

Idaho leads the West in per capita farm income

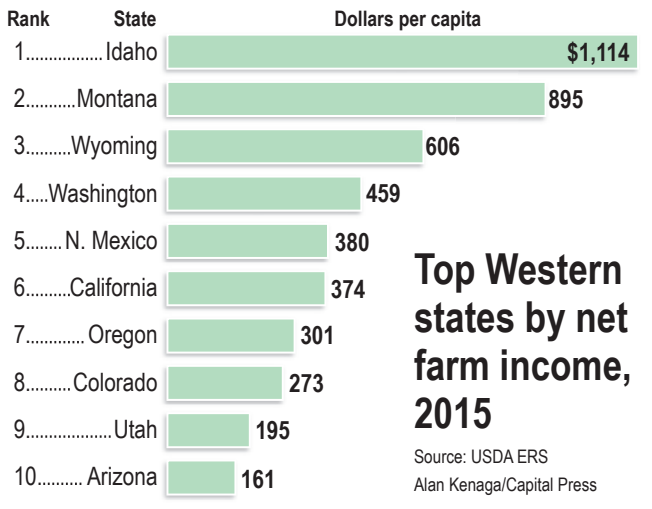
By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lost a little ground in 2015 among the 11 Western states in the rankings for farm cash receipts and net farm income.

But it remained an unchallenged No. 1 when it comes to those categories on a per capita basis.

“To me, (that) shows how dependent Idaho is on agriculture compared to our neighboring states,” said University of Idaho agricultural economist Ben Eborn, who compiles the Western state rankings annually.

Eborn said the rankings are a fun way to show how Western states compare with each other in agricultural terms but he compiles them main-



ly as a way to show policy makers and elected officials how critical farming is to the state.

The data, based on USDA Economic Research Service

2015 and \$14.6 billion in net farm income.

Washington kept its No. 2 ranking for cash receipts with \$10.2 billion and generated \$3.3 billion in net farm income, taking the No. 2 ranking in that category from Idaho, which had \$1.8 billion in net farm income.

Idaho, which also ranked third in cash receipts with \$7.5 billion, had ranked No. 2 in net farm income the previous two years but Washington soared past Idaho last year in that category.

The downturn in beef and dairy prices hurt Idaho, which is top heavy in animal production when compared with other Western states.

Idaho generated \$4.6 billion in livestock cash receipts in 2015 and \$2.9 billion in

crop receipts, while Washington generated \$2.9 billion in livestock receipts and \$7.2 billion in crop receipts.

Dairy has ranked No. 1 in Idaho for several years in cash receipts.

“Dairy is a big sector in Idaho ag and that was way down,” Eborn said.

Oregon ranked fifth in both categories, with \$4.9 billion in cash receipts and \$1.2 billion in net farm income.

In terms of farm cash receipts and net farm income on a per capita basis, no other Western state besides Montana was even close to Idaho, which produced \$4,510 per resident in farm cash receipts in 2015 and \$1,114 in net farm income.

Montana’s totals were \$3,716 and \$894.

WDFW: No more wolves shot in past week

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

No more wolves in the Profanity Peak pack were killed in the past week, keeping the number shot so far at six, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reported Sept. 2.

WDFW will continue to hunt for the rest of the pack, according to an email from the department’s wolf policy coordinator, Donny Martorello.



WDFW File

A Washington wolf is seen in this photo. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife is removing members of the Profanity Peak pack after repeated attacks on livestock.

The pack was believed to have 11 members before WDFW started removing the wolves on Aug. 4. WDFW has confirmed the pack has killed or injured eight cattle in Ferry County in northeastern Washington since July 8.

WDFW has classified five other attacks as probable depredations.

Most recently, WDFW confirmed Aug. 31 that the pack killed a calf.

WDFW has killed two adult females, two adult males and one female pup, according to Martorello.

The state shot seven wolves in 2012 and one in 2014 to stop chronic wolf attacks on livestock.

The Profanity Peak pack’s territory overlaps almost entirely with federal grazing allotments in the Colville National Forest, according to Martorello.

Four producers graze

Wolf advocates rally to move cows off public lands

Rancher says death threats coming daily

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Wolf advocates rallied Sept. 1 outside the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, calling on the state to immediately stop shooting wolves and for livestock to be removed from public lands.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Meanwhile, across the state, ranchers in northeastern Washington were trying to prevent depredations on cattle over a wide swath of the Colville National Forest.

