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Dairy/Livestock

Commission hopes to impress consumers, ranchers

Marketing campaign to focus on young parents

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington Beef Commission's new marketing plan stresses convincing urban millennials that the virtues of beef and the cattle industry outweigh anything bad they've heard about either.

Meanwhile, a state lawmaker is meeting with cattlemen to hear what they think about the virtues of the beef commission.

The commission, a state agency, recently adopted a one-year, \$1 million budget, a 6 percent cut from the budget that expired at the end of June.

The reduction continues a trend toward fewer cattle transactions and declining commission revenue.

Cattle sellers pay a mandatory \$1.50 per-head fee, with \$1 going to the state commission and 50 cents to the national Beef Board.

Several major cattle groups in Washington this year supported raising the beef check-off to \$2.50, with the additional dollar going to the state commission.

However, support from cattlemen was far from unanimous. Some ranchers wondered how giving the beef commission \$2 million instead of \$1 million would help their



A mother shows her daughter features of a Washington Beef Commission display at the Washington Brewers Festival on Father's Day weekend in King County. The beef commission plans to use social media and events to reach consumers, particularly young parents.

Courtesy of Washington Beef Commission

industry.

Legislators dropped the proposal.

"I couldn't vote for it because there was so much push-back," Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake, said last week. "It was pretty clear the idea was not well-vetted."

Dent, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, has been meeting with producers to explain the beef commission's approach to promotion and to gauge support for increasing the beef checkoff.

Dent said he believes a "majority of people are good with the beef commission." But he said he hesitates to say whether a majority back raising the checkoff fee.

"I'm really trying to listen to people," he said.

To balance its budget, the commission eliminated one position, shrinking the staff to two full-time and two part-time workers.

Long gone are expensive television ads. Newspaper advertising, radio spots and in-

store coupons are largely things of the past, too.

Instead, the commission will continue its shift toward social media and small events, such as cooking demonstrations and ranch tours.

The beef commission, for example, plans to host a Christmas party for consumer bloggers.

"It's just a kitschy way to build relations with bloggers," commission Executive Director Patti Brumbach said. "We're trying to think outside the box."

The beef commission had a high-profile connection with Washington State University's annual football game in Seattle, but the Cougars discontinued the event after 2014.

Brumbach said the commission would have been hard-pressed to afford continuing its sponsorship anyway.

"We're not looking for the big PR stunt," she said.

The social media campaign will include Facebook ads and YouTube videos targeted at millennials born between 1980 and 2000 and who have children.

Social media will be combined with personal contact. The commission, for example, will hand out beef jerky and nutritional information at soccer games — attended by soccer moms. "A theme throughout our marketing is, How do we get to moms and dads?" Brumbach said.

She said the commission's top goal is to build "trust" in beef's taste, nutrition and value, and in the industry's humane treatment of animals.

For the first time since 2013, the beef commission will survey Seattle-Tacoma area consumers to check their attitudes toward beef and the cattle industry.

The beef commission has set goals to nudge consumers into having a more favorable view of the cattle industry, and to serve more beef to their families.

Dent said the focus on social media makes sense.

Research weighs impact of grazing after fire

By DOUG WARNOCK
For the Capital Press

A study conducted at the Northern Great Basin Experimental Range near Burns, Ore., provides valuable information on the results of grazing after fire on sagebrush steppe rangeland.

While the grazing followed prescribed burning, the study provides insight into what could result from grazing after wildfire. The study evaluated cattle grazing impacts over four growing seasons, after fire, on Wyoming big sagebrush steppe in Eastern Oregon.

Big sagebrush steppe is one of the major vegetation types in the intermountain region of the Western United States.

Fire has been both a natural and prescribed disturbance of big sagebrush communities for many years. It temporarily shifts vegetation from joint dominance by shrub and grass to a grass dominance.

After fire, these rangelands typically receive a rest from grazing to allow for plant recovery and regeneration. On most public lands a minimum of two years of rest from grazing is prescribed after fire.

The management goals for a rangeland following fire are: (1) recovery of the ecological processes, such as hydrologic function, energy capture by the plants and resource capture; (2) recovery of the preferred plants; (3) adequate wildlife habitat; and (4) profitable use.

In this study, treatments applied to the sagebrush steppe included: (1) no grazing after burning; (2) no grazing on unburned land; (3) two summer grazing applications after fire; (4) two spring grazing applications after fire.

Information collected from the study measured plant canopy cover, plant density, annual forage yield and perennial grass seed yield. The severity of the burn to the plant community was classified as low.

