

# Grandin cautions about cattle leg conformation issues

Industry improving on welfare, expert says

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

SPOKANE — The cattle industry needs to start looking at leg conformation issues, an animal welfare and handling expert says.

Temple Grandin, professor of animal science at Colorado State University, spoke about animal behavior and other livestock issues Feb. 20 as part of a lecture series at Whitworth University.

Grandin cautioned against breeding for some traits considered desirable that can create problems in other areas.

For example, conformation issues can mean some bulls have difficulty walking, Grandin said. Grandin and graduate student Marcy Franks wrote an article for Beef magazine advising ranchers to inspect the legs and feet of ani-



Colorado State University animal science professor Temple Grandin looks to an audience member for a question Feb. 20 during her presentation at Whitworth University in Spokane.

mals they are considering for breeding. Franks and Grandin surveyed photos on bull semen websites to determine the percentage that showed the animal's legs and feet.

"This is one the industry needs to head off at the pass," Grandin said. "I'm scared that there is leg conformation issues linked to some desirable carcass traits. All I can say about

using genomic power tools: Be careful. Power tools are great, but that circular saw can hack off my hand a lot quicker than a handsaw would."

Grandin said cattle handling has "greatly" improved since the 1980s, but the industry is doing a poor job of informing the public about the advances.

One of Grandin's students,

Ruth Woiwode, conducted a survey of 28 large feedyards several years ago in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska, scoring such handling variables as animals falling down or bellowing, getting caught in the squeeze chutes or electric prod use.

"The prod score was around 5.5 percent," Grandin said. "In the bad old days,

## Online

<http://www.grandin.com/>

the electric prod score would have been 500 percent. Every single animal, multiple times."

More ranchers and meat-packing plants are interested in low-stress and quiet handling of cattle, Grandin said.

"When I see an animal welfare problem now at a large slaughter plant, it's something that's going to have to be fixed at the farm," she said. "A certain segment of the dairy industry is doing a fabulous job, (but) there's other segments that still let a cow get half-dead and emaciated before they bring it in."

The problem lies with a minority of producers, Grandin said.

"But it's not a tiny minority like a half of a percent," she said.

Grandin trains people to conduct slaughter plant au-

ditions using the North American Meat Institute's guidelines. She's also helped to develop clear guidelines.

"If you write something like 'Handle cattle properly,' what does that mean?" she said. "You've got to have something that's clear, like traffic rules."

Grandin recommended agriculture communicate better with younger generations of the public. Audiences tend to listen to values over science, she said, pointing to studies that indicate the public will listen more to a mother than a government scientist. Farmers or ranchers are more credible than food company public relations representatives, she said.

She recommends farmers ensure the values they're promoting are being upheld throughout the supply chain, with a third-party independent auditor.

"Whatever you claim you're doing out there on a farm or a slaughterhouse, make sure you're actually doing," she said.

# House puts payments for cougar depredations in budget proposal

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A House spending proposal would compensate livestock owners who lose cattle, sheep or horses to cougars. The payments are allowed under state law but only if lawmakers earmark the money.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife already provides payments for livestock killed by wolves. A similar compensation plan for cougar depredations has been unfunded.

"The cougar issue has been a head-scratcher for a number of years," Washington Cattlemen's Association Executive Vice President Jack Field said. "This is huge."

The Democratic-led House included \$50,000 for cougar depredations in a budget proposal they released Tuesday. The Republican-led Senate has yet to present its proposal. The spending plan lawmakers pass this year will adjust the two-year budget they approved last year.

The House also proposes to increase funding to prevent wolf attacks on livestock.

"The Legislature is trying to provide assistance to folks impacted adversely" by predators, Field said. "We've had good meetings on both sides,



Don Jenkins/Capital Press House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hans Dunshee, D-Snohomish, speaks at a press conference Feb. 22 in Olympia about the House Democrats' spending plan.

the House and the Senate."

Cougar attacks on livestock are reported far more frequently to WDFW than wolf depredations.

Most recently, cougars killed two sheep in Garfield County and three goats in Klickitat County on Feb. 12, according to WDFW.

State law authorizes WDFW to pay up to \$10,000 per claim, but only if lawmakers supply the money. The 2013-15 budget included funding, but the 2015-17 budget passed last year does not.

WDFW wolf policy lead Donny Martorello said the department supports compensating livestock owners for cougar depredations. He said it's

been frustrating for ranchers to have compensation hinge on whether WDFW determines their livestock were killed by a cougar or wolf.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Brian Blake, D-Aberdeen, said payments have been caught up in the overall controversy about controlling cougar populations. "It's been a battle," he said.

Paula Swedeen, who represents Conservation Northwest on WDFW's wolf advisory group, said it was fair to compensate ranchers for livestock lost to cougars.

"We definitely support compensation for cougar depredations," she said. "Cougar depredations cause issues for producers. If we're going to compensate for wolves, we should compensate for cougars."

The House budget proposal also includes:

- \$300,000 for preventing wolf depredations. WDFW has an ongoing program to split costs with ranchers on protective measures such as range riders, lights, alarms and ribbons.

- \$8.8 million to replace fences and replant pastures damaged by wildfires. From this, \$300,000 would go to control weeds and re-vegetate fire-damaged land in hard-hit Okanogan County.



Photo submitted

Richard Haney, a USDA Agricultural Research Service soil scientist in Temple, Texas, stands by a microwave plasma, which measures minerals at the molecular level. Haney has devised innovative soil testing methods, which have helped growers assess their soil organic matter and plant-available soil nutrients.

