 1965, along with her family and other Filipino grape pickers, walked out of their fields to protest a pay cut from \$1.40 to \$1.25 an hour, the Sacramento Bee reported Monday.

"I was a kid, only 13," recalled Agtang, who was born and raised in a labor camp 2 miles east of Delano. "It was midmorning when picketers showed up where we were picking grapes for Giumarra growers and my dad, Platon Agtang, said there's a strike and we should leave."

When Agtang saw Filipinos on the picket lines, she said, "that affected my life story — I knew the Filipinos were hard-working people not bent on civil disobedience, but it was pretty amazing when I learned they were standing up for what they wanted."

Some were beaten and evicted from their homes; others clashed with law enforcement and Mexican strikebreakers brought in by the growers, but they stood strong.

On Sunday, the efforts of the largely Filipino and Mexican workers were commemorated with a Mass, bus tours of the historically relevant sites, films and a discussion panel.

Agtang, whose dad was Ilo-

cano, a Filipino ethnic group, and whose mother was Mexican, said that before the strike, "the growers would pit Filipinos against Mexicans, saying the other group was working harder, so there was always this kind of competitiveness."

By 1966, Filipinos and Mexicans had formed the still-powerful United Farm Workers.

The table grape strike succeeded where others had failed when Chavez, who led a well-publicized march from Delano to Sacramento in the spring of 1966, came up with a stroke of genius — the 1968-1970 grape boycott that spread worldwide.

"It showed powerless people they could do something," said Philip Martin, professor of agricultural and resource economics at the University of California-Davis. "It is considered one of the most successful union boycotts ever — 12 percent of Americans said they avoided eating grapes during the boycott, and by 1970, most major grape growers had UFW contracts."

The workers also won medical and retirement benefits as well as laws banning the use of pesticides that cause skin disorders and other maladies, Agtang said.

Before she drove to Delano, Agtang stopped at the bronze Cesar Chavez memorial across from Sacramento City Hall depicting Chavez leading two dozen protesters on a march for justice. One of them is a 13-year-old girl.

"That's me on the statue," Agtang said proudly, "and I'm not even dead yet."

Idaho tour highlights voluntary range improvements for cutthroat

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

SODA SPRINGS, Idaho — Bear Lake Grazing Association ranchers have agreed to reduce grazing densities, remove cattle from restored stream banks and adjust grazing rotations on their private land for the sake of conservation.

Thus far, however, they've come out ahead, they assured participants in a Sept. 2 tour of habitat improvements throughout their range, aimed at benefiting Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

The Upper Blackfoot Confluence — a partnership involving mining companies, Trout Unlimited and the Idaho Conservation League — has already completed several trout habitat improvements within the association's territory and has additional projects in planning stages that would involve other nearby grazing entities.

"We have developed a really great relationship (with land owners) here, and the trust is building," said Matt Woodard,

with Trout Unlimited.

The Upper Blackfoot watershed — historically a cutthroat stronghold but depleted of trout in recent years — encompasses several phosphate mines, in addition to expansive rangeland.

The unlikely group of allies has managed to fast-track projects, leveraging federal grants through EPA and other sources with funds from Monsanto, Agrium and J.R. Simplot and expertise from the conservation organizations. Participants also enroll in weed management and grazing rotation programs administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, and several top executives from Monsanto's St. Louis office made the tour, which highlighted off-stream water troughs, stream-bank restorations and new irrigation diversions intended to help both trout and ranchers' bottom lines.

"It's a combination of private, government and corpo-

rate work trying to get the job done," Simpson said, adding similar stream-health projects should be prioritized throughout the country. "It avoids a lot of the controversies and things that come up when government tries to do things by itself when voluntary groups like this come together and try to solve problems."

Glen Kurowski, Monsanto's director of environmental affairs, was impressed estimates that the Lane's Creek stream restoration has removed hundreds of truckloads of eroded sediment from the watershed.

"To see the progress that has been made, it's why all of the companies are involved in this, including Monsanto," Kurowski said.

The partnership restored 2.5 miles of Lane's Creek through Bret King's property. In exchange King has reduced grazing density, kept cattle away from the stream and adjusted his grazing rotation. King admits it's taken some work to get his ranch manager to buy

into the changes. But he now has consistent and evenly distributed water from eight new program-funded off-stream troughs, and he's optimistic greater attention to grazing rotation and an elevated water table surrounding the restored stream will improve forage.

