

Trooper puts down cows after crash

By ALISHA ROEMELING
The Register-Guard

WALTERVILLE, Ore. (AP) — Oregon State Police Trooper Anthony Mathews shot the cow dead.

And then he had to do it again and again and again.

"It's heart-wrenching," Mathews said at the scene along Highway 126 west of Waltherville, where a truck pulling a trailer with 68 cattle overturned Tuesday afternoon. "They're more or less like pets, and it's hard, but you have to do what's right for them and not let them suffer."

Mathews, a wildlife division trooper with the state police, was assigned to kill a total of 12 injured cows trapped inside the trailer.

Mathews said he'd had to kill livestock before, mostly wildlife.

As the shots from Mathews' handgun rang out, bystanders and emergency crew members watched and plugged their ears.



Courtesy of Oregon State Police

An Oregon State Police trooper checks a truck that tipped over while carrying 68 head of cattle. The accident occurred on Highway 126 west of Waltherville, Ore.

Mathews was equipped with ear protection to cancel out the sharp sounds.

Mathews said there were "many more" animals already dead in the trailer.

Once confirmed dead, the cows were dragged from the trailer with a long metal cable and placed into another trailer. A co-owner of the truck and trailer, Ron Langley of Monroe, said the carcasses would

likely be taken to a designated dump, as they could not be used for meat.

"A lot of them have broken legs and bones," Langley said of the animals. "There's no way for us to get them up or use them, so we have to shoot them."

Langley works for Apache Transport, a Junction City company that hauls livestock and construction materials.

The owner of the cows was also on the scene and helped troopers decipher which animals could be salvaged.

The truck driver had minor injuries and was not taken to a hospital, law enforcement officials said.

The truck sheared a tree and struck a power pole, which downed lines and cut power to several nearby homes and businesses.

Following the crash, several cows escaped to a nearby field through a hole in the top of trailer, according to state police Sgt. Vonn Schleicher, who said he was unsure how many cows were alive, dead or injured. The trailer likely was ripped open on impact, Schleicher said.

The cows that remained trapped inside the trailer could be heard mooing and kicking the metal trailer, prompting officials to decide to shoot the severely injured animals, Schleicher said.

The area where the truck

overturned has been the scene of multiple crashes over the years, according to several neighbors.

A driver who crashed his state-owned tanker truck on Dec. 30, 2014, spilled a load of 11,000 juvenile salmon in the same spot. The driver, who struck a power pole, was later determined to have a blood alcohol level of 0.29 percent, state police said at the time.

The scene at Tuesday's crash was eerily familiar, according to 38-year-old Penny Burns, who said crashes in the area are "a constant problem."

"That's the exact same spot the fish truck crashed," Burns said. "There are so many crashes here. ... I mean look at my fence, it's had to be replaced because of it."

Burns said she was the first to call 911.

"As soon as I heard it, I came out and saw one (cow) take off," Burns said. "They were all mooing and kicking very loudly."

Burns said the driver got out of the truck quickly.

"The guy was hurt a little, he was bleeding from the head and looked like he may have broken his nose, but he was walking and talking just fine," Burns said.

Marlin Lay, 56, said he was arriving home just up the street when the crash happened.

"Speeding is what got him," Lay said. "He hit that tree so hard, he bounced back into the highway."

Lay, who has lived off Cedar Flat Road for more than 20 years, said the area is prone to crashes because of its curves.

"You're going 55 (mph), then all of the sudden it's 45 and the road is curving," Lay said. "There's a sign right there that says 45 and they don't pay attention."

Police said Wednesday that speed was a reason the truck failed to negotiate the turn. The driver was cited for failing to drive within his lane.

Demand for farm loans surges amid low crop and cattle prices

By ROXANA HEGEMAN
Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — The nation's net farm income is the lowest since 2002, and with another year of low commodity prices, demand for agriculture loans is surging as farmers struggle to make ends meet.

Today's grain prices will bring in enough to pay for basic operating costs like fertilizer, seed and land rent, said Troy Soukup, the past president of Kansas Bankers Association's Ag Bankers Division. Yet, crop prices are not high enough for farmers to make payments on equipment loans — or even to get paid for their own labor.

