

# Oregon farmer challenging order to confine hogs

## Regulators require facility to correct water problems

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

A pig breeder is challenging the Oregon Department of Agriculture's order to build a confinement facility for his hogs, arguing it would hurt their health.

Luther Clevenger and his wife, Julie, raise Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs and

other livestock on their 15-acre property near Aumsville, Ore., which has experienced water drainage problems during heavy winter rains.

ODA inspected the operation repeatedly this year after receiving several complaints that Clevenger's 200 pigs were "creating a huge mess and affecting the property values of all the adjacent property owners" and that water was flowing onto neighbors' lots.

The agency ultimately concluded that Clevenger's farm was violating water quality standards and or-

dered a multi-pronged "plan of correction," requiring him to construct a "swine confinement facility" to prevent pollutant discharges to the "surface water of Oregon," according to ODA.

Currently, the pigs are raised on pasture but have access to portable shelters.

The plan also requires Clevenger to store manure and wastewater from the facility so that none is discharged into waterways, apply manure to the soil at agronomic rates and maintain grassed filter strips, among other measures.

Clevenger recently filed a petition in Marion County Circuit Court asking for the "plan of correction" to be overturned, arguing he hasn't polluted state waters.

Water had collected on a neighbor's property during winter, but that's because the previous property owner filled a natural drain to expand his lawn, Clevenger said.

While he's not opposed to reducing his number of pigs or working with the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District to improve drainage issues, Clevenger

said the confinement facility isn't feasible for his rare hogs.

"This breed can't be confined. They don't work in confinement," he said.

When Clevenger has confined the pigs in the past, even for relatively short periods of time, they've lost weight and some have even died, he said.

"If you have them out on pasture, they do fine," he said.

People who buy from Clevenger generally raise the hogs organically or without antibiotics, and sell the meat through a "Community Supported Agriculture" model or

other specialty markets, and they "prize pastured pigs," according to his petition.

Clevenger has invested substantial amount of money in acquiring Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs from "all available genetic lines," which has involved flying them from other locations and importing frozen semen from Ireland, the petition said.

Bruce Pokarney, communications director for ODA, said the agency can't discuss the litigation but could "talk about all the details once the issue is settled."

# Oregon House speaker supports efforts to help Malheur County economy

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek says she supports efforts to help Malheur County's economy, including improving the transportation infrastructure to reduce the cost of shipping agricultural products.

The Portland Democrat visited the Eastern Oregon county last month at the invitation of Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, and agricultural industry leaders concerned about the impact the state's new minimum wage law will have on farmers and others here.

A three-tiered plan passed this year will hike the minimum wage in rural areas to \$12.50 an hour over six years. Malheur County's farming industry competes with Idaho, which borders Oregon and has a \$7.25 minimum wage.

Oregon's rural minimum wage increased 25 cents on July 1 to \$9.50 an hour. It will reach \$12.50 on July 1, 2022, and then increase annually, based on the consumer price index for all urban consumers. It will be pegged \$2.25 below the Portland Metro minimum wage.

In an email statement, Kotek told Capital Press she now has "a deeper understanding of the economic challenges of sharing a border with a fast-growing part of Idaho. It's clear that a variety of factors impact the ag industry in both states, including but by no means limited to, the minimum wage."

Kotek said she supports ideas floated by Bentz that could help improve Malheur



Portland Tribune

Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek says she might be supportive of plans to boost the economy of Malheur County. Farmers and others in the county say the state's higher minimum wage will put them at a disadvantage to neighboring Idaho.

County's economy.

That includes creating a special economic zone and bringing a freight transportation hub to the area, which she said "would cut the time and cost for growers who are exporting onions and other agricultural products."

Special tax credits for the area and creating a "Micro Irrigation Center" at the Oregon State University are other ideas the speaker supports, Bentz said.

The backbone of the effort to help the county's economy is to improve transportation infrastructure and reduce freight costs, Bentz said. "We have to have a lower-cost way of getting (our) products to the market."

Bentz and local ag leaders were hoping to convince Kotek and other legislators to

reduce Malheur County's minimum wage below the \$12.50 rate in the plan passed this year.

That appears unlikely, Bentz said.

Kotek said she is "committed to upholding Oregon's new minimum wage law ... while also respecting regional economic needs and giving local businesses time to plan."

