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Bill solves dispute between Idaho trader lots, auction yards

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A bill that would end a disagreement between auction yards and trader lots over livestock testing requirements is gliding through the Idaho Legislature.

Idaho lawmakers last year rejected a proposed rule by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture that would have placed stricter livestock removal testing requirements on trader lots.

While they both sell cattle, trader lots are open six days a week and have less overhead than auction yards because they skip the public auction process and sell directly to customers. Trader lots handle mostly cull cows from dairies.

The state’s livestock auction industry petitioned the ISDA for last year’s proposed rule change as a way to protect the health of Idaho’s cattle herds by ensuring trader lots play by the same rules when it comes to animal removal requirements.

Auction yard representatives said Idaho’s animal removal requirements don’t apply equally to trader lots.

But lawmakers said the rule would have actually placed greater restrictions on trader lots than those auction yards face and they rejected it.

A bill introduced this year

by Sen. Bert Brackett, a Republican rancher from Rogerson, would solve the dispute. It passed the Senate 32-0 and the House ag committee has sent it to the floor with a “do-pass” recommendation.

Brackett told fellow lawmakers his legislation would address the concern auction yards have over testing requirements for trader lots without unfairly burdening trader lots.

He said it closes a loophole in Idaho code that allows bulls eligible to be tested for trichomoniasis to be removed from a trader lot and returned to the country for breeding purposes without being tested for the venereal disease, which causes abortions and infertility in cattle.

“This bill is about animal health, disease prevention and assuring traceability ... as livestock move through the marketing channel,” he said. “I believe this bill strikes a good balance between protecting animal health and not interfering with commerce.”

The legislation requires brucellosis test-eligible cattle to receive a health certificate prior to being released from a trader lot for breeding or grazing purposes.

Brackett’s bill was supported by trader lot co-owner Joel Van Lith, who opposed the proposed rule change last year.



Corn is harvested from a field near Wilder, Idaho, in October. A bill making its way through the Idaho Legislature would make it a felony to knowingly introduce a crop or livestock disease, or poison onto a farm, ranch or ag facility.

Bill imposes criminal penalties for breaches in biosecurity

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A bill that seeks to prevent biosecurity breaches on Idaho farms and agricultural facilities is making its way through the Idaho Legislature.

During the bill’s initial public hearing March 3, farm and food processing groups testified in support of the legislation, which makes it a felony to knowingly introduce a contagious crop, or livestock disease or poison on a farm, ranch or agricultural facility.

The legislation also covers food processing facilities.

It is “of the utmost importance that Idaho continues to protect our food supply and economic stability in agriculture,” said Benjamin Kelly, executive assistant of Food Producers of Idaho, which represents 40 ag groups.

He said FPI “membership agrees that their facilities should be firmly protected

against crimes intended to infect crops or livestock products at agricultural operations with diseases or poison.”

The bill, authored by the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, also makes it a crime to attempt to introduce crop or livestock diseases or poison, or to aid, abet or conspire with another person to do that.

The crime is punishable by up to 20 years in prison if it causes more than \$1,000 in damage.

The bill’s supporters walked a fine line in explaining to House Agricultural Affairs Committee members why it is necessary without providing specific examples of how someone can harm an ag facility in such a way.

“We just don’t want to provide a how-to check list ... on how to go on to any type of ag facility and create some significant issues,” said IFBF Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs Dennis Tanikuni. How-

ever, he added, “any of us are more than happy to talk about those things privately.”

Rep. Gayle Batt, R-Wilder, the House sponsor of the bill, said it addresses “the exploitation of agriculture’s vulnerability to breaches of biosecurity.”

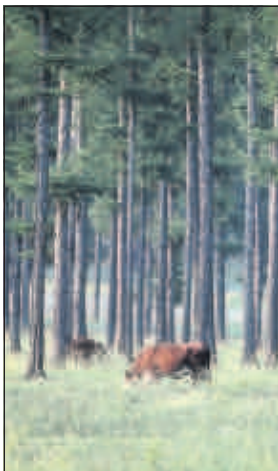
The legislation doesn’t affect normal farming practices such as spraying.

Tanikuni said a key point of the bill is that it also addresses the attempt to commit such actions and it’s needed because of the inherent vulnerability of farming operations and facilities.

“In certain operations, devastating results can be achieved with cheap, easily obtainable chemicals,” he said.

Tanikuni said the bill’s crafters ran its provisions by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, farm groups and a lot of other possible stakeholders.

“In preparing for this bill, we talked to everybody,” he said.



University of Idaho Extension Cattle graze in the under-story of a stand of larch that has been thinned and seeded with grass north of Blanchard, Idaho. University of Idaho Extension is offering a workshop on forestland grazing April 9 in Bonners Ferry.

Workshop to help forest owners with grazing

Course covers mutual benefits of raising animals, growing trees

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Forest owners will learn better ways to manage livestock grazing on their land during a workshop offered by the University of Idaho Extension.

The session will begin at 1 p.m. April 9 at the UI Extension Boundary County Office, 6447 Kootenai St., in Bonners Ferry.

“There’s a lot of folks that like to turn cattle out in the woods and in certain stages of forest development. That’s something that’s entirely compatible with growing trees on those properties,” said Chris Schnepf, UI Extension forestry educator in Coeur d’Alene.

For some landowners, there’s more total benefit in raising cattle and growing trees, Schnepf said.

Standard forestland grazing is releasing cattle and focusing on areas with understory plants. Silvopastoral systems integrate forests with livestock and forage production. For example, a company in Missouri pastures livestock on soybeans planted among walnut trees, Schnepf said.

Most landowners are interested in raising cattle in traditional conifer environments, Schnepf said.

“For the most part, cattle don’t munch on trees,” Schnepf said.

The concern is whether livestock will cause trampling damage, but this can be solved using salt licks and fencing and by herding, Schnepf said.

Landowners with young conifers should keep cattle out for the first five years, he said.

“Once the trees are shoulder height to a steer, it’s not really much of an issue,” he said.

Most concerns about forestland grazing can be addressed with more attention to management, Schnepf said.

Farmers, ranchers tell lawmakers depredation program isn’t working

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers have been told the state’s big game depredation prevention and compensation program isn’t working and needs to be fixed.

Farmers and ranchers from around the state told Senate Resources and Environment Committee members last week the depredation problem has reached near-crisis levels this winter.

In addition to eating crops in the field, large populations of deer and elk are consuming even tarped hay stacks and breaking down fences, they said.

“Many of the (Idaho Grain

Producers Association) members have real concerns with the depredation problem,” said Caribou County farmer Sid Celan, past president of the IGPA. “We have to be on top of it before we lose a lot of agricultural money.”

Producers expect to feed a certain amount of wildlife but the presence of increasingly large ungulate herds has made the situation unmanageable in many parts of the state, said Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Wyatt Prescott.

“It’s a very widespread, statewide issue,” he said. “The true management cost is an extreme challenge.”

Lemhi County Farm Bureau President James Whittaker illustrated the scope of the problem by presenting his group’s estimate of the total depredation damage caused to 15 landowners in that area in the past year.

It showed \$118,800 in damage caused by elk, \$21,600 by deer, and \$30,000 in fencing costs.

In submitted written testimony, Chad Larsen Farms owner Chad Larsen said his operation has lost between \$60,000 and \$70,000 from elk damage to hay stacks since 2004.

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