Agricultural lenders say they are seeing people who had operating loans requesting larger ones, and some who had operated with cash are borrowing money. But it's unlikely the current run on loans will be anything like the farm credit crisis of the 1980s.

Farmer Tom Giessel had to borrow just to finish out this season at his western Kansas farm where he grows wheat, corn and sorghum. Not so long ago, commodity prices were so high that Giessel didn't have to borrow any money for the farm between 2012 and 2014.

"Everybody is kind of taking a step backward with these low commodity prices," he said. "In fact, it might be more than a step — it might be kind of a tumble backward."

U.S. farm debt is forecast to increase 6.3 percent in 2015, a recent U.S. Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service report showed. At the same time, net income has plummeted by a staggering 55 percent since 2013 and is forecast to be



AP Photo/Charlie Riedel

In this photo taken Nov. 10, a motorist passes a pile of milo at a grain storage facility near Canton, Kan. Record crops for grains like milo contribute to low commodity prices for farmers, fueling a surge in agriculture operating loans.

\$55.9 billion this year — the lowest since 2002. The report cites depressed crop and cattle prices as the main reasons for the decline.

It's the latest in a boom-and-bust cycle as old as farming. A widespread drought that began in 2010 in the south and spread across the Midwest before peaking in 2012 diminished stockpiles of grain, but was followed by a renaissance fueled by a rare combination of high crop yields and prices. As more grain crops were grown, the resulting glut caused a sharp fall in prices these past two years, aggravated by weak exports.

"Most of what we are hearing out there is that farm-

ers and the banks are in good shape to be able to weather any potential downturn," said Steve Apodaca, vice president of the Washington, D.C.-based American Bankers Association's Center for Agricultural and Rural Banking.

The USDA's Farm Service Agency saw demand for loans across the nation soar over two from nearly \$4 billion in 2013 to more than \$5.6 billion in 2015. Delinquency rates nationwide were around 1 percent, according to FSA.

USDA provides farmers "a strong safety net to support them during challenging times," FSA administrator Val Dolcini said in an email.

Lenders credit the low delinquency rates in part to

banks, government lenders and some agricultural programs that help stretch out repayment periods until prices come up again. Some lenders also are restructuring payments on some older loans for equipment or land to give farmers more flexibility, according to Soukup, who is also a banker.

But the longer commodity prices stay at this level, the more difficult it will be to do that long-term. Giessel is now trying to decide whether he should plant much, if any, corn next year due to the cost of seed: "I guess what you will end up choosing is what you will lose the least amount of money on, if you are going to put a crop out."

Idaho potato industry awaits results of litchi tomato field trials

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — The first Idaho field tests of a so-called trap crop that researchers hope can significantly reduce pale cyst nematode numbers in infested potato fields went well, at least from an agronomic standpoint.

Now the state's potato industry is awaiting the release of research results that will show how well litchi tomato fared in actually reducing PCN numbers.

Those results are expected to be released in December or January, said Lloyd Knight, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's plant industries division administrator.

"If it does work like they think it will, it would be a really good solution to this problem," said Oakley potato grower Randy Hardy.

PCN, a tiny worm that can reduce potato yields if it's present in high numbers, was first detected in Idaho in 2006 and 26 fields encompassing 2,897 acres are infested with PCN. Those fields in East Idaho, along with another nearby 7,734 acres which have been associated with the infested fields, are regulated under a federal quarantine.

Litchi tomato, which is in the same plant family as potatoes, stimulates nematode eggs to hatch in the soil but it does not support nematode feeding or reproduction.

In greenhouse trials, litchi tomato greatly reduced the amount of PCN cysts on succeeding potato crops, according to information sent to the Capital Press by USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service officials.

"Non-field trial research led by the University of Idaho resulted in litchi tomato almost entirely eliminating re-

production of pale cyst nematode," Rhonda Santos, an APHIS public affairs official, said in an email.

In greenhouse experiments, the use of litchi tomato reduced nematode cyst numbers by 70-95 percent in a succeeding potato crop. By contrast, according to APHIS, cyst numbers increased by 340 percent when potatoes were planted following potatoes.

Santos said researchers would learn more in the weeks to come about how this year's field trials fared but she said, "If we get the results we expect, we may support expanded use of litchi tomato as another effective tool to eliminate (PCN)."