"Fish haven't been a priority for the last 100 years, and I think we can benefit them and still do what we want to do," King said.

Lynn Keetch, with Bear Lake Cattle Co., has been pleasantly surprised that cattle seem to prefer water troughs installed with partnership funding. The partnership restored a reach of Sheep Creek through the company's land — which the company views as a pilot project that could lead to future stream restorations if the water table rises and improves forage growth, as anticipated.

"We haven't had any problems," Keetch said, advising other ranchers to weigh the pros and cons of such partnerships and to make certain their operations stand to gain.

Ecology to EPA: Don't count dust storms

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Ecology is asking the Environmental Protection Agency to exclude several 2013 dust storms from calculations used to determine whether the area exceeded particle pollution standards.

When standards are exceeded more than three times in a three-year period, local and state air quality agencies are required to take steps to reduce air pollution, according to Ecology. The violations may also affect federal transportation funding.

Ecology will submit a report to the EPA asking the federal agency to exclude high particle pollution levels from three Kennewick, Wash., dust storms in 2013. Agricultural land in Washington and Oregon were the main source of the dust.

The report found that the storms were "uncontrollable events."

Ecology determined in the report that "reasonable and appropriate controls" were in place, but the wind from the three storms overwhelmed them.

Online

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/other/Windblown_dust_information.htm

"The agriculture controls in place are enough and they're doing the job," said Camille St. Onge, communications manager for Ecology.

"We decided what they're doing was adequate at the time," said Laurie Hulse-Moyer, air quality planner for Ecology.

If the storms are counted, the total number of events will exceed the three-time limit, Hulse-Moyer said. There have been two other similar occurrences since 2013, she said, both of which could also qualify as "exceptional events," with little or no human cause.

It's unclear what the impact would be for agriculture if the air quality agencies would have to take further steps, Hulse-Moyer said.

"They would ask us to look at all sources of air pollution to see what could be done," she said.

OSU researchers experimenting with emerging soil moisture sensing system

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Oregon State University researchers in Malheur County are testing emerging soil sensor technology to try to help farmers in this drought-stricken area make better use of their sparse water supplies.

Researchers at the OSU experiment station and extension office in Ontario are using soil sensors and a wireless sensor web system to monitor soil moisture levels and provide usable data that farmers can view from a computer, smart phone, tablet or other device.

As Malheur County farmers suffer through the third straight year of significantly reduced water supplies, that type of information can be critical, said OSU cropping systems extension agent Bill Buhrig.

"If you are planning on watering every four days and your sensor's telling you watering every six days is fine, you're going to save a lot of water over the course of a year," he said.

In the past, farmers have had to go to a central point in a field to download or access soil moisture data, Buhrig said. This system allows them to view it anywhere they have an Internet connection.

"Properly installed moisture sensors can tell you a lot about what's going on in your field and ... it keeps you from having to stand on site to get your moisture data," he said. "Remote sensing technology is really kind of the next frontier."

The system includes poles with sensors planted in the soil nearby. The poles gather

the sensor information and relay it back to a main base station in the field, which sends it to a web-based platform that updates the data every 30 minutes.

The system can send a grower an email if soil is too wet or dry.

The data is presented to farmers in a usable format that allows them to increase the accuracy of irrigation scheduling and manage soil moisture quicker and more effectively, Buhrig said.

Buhrig is experimenting with the system in multiple crops grown in the region, including sugar beets, onions, potatoes, pumpkins and alfalfa seed.

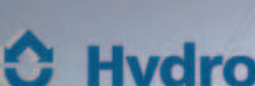

This type of remote sensing technology is relatively new to the area, he said.

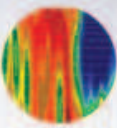


"I don't know of a lot of producers who are (using it)," Buhrig said. "Part of the purpose of these demonstrations is to try to show it to producers and to try to get them to adapt the technology."

Snake River Sugar Coop Chairman Duane Grant, a farmer in Rupert, Idaho, said sugar beet growers are keeping track of the OSU experiments because "we are interested in using remote sensing as a platform that allows us to more effectively track soil moisture and more effectively manage crop health."

The technology doesn't replace anything but it does bring growers a new set of additional data points that is important as water gets tighter, he said.

"The water supply in all of our growing area is restricted," Grant said. "The days of being able to count on a full available supply of water are over."

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