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Dairy/Livestock

Judges question agency's handling of 'cattle drift'

Federal appeals court hears grazing case

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The U.S. Forest Service's oversight of stray cattle in national forests on the Oregon-California border drew sharp questions from federal appellate judges at a Nov. 2 hearing.

Environmental groups filed a lawsuit in 2011 claiming that cattle wander away from their approved allotments, damaging sensitive native plants in the remote Siskiyou Crest area, where fencing isn't an economically feasible option.

Their complaint was dismissed in 2013 by a federal judge who found that the "cattle drift" problem was sufficiently analyzed and mitigated by the Forest Service.

"There is little evidence of quantitative, objectively verifiable damage" caused by wayward cattle despite drift occurring in the area since the 1800s, which is "not particularly surprising given the relatively low grazing rates" across a vast area, U.S. District Judge Morrison England said in the ruling.

The Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center and the Klamath Forest Alliance have challenged that decision before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which held

oral arguments in the case before a three-judge panel in Portland.

An attorney for the Forest Service, Evelyn Ying, said the agency considered the frequency and duration of drift in concluding that it caused minimal impacts because ranchers monitor the area regularly.

"The permittees have been compliant in getting them back when they do drift," she said. "There is no information to show adverse environmental effects."

Circuit Judge Marsha Berzon repeatedly questioned Ying about whether the lack of evidence was simply due to the U.S. Forest Service not studying the damage.

Berzon said it bothered her

that nobody seems to have looked for quantitative data about damage, asking whose burden it should be to gather such information.

Ying responded that Klamath National Forest managers monitored for drift and concluded it wasn't a serious problem, she said.

Managers of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, which is mostly in Oregon, did not object to grazing even though cattle were drifting in from the Klamath National Forest in California, she said.

Circuit Judge Paul Watford asked why the Forest Service didn't consider evidence of damage submitted by environmentalists when consider-

ing the effects of grazing.

Ying replied that these reports were largely anecdotal.

"They are not based on scientific protocol," she said. Watford said that notes from a meeting among Forest Service managers seem to indicate they weren't sure what to do about cattle drift or how to present the issue in their environmental assessment of grazing.

"We really don't have the information, so we have to say something," Watford said, characterizing their statements.

Ying said the Forest Service officials did not want to downplay the drift issue but wanted to be careful in how they explained it.

David Becker, attorney for the environmental groups, said that Siskiyou Crest is home to fragile soils and wetlands, so cattle can harm the environment simply by wandering from one pasture to another.

The Forest Service did not take the required "hard look" at the issue, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and failed to adequately explain why it didn't conduct a more comprehensive study of drift, he said.

"Even 15 cows, even 10 cows, getting into a riparian area can cause damage, can have it not recover," Becker said.

The judges did not issue a ruling at the hearing.

Dairy cows to be shipped from Olympia to Vietnam

Port welcomes other cattle exporters

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Some 1,400 dairy cows from Washington and Idaho farms are scheduled to leave the Port of Olympia in November for Vietnam, possibly reviving a trade connection conceived but never completed 20 years ago.

The cows, exported by Missouri-based Clayton Agri-Marketing, will board the Falconia, a livestock-transport ship operated by Denmark-based Corral Line.

Vietnam has been building its dairy industry for several years with imported cattle, mostly from Australia. U.S. breeding cattle have been allowed into Vietnam since 2011.

The cows exported in November be the first sent to Vietnam from Olympia, port spokeswoman Kathleen White said. The Washington Department of Agriculture, which must inspect brands, has no record of cows being shipped from anywhere in the state to Vietnam.

Before leaving the country, the cows will be briefly held and examined by U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarians at Schorno Agri-Business in Yelm, about 20 miles from the port.

Schorno's president, Glenn Schorno, said his father, Larry, built the quarantine facility 25 years ago, mostly for livestock to be flown overseas via Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Larry Schorno in 1995 hoped to ship a thousand pregnant Holsteins from Olympia to Vietnam, just a year after President Bill Clinton lifted a trade embargo. The groundbreaking deal came after then-Gov. Mike Lowry traveled to Vietnam on a trade mission. Lowry said



Courtesy of the Port of Olympia

Dairy cows walk up a ramp designed to keep their hooves from touching the dock as they board a ship. Some 1,400 dairy cows are scheduled this month to be shipped from Olympia to Vietnam.

then that he expected Vietnam to take as many as 4,000 more cows.

Glenn Schorno said Friday that the cows were never shipped.

"They (Vietnamese dairies) weren't set up to handle them. They still needed to make some progress in feeding animals," he said. "Now, they're ready."

Schorno said he's hopeful the quarantine facility will see more cows bound for Vietnam.

"We are excited whenever there's a new market, and it's in Asia," he said. "From where we are, we have a strategic advantage."

The export business has been "hit and miss," Schorno said, particularly after a cow in 2003 in Central Washington was diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, mad cow disease.