Because Idaho considers litchi tomato an invasive species, the state's PCN program has to obtain a detailed permit from ISDA to grow the plant to ensure it doesn't spread.

"Everything in the permit having to do with the project went according to plan," Knight said. "It worked exactly as we hoped it would. I look forward to hearing what they got out of that research."

The field trials included three infested fields covering a total of almost 120 acres.

Santos said researchers learned a lot agronomically about how to grow the plant in Idaho, including "how to prepare and plant the litchi tomato seed for rapid and consistent germination and that it can be drilled or planted like grain seed, using equipment that the growers already have."

She said the plant grew better than expected in Southeast Idaho's cooler, drier climate "but early season weed control is important as some weeds initially grow more quickly than the litchi tomato."

Scoular acquires Legumex Walker pulse business

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Scoular has acquired the Legumex Walker Inc. special crop division, which is devoted to pulse crops.

Scoular entered into an agreement with Canadian company Legumex Walker in September to acquire all the assets of LWI's special crops division for \$70.4 million plus the amount of working capital at closing. The transaction was finalized in November, according to Scoular.

Based in Urbandale, Iowa, Scoular now owns the Legumex Walker name and the affiliated special crops business. The seller has changed its name to LWP Capital Inc.

The special crops division includes the processing of lentils, whole and split peas, edible beans, chickpeas, canaryseed, flaxseed and sunflower seed, according to Scoular.

Pulses are referred to as special crops in the industry.

Pacific Northwest farmers likely won't immediately see changes as a result of the acquisition, but the division will allow Scoular to advance marketing in the future, said Bob Ludington, chief operating officer for the company.

Scoular will buy pulses from PNW farmers after taking time to get adjusted to the market and creating some new infrastructure, Ludington said.

The special crops group has also established relationships with universities in the U.S. and Canada to develop new varieties, he said.

"They're all being derived by our customers, mostly on the food side, where they want a different color, a longer shelf life and different protein or processing profiles," he said.

Scoular became aware of Legumex Walker through the

Pacific Coast Canola plant in Warden, Wash. Legumex Walker was an owner of the plant.

"We had been looking for a business in the special crops area for 15 to 20 years," Ludington said. "Once (Legumex Walker) announced they were going to be selling, we began working in earnest to acquire that group."

The Warden plant is not involved in the special crops division acquisition, Ludington said.

The first 30 to 90 days will be devoted to transitioning employees and the more than 300 new employees moving to Scoular from Legumex Walker, Ludington said.

Through the acquisition, Scoular is adding 14 processing facilities strategically located in key growing regions in the Canadian prairie provinces, the northern U.S. and China, according to a Scoular press release.

Western governors offer water solutions

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Following up on a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on legislation to mitigate drought in the West and Alaska, the Western Governors' Association has sent a letter offering policy solutions to committee members.

They emphasized that Western states are "impacted by water shortages because of extended drought conditions and insufficient infrastructure to assure adequate water supplies."

"The biggest challenge is how to affordably and effectively create flexibility in our water system," said Laura Chartrand, WGA policy adviser for Western water issues.

The letter was sent to the Senate committee members to encourage them to review some tools Western states

have identified that can help build resiliency and flexibility in the structure, she said.

Water management is different in the West than it is in the East, and policy to mitigate drought would benefit from the expertise and viewpoint of the 19 Western states, she said.

The Western Governors Drought Forum was launched last year by Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval to enable states to share best practices in water resource management focused on improving drought preparedness and response.

The solutions shared with the Senate committee reflect information from the forum, said Joe Rassenfoss, WGA communications director.

The solutions are aimed at promoting greater investment in water infrastructure and providing incentives for innovative water management policies among states that pre-

serve states' primacy in water management.

They also focus on strengthening federal efforts to maintain adequate collection of drought and water data and coordinating information programs across multiple agencies, enhancing data networks and facilitating better use of existing information.

Among other things, the governors propose the creation of a federal loan program that will make it possible for states and other public and private entities to secure financing on reasonable terms to complete important water-resources management projects.

The governors also encourage Congress to authorize federal agencies to provide resources and technical support to help states implement state plans designed to provide water for municipal, rural, agricultural, industrial, and habitat needs.