# Soil breakthrough helping growers

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

A Texas USDA scientist's innovative approach to testing agricultural soils suggests U.S. producers have been applying too much fertilizer, especially nitrogen, to their crops.

Richard Haney, a soil scientist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Grassland Soil and Water Research Laboratory in Temple, Texas, explained the test also gives producers insight into the effectiveness of their efforts to improve soil health.

Haney's methods have slowly been winning over converts among farmers and ranchers in recent years, and have been touted nationwide lately by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Parma, Idaho-based Western Laboratory has a contract with the Idaho agricultural company J.R. Simplot to improve the tool for use in high-cost production systems, hoping to develop it to measure other essential minerals beyond nitrogen and phosphate.

Haney has devised the first method to measure the amount of organic nitrogen and phosphate in soil that will be available for a plant to utilize. Haney explained that prior tests have missed plant-available organic phosphate and nitrogen, leading producers to overestimate the amount of supplemental fertiliz-

er necessary to raise a crop.

"It turns out all of these years we've been measuring one form of nitrogen, which is inorganic, and we've been missing about half of what's there," said Haney, who has now tested more than 22,000 U.S. soil samples.

Haney explained a common test for inorganic soil carbon involves combusting a small soil sample and measuring the nitrous oxide formed by the process. His own method entails placing soil in water, separating the organic compounds from soil in a centrifuge and combusting only living material, thereby measuring only the organic nitrogen available to soil-borne microbes for feeding plants.

Though his soil test isn't calibrated to yield, Haney said he's never heard from any farmer who cut back on fertilizer based on his test results and experienced a nutrient deficiency.

"I can't tell you the number of farmers I get who are mad," Haney said. "They've been over-fertilizing for their whole careers, and they feel like they've been duped."

Working as a master's student with another USDA researcher, Alan Franzluebbers, in the mid-1990s, Haney was a part of the discovery that soil life could be measured by moistening soil and recording the flush of carbon dioxide respiration emitted by the organisms.

# Water markets offer efficiency, analysts say

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

Agricultural producers are competing for water around the world, vying for the limited resource that is also needed for a growing population, economic growth and ecosystem health.

"All of those competing needs must be met, against a backdrop of increasing climate variability. Proper allocation of existing resources is critical," Rabobank analysts said in their new report, "Agricultural Water — Free Flowing Markets Sustain Growth."

The challenge is in determining what the proper allocation should be, along with incentivizing investments so efficiency technologies and supply-side infrastructure are not short-changed, they stated.

"Free markets have been shown to be a capable mechanism for efficiently allocating resources to their highest value use, including the allocation of capital investment," they stated.

Water markets are absolutely essential and inevitable in meeting future needs, said Vernon Crowder, Rabobank analyst and co-author of the report.

According to the United Nations, the global population is expected to increase 25 percent by 2050, bringing a 60 percent increase in food demand and a 55 percent increase in water demand. In a "business-as-usual" scenario, the world is expected to have a 40 percent water deficit.

But that's not going to happen; the global community is not going to starve people. It's going to use the water better on higher dollar crops where it's most effective. Markets help that happen, Crowder said.

"Water markets don't make new water, but they help us use it smarter and better," he said.

Markets have been used successfully in Australia and California to help agriculture weather drought, he said.

Agriculture is in a paradoxical situation because it is both the vehicle to feed a growing population while being the largest user of developed water, the analysts stated.

It is important for agricultural leaders to be directly involved in the establishment of water markets to protect the long-term economic sustainability of the industry. Obviously, water districts should be involved but so should influential ag water users and trade organizations, Crowder said.

"When it rains or snow falls, the resource belongs to everybody, theoretically," he said.

## Joyce Capital, Inc.

In agriculture, nothing is certain. Your interest rate should be.

**We offer competitive interest rates for your agricultural financing needs:**

- Term agricultural loans (purchases & refinances)
- FSA Preferred Lender
- Amortizations up to 25 years

CONTACT: Kevin Arrien, or Joe Lodge  
at Joyce Capital, Inc.  
Agricultural Loan Agents  
(208) 338-1560 • Boise, ID  
joe@arrien.biz

FIRST FINANCIAL BANK  
American Farm  
Mortgage & Financial Services  
a subsidiary of Legacy Bank

9-4/#17



"As agriculture intensifies towards high yields and quality, Agriculturalist will have to expand their concepts and appreciation of Balanced Nutrition" — Dr. Thomas Yamashita, Plant Pathologist

## Are you in need of:

- An alternative to fumigation
- Superior foliar nutrition programs
- Is Economically Beneficial
- Organic & Conventional Labeling Solutions
- 30+ years of proven field results
- Local representatives and distribution points throughout WA, ID, OR, and CA

Contact us today for more information  
1-888-634-3360 • www.fusion360inc.com

9-2/#18

**CLEARY BUILDING CORP.**

**CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAYS SALE!**

MARCH 10-11 • 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. / MARCH 12 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Serving You Since 1978, Over 100,000 Buildings Sold!

FEATURING: **FABRAL**

**Best Prices of the Season!**

Stop in, or contact us today for a FREE consultation!

Call 1-800-373-5550 to find your nearest office!

CCB# 115247  
CLEARBC044NE

**STOP IN and Experience the Cleary Advantage!**

**ClearyBuilding.com 800-373-5550**