

People & Places

Rancher-vet passes on knowledge

Jill Swannack mentors others, leads statewide organization

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

LAMONT, Wash. — Jill Swannack knew she wanted to be a veterinarian when she was 7 years old.

“Somebody said to me, ‘You can be anything you want to be,’ and I looked at them and said, ‘I’ll be a veterinarian.’” she said. “And that was it.”

Swannack received her doctor of veterinary medicine degree from Washington State University in 1991 and has been practicing in the Sprague-Lamont area since 1992. She treats large and small animals.

Swannack and her husband, Art, raise 900 sheep on their ranch. She was elected president of the Washington State Sheep Producers in October 2014 and is the first female leader of the organization that she is aware of.

Swannack said she would like to include more smaller and non-traditional sheep producers in the organization.

“As an industry we represent the large producers well,” she said. “(Smaller producers are) where the industry is really growing.”

The organization offers



Lamont, Wash., veterinarian Jill Swannack, president of the Washington State Sheep Producers, manages a lamb as she looks to Washington State University veterinary students during a lambing school on her ranch March 12.

schools on lambing, held on Swannack’s ranch, and on health screening and shearing, as part of an emphasis on education, mentoring and community involvement.

“It’s passing on skills,” Swannack said. “You can watch a video and you can read about it, but until you get your hands on it and do it, it’s just not the same thing.”

Are there many female large-animal vets?

“There aren’t many large animal vets,” she said with a laugh. Swannack grew up on a Monroe, Wash., dairy farm, and was surrounded by a variety of animals. Swannack blames the low vet numbers

on a lack of knowledge, since few people are born in rural environments today and grow up around livestock.

“They’re willing to work rurally, but they don’t want to do cattle,” she said. “I tell (students), ‘You can’t work rurally and not do cattle. Most people have been around cats and dogs, the kids that love horses, they bond with that animal. With cattle, you’ve almost got to come from where it was part of your livelihood to have true experiences with them.’”

She expects the number of large-animal vets to remain low.

But there is hope for the

future: Her daughter, a high school senior, recently decided she also wants to be a veterinarian.

“More than anything, I want my children to do what interests them,” Swannack said. “I counsel all my kids that because we are a farm family, we are a minority, and that is a huge strength in the job market.”

Lamont area resident Harry Harder said Swannack is a helpful mentor him as he started a sheep flock over the last two years.

“You can ask her anything you want and she will answer to the best of her ability,” he said. “Working with her is like



Western Innovator

Jill Swannack

Age: 50

Title: President, Washington State Sheep Producers; veterinarian

Hometown: Monroe, Wash.

Current location: Lamont, Wash.

Education: Doctor of veterinary medicine degree, Washington State University

Family: Husband, Art, is a rancher and Whitman County commissioner; children Carmen, 19; Leah, 17; and Owen, 14

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/Washington-State-Sheep-Producers-207117485979912/>

working with a close friend or family, even.”

Louise Belsby ranches south of Cheney. Swannack is her veterinarian.

“I have rolled in the mud with Jill pulling a calf — I have never seen anybody work so hard to keep a calf alive, going through a tough birth,” Belsby said. “She’s not just a vet, she’s also a producer, and I think that makes a big difference.”

Oregon Dairy Farmers give two achievement awards

SALEM — The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association honored the Oregon Dairy Women and Larry Hansen for their contributions to the industry at the association’s recent convention.

The Oregon Dairy Women, a nonprofit organization that promotes the dairy industry, received the Community Service Award, according to an ODFA press release. Hansen, Northwest and Mountain Division Pool Manager for Organic Valley, received the Distinguished Service Award.

The Oregon Dairy Women is an all-volunteer organization. One of their promotional efforts is the dairy princess ambassador program, which has been active since 1959. Princess ambassadors have been educating children of all ages through school presentations, county and state fairs and other events. During 2015, princess ambassadors reached more than 15,500 students across the state.

The dairy women have also made the Red Barn an



Members of the Oregon Dairy Women are shown at the recent Oregon Dairy Farmers convention in Salem, where they received the Community Service Award.

icon of the Oregon State Fair, where they have invested countless hours to provide ice cream to the public. Proceeds are donated to 4-H and FFA programs, Ag in the Classroom, Oregon Ag Fest, the Summer Ag Institute, dairy judging teams, Adopt a Farmer and the princess ambassador program.

The dairy women have also given scholarships to more than 100 students in the last 12 years. The schol-

arships go to college students from dairy families, students studying dairy-related majors and community college students.

They have also been an important part of ODFA’s Dairy Day at the Capitol the last several years.

“Thanks on behalf of all of our members. We are pleased to be recognized for our efforts,” said Jill Hewitt, president of the dairy women, in the press release. “The Ore-



Larry Hansen, left, receives the Distinguished Service Award from Allen Hanselman, representing the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, at the annual convention in Salem.

gon Dairy Women work hard to promote dairy products and dairy farmers. We look forward to continuing to serve this great industry.”

Hansen has worked in the dairy industry his entire life, starting out as a teen-ager working on a farm. He worked as a herdsman on a Willamette Valley dairy. From there he worked for Walco International, Darigold, Horizon Organic, and in 2012 he became the

Online
www.oregondairyfarmers.org

Northwest and Mountain Division Pool Manager for Organic Valley.