Forage use in both the summer-grazed treatments and the first spring-grazed treatment were close to the targeted level of 50 percent. The second spring-grazed treatment experienced rapid plant regrowth during the grazing, which resulted in about 25 percent removal of forage, or a light grazing.

Grass seed production was greater in the burned areas that were not grazed. However, there was enough seed production in the burned and grazed areas to support plant community recovery after fire. The other herbaceous responses, including canopy cover, density, composition and annual yield, did not differ among grazed and ungrazed burn treatments. All burn treatments — grazed and ungrazed — had greater herbaceous cover, herbaceous standing crop, herbaceous annual yield and grass seed production than the unburned treatment by the second or third year after fire.

Livestock grazing during the first several years after burning in big sagebrush steppe has often been considered undesirable in order to have good plant recovery.

This study supports the idea that moderate grazing following completion of the first growth cycle after low severity fire does not limit plant recovery. It also suggests that requiring two years of rest from grazing after a fire may not be necessary in all situations.

Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he consults and writes on grazing management.

Dairy Markets
Lee Mielke



'Brexit' will impact trade, analyst says

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

History was made last week and the fallout is still falling.

The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union by a 51.9 to 48.1 percent margin. The "Brexit" vote prompted Prime Minister David Cameron to resign.

HighGround Dairy reported that the unexpected result "caused a knee-jerk reaction in financial and commodity markets across the globe. In particular, market participants have flocked to the U.S. dollar, Japanese yen and precious metals, causing a sharp decline in global equity markets, foreign currencies and in kind, commodities priced in U.S. dollars."

The impact on dairy remains to be seen, but HighGround warned, "A stronger U.S. dollar makes commodities priced in its denomination more expensive to importing countries."

Butter, cheese slip

Cash butter and cheese prices weakened some the fourth week of June Dairy Month as traders absorbed the May Milk Production report, anticipated Friday afternoon's May Cold Storage data, and contemplated the Brexit vote.

Block Cheddar closed Friday at \$1.5125 per pound, down a quarter-cent on the week and 12 3/4-cents below a year ago.

Barrel Cheddar finished at \$1.5350, down a penny on the week and 9 cents below a year ago. Only two cars of block exchanged hands on the week at the CME and none of barrel.

The blocks ticked up three-quarters Monday and gained a penny Tuesday, hitting \$1.53 per pound.

The barrels were also up three-quarters Monday and a penny and three-quarters on Tuesday, closing the session at \$1.56, highest barrel price since Nov. 11, 2015, and 3 cents above the blocks.

FC Stone dairy broker Dave Kurzwaski cautioned in his June 24 Insider Closing Bell that "it's important to remember that when key events like Brexit happen, markets tend to over-react."

New Washington State Dairy Ambassadors selected

TACOMA, Wash. — The 2016-2017 Washington State Dairy Ambassador is Alicia Smaciarz of Raymond, Wash.

She represented Lewis County and was selected from a field of six finalists at the 61st annual Washington State Dairy Ambassador Coronation on June 25 at the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center, according to a press release from the Washington State Dairy Women, who sponsor the ambassador program.

Selected as equal alternate ambassadors were Jana Plagerman from Lynden, representing Whatcom County, and Tiana Peterson, from Graham, representing King and Pierce counties.

As a representative of the Dairy Farmers of Washington, the state dairy ambassador and the alternates will visit schools, attend county fairs, appear at Washington Interscholastic Activities Association events and speak before the Washington state legislature promoting the health and nutrition benefits of dairy products.

A dairy ambassador typically makes 400 public appearances during her year-long tenure. At the end of her



From left are Lydia Johnson, Nicole Buell, Becca Bartelheimer, Alternate Ambassador Jana Plagerman, Ambassador Alicia Smaciarz, Alternate Ambassador Tiana Peterson, Allyson Carothers and Caitlin Meek. The contest was held June 25 in Tacoma, Wash.

reign Smaciarz and the alternate ambassadors will receive scholarships to continue their education.

During 2015-2016, the dairy industry was represented by Washington State Dairy Ambassador Nicole Buell of Marysville and Alternate State Dairy Ambassadors Amanda Howe of Bellingham and Lydia Johnson of Ethel.

They traveled around the state educating students, parents and others on the positive impact and value of Washington's dairy industry and the importance of dairy products.

The other 2016 finalists were:

• Snohomish County: Becca Bartelheimer.



Courtesy of the Washington State Dairy Ambassador Program
The new Washington State Dairy Ambassadors are, from left, Alternate Tiana Peterson, Ambassador Alicia Smaciarz and Alternate Jana Plagerman.

• Snohomish County: Allyson Carothers.

• Grays Harbor County: Caitlin Meek.

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