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Dairy/Livestock

Dairy installs double liner in its lagoon

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — A large dairy northwest of Sunnyside has double-lined the first of its storage lagoons in keeping with an agreement with environmentalists, neighbors and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But the owner of Cow Palace, Adam Dolsen, says double-lining is “complete overkill” and “an unreasonable standard” that could wreck the dairy industry if applied throughout the state.

“It’s not cost-effective at all. If this is the approach they want to take to put dairies out of business, they’re on the right track,” Dolsen said.

It’s the first lagoon to have a double synthetic liner with a leak detection system between the liners to ensure manure is not getting into groundwater.

Installing liners for 41 lagoons at four dairies was part of a 2015 settlement of lawsuits between the plaintiffs, Community Association for Restoration of the Environment and Center for Food Safety, and the defendant dairies Cow Palace, Bosma, Liberty and George DeRuyter & Sons.

The final number may be something less than 41 because some lagoons may be combined, Dolsen said. He is planning to double-line up to nine over four years, depending on how many he combines. The cost is roughly \$500,000 apiece for the lagoons that average 78,000 square feet and 6 million gallons capacity, he said.

“When all the lagoons are lined we expect to have more money into liners than we will have in both our milking



A worker rolls out the first of two 60 mil synthetic liners in a Cow Palace Dairy lagoon near Sunnyside, Wash., in early December.



A Cow Palace Dairy storage lagoon is rebuilt in early December near Sunnyside, Wash. The cloth layer is in the center, and the first synthetic liner is at the far left. The system is intended to detect and prevent any leaks.

barns. Cost-effective solutions is not part of the EPA’s vocabulary,” Dolsen said.

Higher costs put the four dairies at a competitive disadvantage and are causing them to fall behind on other upgrades, he said.

Cow Palace milks 7,200

cows per day, and the other dairies total about 10,000 cows, he said.

In a news release from the Western Environmental Law Center, CARE attorney Charlie Tebbutt commended Cow Palace for setting a standard that other large dairies or

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations “must follow.”

The law center faulted the state Department of Ecology for preparing to finalize a CAFO general permit that does not require double liners.

There are hundreds of unlined manure lagoons throughout the state with many in the Lower Yakima Valley and others in Western Washington adjacent to surface waters that feed Puget Sound, the law center said.

In the cases involving the four dairies, U.S. District Judge Thomas Rice found the lagoons were contributing to groundwater nitrate pollution, threatening public health.

The judge was saying USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service standards for lagoons aren’t high enough but he didn’t consider the natural filtration of nitrates when minor seepage occurs, Dolsen said.

“The NRCS standard is

the best design out there but it’s still designed to leak a very minimal amount,” Dolsen said. The industry knows manure is a good sealant and prevents leakage, he said.

In June, the EPA said improved field manure application and irrigation practices, managed by an EPA-approved agronomist, caused nitrogen levels to drop below the excessive 45 parts per million at 2 feet deep in 11 of 20 fields. Nitrogen levels at 26 groundwater monitor levels had not yet improved but the EPA said it believes they will in time.

The improved field management and improvements to solids screening is bringing down nitrates without double-lined lagoons, Dolsen said.

“The current lagoon system has never leaked to our knowledge. The claims that they leaked huge swimming pools worth of water are very misleading and not accurate,” he said.

Cow Palace’s lagoon was rebuilt to a 3-foot horizontal to 1-foot vertical slope, layered on the sides and bottom with 6 inches of sand and then covered with a fabric layer, Dolsen said. Next, the first 60 mil (.06 inches thick) liner went down, then a plastic netting to detect any possible leaks and then another 60 mil liner, he said. The liners went in the first full week of December.

The lagoons are ponds storing water until the right time of year when it can be applied as irrigation to fields, Dolsen said.

The water is rain and snow runoff plus some water from milking parlors that goes through centrifuges and solid separators to remove much of the nitrogen and phosphorous, he said.

Dairy
Markets
Lee Mielke



Market mixed as holidays approach

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Price strength returned to the CME the second week of December despite plenty of product making its way to Chicago.

The cheddar blocks, after three weeks of decline, closed Friday at \$1.80 per pound, up 9 cents on the week and 36 cents above a year ago.