Larry and his wife, Laurie, have been married more than 40 years and have two children and seven grandchildren. He has been a Boy Scout leader for over 25 years, mentoring many young men.

The words that come to mind when you think of Larry are: milk quality, loyal, efficient, sense of humor, and a friend to the dairy industry, said Tami Kerr, ODFA executive director. “Larry is beloved in our state. It doesn’t matter who you ship to, Larry means a lot to everyone. ... Our board was very pleased to honor and recognize him for his many years of outstanding service.”

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, established in 1892, works on behalf of Oregon’s 240 dairy farm families.

Donations sought for Dayton FFA alumni dinner auction

Dayton FFA alumni are seeking donations for the 26th Annual FFA Alumni Auction and Dinner on April 2.

The auction is held in the old gym at Dayton, Ore., High School.

“The auction is the largest

fundraiser the alumni do,” said Ian Heard, president of the Dayton FFA Alumni.

“Proceeds from the auction go toward vocational ag programs that would otherwise go unfunded. In years past, we have been able to help send

students to the National FFA convention in November.”

The doors will open at 5 p.m. for registration at DHS. “The silent auction will begin at 5:30 with a staggered closing of the tables starting at 6:30. Every 20 minutes a

table will close,” said Heather Oliveria, silent auction chair.

An “agriculticious dinner” will be served at 7 p.m. with the oral auction following at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased at the door or in advance by calling

the Dayton Ag Shop at 864-2080.

Any individual or business that would like to donate an auction item, time, money or services to this year’s auction, call Karen Goddik at 503-560-9275.

Calendar Sponsored by: OXARC GASES / WELDING / SAFETY / FIRE

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on “Submit an Event.” Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Saturday, April 2
26th Annual Dayton FFA Alumni Auction and Dinner, 5-9:30 p.m. in the old gym at Dayton High School, 801 Ferry St., Dayton, Ore. The silent auction starts at 5:30 and an “agriculticious dinner” will be served at 7 with the oral auction following at 8. Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased at the door or in advance by calling the Dayton Ag Shop at 503-864-2080.

Sunday, April 3
Spring Farming Days, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Eastern Washington Agricultural Museum, Pomeroy. www.co.garfield.wa.us/museum

4 p.m., Eastern Washington Agricultural Museum, Pomeroy. www.co.garfield.wa.us/museum

Wednesday, April 6
Idaho FFA State Leadership Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls. idahoffa.org/

Thursday, April 7
Growing Agripreneurs — A Season of Farming Training, 6-9 p.m., Growing Agripreneurs is a seven-month program, beginning April 7, designed for beginning farmers interested in gaining theoretical and practical knowledge through classes, field work, marketing, food preservation, farm tours and one-on-one mentoring. Pre-registration required. Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Cost: \$350 (couples discount, \$600) Partial scholarships available. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/farms>

Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls. idahoffa.org/

Friday, April 8
Idaho FFA State Leadership Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls. idahoffa.org/

Saturday, April 9
96th Annual California Ram Sale, Viewing starts at 8 a.m. Over 400 range rams from California, Oregon, Idaho and Utah. Crossbred, Hampshire, Suffolk and White-Faced (Columbia, Rambouillet) rams will be auctioned off in the sale. In addition three purebred ewes will also be sold. Also, ultrasound carcass measurements and a range ram index will be provided on all sale rams, Porterville Fairgrounds, 2700 W. Teapot Dome Ave., Porterville, Calif. <http://cawoolgrowers.org/sale/ramsale.html>

Idaho, Twin Falls. idahoffa.org/

Tuesday, April 12
Oregon Cranberry Growers Twilight Meeting, 4 p.m., Robinson Farm, Bandon, Ore. www.oregoncranberrygrowers.com

Wednesday, April 13
International Fair of Agricultural Technologies Conference and Exhibition, FEXPO Agricola Central, Talca, Chile

Thursday, April 14
International Fair of Agricultural Technologies Conference and Exhibition, FEXPO Agricola Central, Talca, Chile

Friday, April 15
International Fair of Agricultural Technologies Conference and Exhibition, FEXPO Agricola Central, Talca, Chile

Saturday, April 16
Oregon Women for Agriculture

Auction & Dinner, 5-9 p.m. The organization’s 29th annual fundraiser, themed “Oregon Agriculture A to Z,” will take place at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E in Albany, Ore. Cost: \$40 per person. <http://owaonline.org/owa-auction-2016/>

Holistic Land Planning, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Create the ideal land plan for your ranch. What is the ideal layout of your fences? Where should infrastructure be located to facilitate animal handling and movement? Kittitas Valley Event Center, 901 E. Seventh Ave., Ellensburg, Wash. Cost: \$227 until April 2. www.rootsofresilience.org

International Fair of Agricultural Technologies Conference and Exhibition, FEXPO Agricola Central, Talca, Chile

Hood River Hard-Pressed Cider Fest, noon-7 p.m., 3315 Stadelman Drive, Hood River, Ore. <http://hoodriver.org/cider-fest/>

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Correction
A story on page 7 of last week’s editions incorrectly identified the Crook County, Ore., sheriff’s deputy who investigated the killing of a rancher’s three guard dogs. The deputy’s name is Brian Bottoms. The Capital Press regrets the error.

Correction policy
Accuracy is important to Capital Press staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.