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Dairy

Source of contamination in wells still unknown

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Officials in south-central Idaho still don't know the source of contamination in wells in Lincoln and Gooding counties but are retesting them to determine whether the water quality is improving.

Abundant snowfall, heavy rains and warm weather have caused widespread flooding across the region.

Last month, several wells

northwest of Shoshone began producing what officials describe as "green water."

Lincoln County Commissioner Cresley McConnell said, he "believes there are groundwater issues in northwestern Lincoln County."

The South Central Public Health District is sending its environmental health staff to Lincoln County to retest 16 wells previously tested by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

"We do not know the source or sources of the groundwater issues. But whether it is one source or 10, the groundwater is a serious concern and we need more information," Rene LeBlanc, director of the health district, said on Wednesday.

The wells being retested are in the advisory zone, an area of northwestern Lincoln County and northeastern Gooding County.

"Residents in the advisory

zone have been able to confirm the presence or absence of coliform and E. coli. However, no baseline bacterial count for most wells exists," LeBlanc said.

The previous tests provide a baseline that will help determine whether the suspected groundwater contamination is lessening, he said.

The tests will be processed by the Idaho Bureau of Labs and results should be available next week.

Officials of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture are investigating alleged discharges of wastewater from 4 Bros. Dairy north of Shoshone, which might have been a factor in the contamination.

With widespread flooding, the ag department is responding to calls, complaints and requests for technical assistance in the Magic and Treasure valleys, Chanel Tewalt, ISDA communications chief, told Capital Press last week.

Dairy Markets
Lee Mielke



Cheddar prices down fifth straight week

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Last week was another tough one for cheese prices. Chicago Mercantile block cheddar dropped the fifth week in a row, closing Friday at \$1.3850 per pound, down 9 1/2-cents on the week and 11 1/2-cents below a year ago.

The barrels ended at \$1.40, down 3 3/4-cents on the week and 7 cents below a year ago. Twelve carloads of block traded hands on the week and 33 of barrel.

The blocks lost 1 3/4-cents Monday as winter storm Stella attacked the Northeast, though New York was spared the large dump of snow that was expected. They inched up a quarter-cent Tuesday, to \$1.37, lowest since June 1, 2016.

The barrels were unchanged Monday and Tuesday but are at an inverted 3 cents above the blocks.

Midwestern cheesemakers report the flow of milk into cheese vats is not slowing, according to Dairy Market News. Cheese production remains active. Inventories are long.

Western contacts say consumption eased following the winter holidays and Super Bowl and buyers have been slow to return. Significant volumes of cheese exports have yet to materialize as U.S. cheese is facing stiff competition from European cheeses in some markets.

Cash butter saw some ups and downs and a Friday close of \$2.1625 per pound, unchanged on the week but 17 1/2-cents above a year ago.

The butter was unchanged Monday but had climbed by 1 3/4-cents Tuesday, to \$2.18.

Central producers continue to see plenty of cream. Butter sales are fair to strong. Spring orders have arrived and some report that demand is better than expected but inventories are building.

Western output is steady as cream is also readily available. Inventories are heavy and growing seasonally.

Spot Grade A nonfat dry milk closed Friday at 81 cents per pound, up a half-cent on the week and 6 cents above a year ago.

The powder inched a quarter-cent lower both Monday and Tuesday, slipping to 80 1/2-cents per pound.

Forecast raised

The Agriculture Department raised its 2017 milk production forecast for the second month in a row in its latest World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report "as milk cow numbers are expected to increase more rapidly. However, growth in milk per cow was reduced on January data."

2017 production and marketings were projected at 217.5 billion and 216.5 billion pounds, respectively, up 100 million pounds from last month. If realized, 2017 production would be up 5.1 billion pounds or 2.4 percent from 2016.

The Class III milk price forecast was raised as a higher forecast whey price more than outweighed the reduced cheese price. Look for the Class III price to be \$16.60-\$17.20 per hundredweight, up from the \$16.45-\$17.15 expected a month ago, and compares to \$14.87 in 2016 and \$15.80 in 2015.

The Class IV price forecast was lowered, reflecting a weaker nonfat dry milk price which more than offsets a higher forecast butter price. The Class IV will average \$14.85-\$15.55 per cwt., down from \$15.10-\$15.90 predicted last month, and compares to \$13.77 in 2016 and \$14.35 in 2015.