The barrels closed at \$1.70, up 12 1/4-cents on the week, 25 cents above a year ago, but a larger than normal 10 cents below the blocks. Twenty-three cars of block traded hands on the week and 30 of barrel.

The blocks lost a penny Monday, as traders awaited Tuesday morning’s global auction and Tuesday afternoon’s November Milk Production report. They inched a half-cent lower Tuesday, to \$1.7850.

The barrels were down a penny and a half Monday and lost 3 cents Tuesday, dipping to \$1.6550, an unsustainable 13 cents below the blocks.

Spot butter, after dropping 12 cents the previous week, closed Friday at \$2.19 per pound, up 12 1/2-cents on the week and 13 cents above a year ago, with six cars sold on the week. The spot jumped 9 1/2 cents Friday morning alone.

The hot market was up another 5 3/4-cents Monday, hitting \$2.2475, the highest spot price since Aug. 15 but a cold front moved in Tuesday, dropping it 2 3/4-cents, to \$2.22 per pound.

Cash Grade A nonfat dry milk finished the week at \$1.02 per pound, 4 3/4-cents above the previous week and 24 cents above a year ago with 28 cars sold on the week.

The powder inched up a quarter-cent Monday but gave it back Tuesday.

U.S. production up

While global milk production is falling, that’s not the case in the U.S., thanks to increasing cow numbers and impressive gains per cow.

November output in the top 23 producing states totaled 16.1 billion pounds, up 2.6 percent from November 2015, according to USDA. The 50-state total, at 17.1 billion pounds, was up 2.4 percent. There were no revisions in the October report, which remained at 16.5 billion pounds, up 2.7 percent from October 2015.

November cow numbers in the 23 states totaled 8.67 million head, up 4,000 from October and 33,000 more than a year ago. Output per cow averaged 1,851 pounds, up 40 pounds from a year ago and the highest November output since the series began in 2003.

California topped its year-ago output for the second month in a row but barely, up 0.2 percent, despite a drop of 11,000 cows. Output per cow was up 15 pounds. Wisconsin was up 2.2 percent on a 45-pound gain per cow but cow numbers were down 3,000 head.

Texas raised eyebrows with the biggest gain, up 11.4 percent from a year ago, thanks to a whopping 28,000 more cows and a 90-pound gain per cow. Increased cow numbers spurred milk output in Michigan, up 5.3 percent, on 12,000 additional cows and output per cow up an impressive 50 pounds.

Idaho also milked 12,000 more cows, and got 30 pounds more per cow, pushing the state’s output up 3.6 percent.

Expert predicts Idaho dairy profitability in late 2017

By JOHN O’CONNELL
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — An industry expert expects a struggling Idaho dairy market will return to profitability in the second half of 2017, as excess inventories are exhausted.

“We still have high inventories of powdered milk and cheese globally, and we’re looking at U.S. inventories bumping up to near-record levels,” said Rick Naerebout, operations director with the Idaho Dairymen’s Association.

Naerebout said milk base prices should reach their five-year averages in the coming year. The base price of Class III milk, which is used for making cheese and represents the majority of Idaho’s production, is predicted to average \$16 per hundredweight in 2017. Class IV milk, used to produce butter and dehydrated milk, should average \$15 per hundredweight. Naere-



Dairy cows feed at Reed’s Dairy in Idaho Falls. The outlook in 2017 calls for a slow start to the year followed by an improved second half, according to an Idaho Dairymen’s Association expert.

bout said the Class IV category got a boost within the past year when McDonald’s restaurants started using butter rather than margarine on breakfast sandwiches.

The main factors he attributed to the improved dairy outlook are decreasing global production — including large reductions in the European Union and New Zealand — and decreasing

feed prices. In Europe, producers have reduced herd size after ramping up production too much following the removal of production quotas. It was exacerbated by the Russian embargo on Western dairy products, he said. New Zealand, a major milk supplier to Southeast Asia, decreased production in response to the softening of the Chinese economy.

Naerebout said feed prices initially dropped less than milk prices, but there’s been a recent market correction. Corn silage is expected to sell for \$30 per ton in the Magic Valley in 2017, which would be down a couple of dollars from this year, he said.

