

Subscribe to our weekly Idaho email newsletter at CapitalPress.com/newsletters

Idaho

Bill would allow live horse racing to continue

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho’s equine industry will propose legislation this year that horse owners hope will allow live racing in Idaho to continue.

Horse owners say the state’s repeal of so-called instant horse racing last year threatens Idaho’s equine industry and will have a major impact on the state’s economy, as well as agriculture.

“I don’t think people realize the impact of what horse racing does for the state and the agricultural industry,” said Clayton Russell of Emmett,

who breeds and races quarter horses. “It’s going to be missed if we’re not successful.”

The Idaho Legislature last year repealed a 2013 law that permitted instant horse racing because of concerns that the terminals used to conduct bets too closely resembled slot machines.

Instant horse racing is a form of pari-mutuel betting that allows people to bet against each other on previously run races.

Horse tracks in Idaho, including Le Bois Park, the state’s largest, have said that without instant horse racing,

they can’t afford to run live horse races.

Without live horse racing, many horse operations will leave Idaho and that would devastate the state’s equine industry and trickle down to affect farmer and ranchers, said Jeralyn Messenger, who breeds race horses in Idaho Falls.

According to the most recent Idaho horse census, owners of the state’s estimated 210,000 equine spend \$39 million on hay each year, \$7 million on grain, \$8.6 million on veterinary services and \$7 million on

training and breeding.

Messenger said her operation buys 20 tons of hay a year.

“If there wasn’t horse racing, we wouldn’t have to buy any,” she said. “And that’s just us. The impact on the agricultural end will be huge.”

Gov. Butch Otter, a rancher, vetoed the legislation that repealed instant horse racing, but the Coeur d’Alene Tribe filed a lawsuit arguing he signed the veto too late.

The Idaho Supreme Court agreed and struck down Otter’s veto in September.

In an October news release, Otter pledged to work

collaboratively to craft new laws that would allow the resumption of pari-mutuel betting. His plan would include forming a state gaming commission that would oversee and regulate electronic gaming.

“I’m not willing to turn my back on an industry with businesses, ranches and farms ... contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to our communities and economy,” Otter stated in the news release.

Debate on the issue last year focused on the machines used to make bets, said Ken Burgess of Veritas Advisors,

which is representing the horse industry on this issue.

Lost in that debate was the economic impact of horse racing on the agricultural sector and the state economy, he said. “We would like for the broader agricultural industry to understand that and we’d like some legislators to understand that.”

Burgess said the horse industry doesn’t care about the details of the betting machines or what they look like.

“As far as the horsemen are concerned, they just want to have live horse racing opportunities,” he said.

Idaho amends its trich testing requirements for imported cattle

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers have approved a proposed rule that amends Idaho’s trichomoniasis testing requirements for imported cattle.

The disease, also known as Trich, is a venereal disease that causes infertility and abortions in cattle.

The Western States Livestock Health Association last year recommended states adopt consistent standards and Idaho’s deputy state veterinarian told lawmakers he is confident the modified requirements will not threaten the state’s cattle industry.

Different states have had different rules for trich testing and the WSLHA-recommended changes will provide consistency from state to state so producers don’t get confused about the requirements, Dr. Scott Leibsle, the deputy state veterinarian, told legislators.

States have often disagreed on what age a bull is considered a virgin, which tests they will accept, whether the tests of several animals can be pooled and how long the tests are valid.

The changes bring Idaho and most other states into alignment on trich testing, said Leibsle, who is also deputy administrator of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture’s animal industries division.

The modifications to Idaho’s trich import requirements



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Cattle graze in a field near Meridian, Idaho, last March. Amendments to the state’s trichomoniasis testing rules for imported cattle won’t increase the risk of Idaho cattle contracting the venereal disease, which causes abortions and infertility in cattle, according to state and industry officials.

unanimously approved by the House and Senate agricultural affairs committees move the age that Idaho considers imported bulls to be virgins from 12 months to 18 months, and increase the validity of test results from 30 days to 60 days.

The type of tests Idaho accepts and its regulations regarding the pooling of test results — it allows pooling, with individual testing required if a pooled test result reveals a potential problem — will remain unchanged because they are in harmony with the WSLHA recommendations.

The changes do not alter the state’s current in-state trich testing requirements.

During testimony before the Senate ag committee Jan. 21, Leibsle was asked several

times whether the modifications to Idaho’s trich testing rules for imported cattle would pose a risk to the state’s cattle industry.

Sen. Grant Burgoyne, D-Boise, asked Leibsle multiple times, in different ways, whether the slightly increased risk that could be assumed to come with the new requirements was an acceptable one.

Leibsle pointed out that the Idaho Trich Task Force, which includes the industry, approved the changes and they were also accepted by the state’s main cattle and dairy organizations.

Idaho in 1989 became the first state in the nation to adopt a trich testing program and conducts about 25,000 tests a year, Leibsle said. There have

been fewer than five positives in each of the past three years, he added.

“Is that slight risk deemed by you and the department, as opposed to industry, to be an acceptable risk?” Burgoyne persisted.

Given the success and level of enforcement of the state’s current trich program, “I’m confident we can adequately maintain the success of the trich program with these new regulations,” Leibsle said.

Sen. Mark Harris, a Republican rancher from Soda Springs, told fellow Senate ag committee members that trich testing is an issue the industry takes seriously.