“We do everything we can to protect the cattle. The only other thing we could do is not turn them out,” said Justin Hedrick, co-owner of the Diamond M Ranch, the most high profile of the cattle operations losing cattle to livestock in the forest this summer.

“We’re not the only ones affected. We’re the ones getting the media on it,” he said. “Nobody wants the attention, but we feel we have to put ourselves out there for there to be remedies.”

As of early Thursday afternoon, WDFW had reported shooting six wolves in the Profanity Peak pack. WDFW was due to break its week-

long silence and issue an update in the afternoon on the hunt for the pack’s remaining five wolves.

Since WDFW’s last update, emotions have risen. Hedrick said his family, which has grazed cattle in the Colville for 73 years, have been threatened.

“We’re getting death threats every day,” he said. “It’s very troubling. They call all day long, all night long.”

At the rally, Amaroq Weiss of the Center for Biological Diversity told the some 80 wolf advocates that nobody should be threatened.

“That has no place in this discussion at all,” she said afterward.

Weiss said WDFW’s policy of not providing more frequent updates on its wolf hunt has created an information void. “I think that’s a flaw with their protocol,” she said.

Efforts to obtain comment from the WDFW for this story were unsuccessful.

The information void has been filled, though with questionable accuracy. Washington State University issued a statement Wednesday repudiating comments by Robert Wielgus, the director of the university’s Large Carnivore Conservation. Wielgus told the Seattle Times that the Diamond M Ranch released cows “on top” of a wolf’s den.

The university called the comments “inaccurate and inappropriate” and that cows were turned out more than 4 miles from the den.

Hedrick said depredations are occurring over a large area and forcing cows from the high-elevation pastures they move toward in late summer.

“It’s completely disrupting our entire program,” he said. “The wolves are in an area 30 miles wide and 30, 40 miles long.”

Colville National Forest spokesman Franklin Pemberton said about 4,400 cow-calf pairs are grazing over 583,000 acres in the 1.1 million-acre forest.

Depredations have occurred on four grazing allotments in two watersheds, he said. “I think it’s safe to say there aren’t many places on the national forest where there aren’t wolves.”

Pemberton said the Forest Service went over grazing plans with the Diamond M Ranch owners, including Bill McIrvine, Hedrick’s uncle. WDFW also was involved in pre-grazing discussions about how to avoid conflicts, he said.

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Oregon farm supplier expands fertilizer capacity

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

ST. PAUL, Ore. — Though it’s certainly no metropolis, downtown St. Paul, Ore., isn’t always a convenient place to operate a fertilizer storage and blending facility.

Occasionally, the Marion Ag Service operation receives several night deliveries of fertilizer, waking nearby residents with trucks backing up and other loud noises.

“It would turn into a little mini-truck stop,” said John Hockett, the company’s vice president of sales.

The citizens of St. Paul will soon be able to sleep easy.

Marion Ag Service is building a massive 150,000-square-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

foot fertilizer facility on a rural highway more than five miles west of town. It is scheduled to open in December.

The facility marks a major expansion for the 40-year-old business.

Currently, the company

stores 1,000 tons of fertilizer in St. Paul and 3,000 tons at its plant north of Salem, Ore.

The new operation will be able to store 29,000 tons, more than seven times its current total capacity.

With Interstate 5 nearby and

a rail line passing right next to the facility, Marion Ag’s new plant will become a fertilizer hub for its operations as well as other farm suppliers in the region.

“When the season hits, the Willamette Valley doesn’t have enough storage. This will help take the pressure off the distribution system,” said Tom Wimmer, its chief operating officer.

Severe fertilizer price volatility in recent years has often discouraged farm suppliers from building up inventories — they’re afraid of being stuck with large stocks of expensive product when prices fall.

On the other hand, getting fertilizer delivered just in time to meet farmer demand is challenging, since they’re competing for railcars and trucks, Hockett said.

“If there’s that interruption in supply, then you’re not selling fertilizer,” he said.

Since the new facility will provide warehousing services for other fertilizer companies, including J.R. Simplot, Potash Corp. and International Raw Materials, Marion Ag Service won’t actually have to buy all the fertilizer needed to fill the plant’s capacity.

Marion Ag Service’s leaders aren’t disclosing the amount of money invested in the new facility, but they acknowledge the firm is making a multimillion-dollar bet on the health of the Willamette Valley’s farming industry. The company expects that as the costs of running a farm continue to increase, local growers will switch to more crops that generate higher returns, said Jeff Freeman, its director of marketing.

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