Doug Robison, a senior vice president at Northwest Farm Credit Services, predicts improvements in the dairy sector will eventually strengthen feed markets, as dairy producers are likely to replenish long-term feed supplies in the fourth quarter of 2017. Feed stocks are too abundant for much improvement to occur next year, he said. Robison also noted 40 percent of global dairy trade is with net oil exporters, so he believes a recent strengthening in oil prices should help the dairy market.

Contrary to the global production outlook, Idaho has continued a trend of steady production increases, Naer-

about said. Idaho dairymen had increased their herds by 5 to 7 percent annually before 2009, but have slowed herd growth to 2 to 3 percent since then.

Producers are also continually getting more milk from each cow, increasing output by about 2 percent per year through improvements in feed and genetics. The state’s dairy industry averages about 38 million pounds of milk production per day, and a 1 percent herd-size increase coupled with 2 percent efficiency gains would support a new processor the size of Chobani every three to four years, Naerebout explained. Fortunately, he said the state’s processing capacity has grown comparably with its milk supply.

“This (production increase) is at a lower rate of adding cows. It’s just amazing,” said University of Idaho agricultural economist Garth Taylor, adding that milk drives Idaho’s agricultural economy.

Beef economics workshop helps ranchers make right decision

WSU Extension offers tools for low cattle market

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Ranchers will be able to add more financial tools to their toolbox at a Washington State University Extension workshop on beef economics.

Pre-registration deadline for the workshop is Dec. 30. The workshop is 10 a.m. Jan. 6 in Moses Lake, Wash.

The beef herd economics workshop is part of WSU’s partnership with the University of Wyoming, where researchers developed computer-aided tools as part of a ranch management program. It includes tools for such business decisions as retaining

Online

<http://extension.wsu.edu/grant-adams/event/beef-herd-economics-seminar/>

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2725470>

calf ownership and the number of cattle to hold.

Cattle price volatility makes the workshop particularly useful, said Sarah Smith, regional specialist in animal sciences for WSU Extension in Grant and Adams counties.

“The cattle market doesn’t look like it’s going to see drastic improvement in 2017,” she said. “We’re still going to have a lot of supply and with the strength of our dollar and exports down, (ranchers are) trying to make decisions to move forward.”

Ranchers may try to hold

cattle in hopes of seeing a price improvement, Smith said, but they need help in determining whether they should.

“These cattle are in our herds for generations, so a decision we make today we might pay for two years from now with that next generation,” she said.

The workshop will help ranchers make the best decisions for their operations, Smith said.

“There can also be a lot of opportunities in these challenging times for people willing to make those tough decisions,” she said.

Registration is free because of a grant and support from WSU Extension and the Grant County Cattlemen’s Association. Contact Smith at smithsm@wsu.edu or 509-754-2011, ext. 4363.

Meter reader survives attack by two bulls

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A meter reader was expected to leave the hospital Thursday after surviving an attack by two bulls near Moses Lake, Wash.

The Grant County Public Utility District employee was hospitalized after she was gored by a bull Dec. 7, according to the county sheriff’s office.

The 54-year-old woman attempted to read a meter when she was attacked by two bulls, according to a sheriff’s office spokesman.

A neighbor rescued the victim, shooting and wounding both bulls to protect her. The neighbor helped the injured woman into his home and started first aid, said Kyle Foreman, public information officer for the sheriff’s office.

“The citizen’s actions would certainly be appropriate when trying to help save that person’s

life when being attacked by the two bulls,” Foreman said. “Once the bulls were shot, they backed off and the neighbor was able to go in.”

Sheriff’s animal control officers euthanized the bulls.

The victim had a severe leg wound. She was transported by ambulance to Samaritan Healthcare in Moses Lake.

According to the animal control officer’s report, the bulls’ owner will not face charges, Foreman said.

The case is closed, with the possibility of re-opening it later if necessary, Foreman said.

The value of the bulls is not known. One bull was a Guernsey. Both were dairy bulls, Foreman said.

Foreman called the situation “unusual.” The Moses Lake Fire Department responded to a public safety call “many years ago” in which another person had been injured by a bull.