“As a cattle producer, I’m comfortable with this change,” he said.

Idaho wine grape harvest off by half

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — Idaho wine grape production was down sharply in 2015 and that will have an impact on the availability of certain varieties.

Total wine grape tonnage in Idaho was off 40-50 percent from normal, according to Idaho Wine Commission officials.

However, growers said the quality of the grapes that were picked was excellent.

Instead of quantity, nature gave Idaho winemakers quality in 2015, said Huston Vineyards owner Gregg Alger.

“The fruit was quality. We were just very limited in how much we had,” he said. “We were down volume-wise ... but we have some varieties that did really, really well.”

The reduced grape tonnage was due to a combination of weather-related factors but the biggest impact came from a bitter cold snap in November 2014 that saw temperatures drop from about 60 to 0 degrees in a few days, Alger said.

“That was certainly the initial crux of the problem,” he said.

According to an IWC news release, “even established grapes were affected and struggled to come back in the 2015 growing season.”

The 2015 winter in southwestern Idaho, where most of Idaho’s wine grapes are grown, was incredibly warm and bud break was the earliest in memory, Alger said.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Total wine grape tonnage in Idaho was off 40-50 percent from normal in 2015, according to Idaho Wine Commission officials. However, growers said the quality of the grapes that were picked was excellent.

But the season’s first frost was also extremely early “and whatever healthy grapes we had got pounded by that,” he said.

Mildew from rapid cooling and summer rain was also a factor, according to IWC officials.

“It was just a train wreck from a weather standpoint,” Alger said.

Harvest was completed much earlier than normal last year, Alger said. He attributed the good grape quality to the unusually warm 2015 temperatures, which resulted in a high number of growing degree days.

According to the IWC release, the decreased tonnage will result in a limited production of Merlot, Viognier and Chardonnay varieties this year.

Bills would repeal state aquaculture, pesticide management commissions

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers have been asked to approve bills that would repeal the state’s aquaculture and pesticide management commissions, two groups that

don’t have the funds to accomplish their original goals.

Fewer and fewer fish producers have opted to pay the checkoff fee that supports the Idaho Aquaculture Commission, Rep. Donna Pence, D-Gooding, told fellow members of the House Agricultural

Affairs Committee.

Pence, whose district includes a large number of Idaho’s fish producers, introduced legislation that would repeal the aquaculture commission.

The legislation that created the commission in 2004

included an opt-out clause for the checkoff fee that funds it.

“Over the years, there have been fewer and fewer members who have” opted to pay the fee, Pence said. “What’s left now are very small producers.”

The ag committee unanimously voted to print the bill, guaranteeing it a public hearing.

The commission was created with the intent of enhancing the marketing efforts of the Idaho Aquaculture Association, a voluntary industry group that relies on member dues, and it was hoped the IAC could market Idaho fish products nationwide, said IAC Commissioner Linda Lemmon.

She said most large fish producers, which do their own marketing, have opted out of the fee and consolidations and closures have further reduced participation.

“We would have liked to get more people involved so that we could have (done some) bigger nationwide generic marketing of Idaho fish products, but we just don’t have the participation any more,” Lemmon said.

She said the commission was successful in helping educate Idahoans about the large number of fish products produced in their state. Idaho produces about 70 percent of the nation’s food trout.

“Five years ago, we had a lot of questions from people

who didn’t know we raised trout in Idaho,” Lemmon said. “Now they know we do and that’s been a positive for us.”

IAC commissioners voted in favor of dissolving the commission, Pence said. Most of the \$12,000 that remains in the IAC account will be used to support the aquaculture association’s marketing efforts and some will go the University of Idaho ag seminars and publications fund.

A bill introduced in the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee would repeal Idaho’s Pesticide Management Commission, which was created in 2002.

Many chemical companies don’t see an economic advantage to justify registering pesticides for use on minor crops and the goal of that commission was to help fund the research needed to get more pesticides registered for minor crops, Darrell Bolz told Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee members.

But the commission, which received no state funds and only has \$4,983 of private money in its account, never received enough funds to accomplish that goal, said Bolz, a former University of Idaho Extension agent.

Bolz carried the legislation that created the commission when he served in the Idaho House of Representatives.

“Now I’m coming full circle and taking it off the books,” he said.

The remaining commission funds will be used to support UI’s pesticide management efforts.

WESTERN PACKAGING

Your Future is Our Future

WE SPECIALIZE IN BULK BAGS!

BAGS:

- Seed Bags
- Fertilizer Bags
- Feed Bags
- Potato Bags
- Printed Bags
- Plain Bags
- Bulk Bags
- Totes
- Woven Polypropylene
- Bopp
- Polyethylene
- Pocket Bags
- Roll Stock & More!

HAY PRESS SUPPORT:

- Hay Sleeves
- Strap
- Totes
- Printed or Plain
- Stretch Film (ALL GAUGES)

WAREHOUSE PACKAGING:

- Stretch Film
- Pallet Sheets
- Pallet Covers

LOCATIONS:

Albany, Oregon (www.wipack.com)
Ellensburg, Washington

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 855-828-3856
Fax: 541-497-6262
info@westernpackaging.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR TOP PRIORITY!

www.westernpackaging.com

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

ROP-32-52-2/#17