News that Malheur County's minimum wage likely won't be reduced below \$12.50 an hour came as bad news to the ag industry.

"That's a blow," said Nysa farmer Paul Skeen. "They can't see that we have a problem?"

Owyhee Produce General Manager Shay Myers said he's glad legislators are working on a larger effort to improve the county's economy.

But onion packers and the local ag industry will still face fierce pressure from competitors on the Idaho side, who will have much lower labor costs, he said.

He said reducing freight costs would benefit businesses on both sides of the border and the disparity in the two areas' minimum wages will likely cause some Oregon businesses to move to Idaho, automate or both.

His company has already looked at land acquisition options in Idaho.

"It's not going to change the competitive environment that we as packers of onions are operating in," Myers said of the economic improvement efforts. "That doesn't help me in any way compete with my competitors in the state of Idaho."

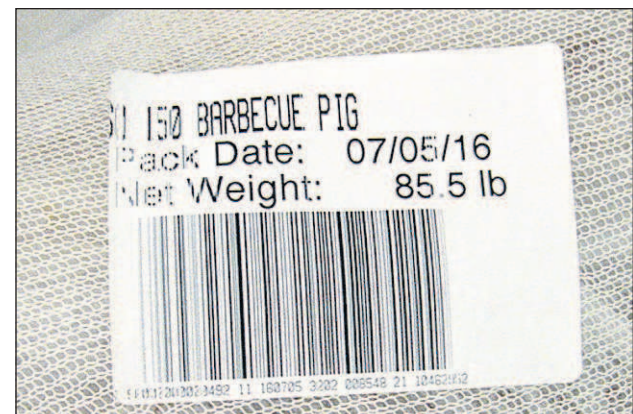


Photo courtesy of USDA

A photo released by the USDA shows the product label on pork recalled by Kapowsin Meats of Graham, Wash. Whole hogs produced by the slaughterhouse between June 13 and July 15 may be contaminated with salmonella.

## Western Washington slaughterhouse recalls hogs

### USDA links pork to sicknesses, salmonella

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Western Washington slaughterhouse has recalled 11,658 pounds of whole roaster hogs that may be contaminated with salmonella, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said July 21.

Kapowsin Meats of Graham, Wash., produced the hogs between June 13 and July 15 and shipped them to individuals, retail stores and institutions in Washington, according to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

It's highly probable that pork from Kapowsin has sickened at least three people, whose illnesses were reported between July 5 and July 7, according to the USDA notice.

The slaughterhouse's owner, John Anderson, was not immediately available for comment.

Kapowsin recalled

523,380 pounds of whole hogs in August 2015 after the meat was linked to at least 32 cases of salmonella poisoning.

Earlier in the same month, the slaughterhouse recalled 116,000 pounds of pork products.

The Seattle Times reported that Kapowsin reopened June 13 after the USDA determined the slaughterhouse had improved its sanitary procedures. Efforts to reach a USDA spokeswoman about the slaughterhouse's status were unsuccessful.

In a USDA notice, the department advised consumers who purchased the hogs to throw the pork away or return it to where it was purchased. The recalled products are marked with "EST. 1628M" inside the USDA stamp of inspection.

The USDA warned that roasting a pig is a complex undertaking with numerous foot-handling risks.

# Portland students will attend rural school to learn about ag

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Burnt River School's invitation to Portland students paid off, and the rural Eastern Oregon school will host up to eight urban kids when classes begin next fall, and eight more in the spring.

"It's happening," Superintendent Lorrie Andrews said. The district is arranging places for the students to stay while in school.

The school, which had a total of 34 students in 2015-16, offers the Burnt River Integrated Agriculture/Science Research Ranch program, or BRIARR, a dip into the ag

and natural resource issues common to the area. The K-12 public charter school is in Unity, Ore., about 50 miles east of John Day.

Students will learn about animal production science, sustainable rangeland science and forest restoration studies, and do water quality monitoring with the Powder Basin Watershed Council.

The invitation to Portland students was intended to help bridge the urban-rural divide, but it could help the district financially, as well. The state provides districts about \$7,100 per student, and that funding follows the student during their time in the rural

district.

Portland Public Schools sent an email to its high school families last spring, telling them of the opportunity, and Andrews received about two dozen email queries within a

couple days.

After clearing interviews and securing placement with host families, eight girls will attend the school fall semester, and eight boys will attend in spring.



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