The quarantine facility in Yelm was last used in 2012,

when 1,200 Holsteins were examined before being exported to Russia, Schorno said.

Efforts to reach Clayton Agri-Marketing owner Tony Clayton were unsuccessful. The company helps importers obtain livestock to improve their herds' genetics, according to the company's website.

The cows are scheduled to be loaded over two days beginning Nov. 16. The crossing is expected to take two weeks, according to the port.

The port said in a press release its managers hope other companies moving cattle to Asia will consider Olympia.

Further information about the cows' destination was unavailable.

The U.S. exported a record \$2.2 billion worth of food and agricultural products to Vietnam in 2015, according to the USDA. Vietnam is the 11th largest U.S. export market.

Dairy prices finish October on 'up' note

By **LEE MIELKE**
For the Capital Press

Most cash dairy prices ended October on an "up" note. However, FC Stone's Brendan Curran wrote in his Friday Insider Opening Bell that the spot market "continues to hang in the shadows of bearishness with the question being whether demand levels will be strong enough to shake that element off as it has basically all year."

CME block Cheddar closed the day before Halloween at \$1.62 per pound, up three-quarter cents on the week but down 18 cents from its Oct. 5 peak for 2015, and 52 cents below a year ago.

The Cheddar barrels finished at \$1.5950, up 4 1/2-cents on the week but 51 1/2-cents below a year ago. Fourteen cars of block traded hands last week and 31 of barrel.

The blocks were unchanged Monday and Tues-

Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



day while the barrels dropped 2 1/2-cents Monday and lost 3 cents Tuesday, dipping to \$1.54, 8 cents below the blocks.

Midwest milk supplies available for cheese are tightening, according to Dairy Market News. "Buying interest from food service customers is steady but minimal cheese from the region is moving into export channels."

Cash butter saw Friday's close at \$2.77 per pound, up 30 cents on the week and 88 cents above a year ago. Eleven cars traded hands last week at the CME.

The spot price was unchanged Monday but jumped a nickel and a half Tuesday on an unfilled bid, to \$2.8250, highest price since Sept. 28.

FC Stone's Brendan Curran says butter's latest move

"caught many by surprise as the expectation was for prices to have returned to somewhere resembling 'normalcy' by now, but that certainly has not been the case. It seems that the paradigm shift regarding the 'yellow giant' has taken hold and we may be looking at long-term price ramifications as a result."

Grade A powder ended the week and the month at 80 1/2-cents per pound, down 4 cents on the week and 43 3/4-cents below a year ago. Twenty cars were sold last week.

The spot price inched up a penny Monday but lost a penny and a quarter Tuesday, slipping to 80 1/4-cents per pound.

HighGround Dairy says "temporary strength is expected for milk powder prices following China's announcement to end their one-child policy, creating the idea their demand for child nutrition and other dairy products will improve into 2016."

Group wants hot dogs off school menus

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has petitioned USDA to stop offering processed meat in the National School Lunch and National School Breakfast programs.

The petition is based in part on a recent decision by a World Health Organization agency to add those products to its list of carcinogens.

In making its announcement last week, however, WHO's International Agency on Cancer Research stated the cancer risk from consuming such products is "small."

USDA rejected a similar petition by a PCRM subsidiary group called the Cancer Project in 2009, citing a lack of "consensus documents" of leading world bodies with cancer expertise, PCRM stated in the new petition.

PCRM, which claims 12,000 physicians among its membership, also cited a risk of cardiovascular disease from processed meats common on

school menus, such as hot dogs, pepperoni and ham.

The U.S. meat industry came out in force against the World Health Organization decision, contending it is not supported by science and defies common sense and numerous studies showing no correlation between meat and cancer.

While people on the WHO panel represent some top health experts, the decision was based on questionable studies that don't show cause and effect, said Dave Warner, director of communications for National Pork Producers Council.

The panel said there is some indication of a risk and that risk goes up with increased consumption of processed meat but it is still low, he said.

To put the decision in context, that panel has looked at 941 agents and decided 940 have some level of risk associated with cancer, he said.

Warner said the PCRM is aligned with animal rights groups and pushes a vegan lifestyle, and it's trying to force that on school kids.

"Essentially, schools pretty much tried what the Physicians Committee is trying to do, under regulations in the Child Nutrition Act of 2010," he said.

They served more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, which is fine, but at the expense of meat — a nutrient-dense, complete protein, he said.

The result was a huge increase in food waste, a substantial decline in student participation in the School Lunch Program and a flood of complaints that athletic students weren't satiated or getting enough protein, he said.

Despite PCRM's petition, Warner doesn't think there'll be much fallout from WHO's decision — not if social media is any gauge, he said.

The response there is essentially "no one's taking 'my' bacon away," he said.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association President Philip Ellis agrees, although the industry doesn't take this sort of thing lightly, he said.

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