Dairy air debate centers on decade-old report

Relevance of 2008 task force recommendations disputed in hearing

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Proponents of legislation requiring new air regulations for Oregon dairies, Senate Bill 197, claim it merely implements recommendations from the 2008 Dairy Air Task Force, which was composed of agricultural and environmental representatives, among others.

Critics of the proposal argue the 2008 report didn't actually require any action and that emissions from dairies still aren't significant enough to justify new rule-making.

Lawmakers created the task force in 2007 as part of broader legislation aimed at clearing up inconsistencies in state and federal law regarding Clean Air Act requirements for agriculture.

The task force issued a report the following year recommending that Oregon's Environmental Quality Com-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

Cows are milked at Threemile Canyon Farms near Boardman, Ore. Oregon lawmakers are considering a bill requiring a new dairy air emissions program.

mission develop rules for a dairy air emissions program, which would initially be voluntary but become mandatory in 2015.

"Senate Bill 197 does not stray from those recommendations," said Ivan Maluski, policy director for Friends of Family Farmers, a group that supports the bill.

Members of the task force who now oppose SB 197 ini-

tially endorsed the 2008 report's findings when it was issued, said Kendra Kimbrauskas, CEO of the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project and a task force member.

"Nothing has been done to move forward with rules we all agreed to," she said at a March 9 hearing before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, a member of the task force, said it's part of the "mythology" of the 2008 report that it required EQC to develop dairy emission rules.

In reality, the report only recommended the dairy air program become mandatory if resources became available, she said.

Opponents of SB 197, including the Oregon Farm Bu-

Washington dairy industry touts safety training

House committee hears complaints

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A few hundred Washington dairy workers will receive safety training developed by two university professors, as the industry responds to an uptick of on-the-job injuries, a dairy official told a House committee Monday.

Dan Wood, executive director of the Washington State Dairy Federation, said the organization hopes to get funding from the state to expand the program beyond this spring and offer the training to all dairy workers.

"I think the biggest motive is nobody wants to have their workers injured or killed," Wood told the House Labor and Workplace Committee.

The committee held a work session on working conditions at dairies. Two farmworkers and representatives from the Washington State Labor Council and United Farm Workers complained about dangerous and unsanitary working conditions.

In tracking injuries, the state Department of Labor and Industries combines dair-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Sunnyside, Wash., residents Jose Gonzales, left, and Celso Gurrulla hold a Cesar Chavez banner after a House committee hearing on working conditions at dairies March 13 in Olympia. Members of an actors union, also on the Capitol Campus to talk to lawmakers, stopped for an improvised picture-taking session.

ies and cattle ranching in one category. The rate of 10.6 injuries per 100 workers since 2009 is almost double the rate for all workers.

Dairies and cattle ranching, however, do not make the list of top 25 most hazardous occupations. Dave Bonauto, a physician and researcher with L&I, said dairies and cattle ranching rank about 70th in injury rate out of 269 industries.

Wood said injuries de-

clined from 2009 to 2013 and then increased in 2014 and the first half of 2015. Figures for the last half of 2015 and 2016 are not yet compiled.

Wood said the industry wants to learn what's causing the injuries. The state dairy federation's annual meeting in November focused on safety, and more farmers attended, he said.

"I think everyone in the room agrees we want to decrease the overall rate of inju-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Members of the House Labor and Workplace Committee file past Washington State Dairy Federation executive director Dan Wood after a hearing on working conditions at dairies March 13 in Olympia.

ry," Wood said.

In the spring, the dairy federation hopes to introduce training funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and developed by New Mexico State professor Robert Hagevoort and University of Texas professor Dave Douphrate. The professors have been consultants to the Idaho Dairymen's Association.

Wood said he hoped about 340 workers will get the initial training. The dairy federation has applied for a state grant to train all dairy workers over two years. Wood estimated the program will cost less than \$200,000. There are about 3,000 workers involved

in milk production, according to the state Department of Agriculture.

Aspects of the training include moving around livestock, handling chemicals and operating heavy equipment.

Dairies operate under the same workplace rules as other agricultural operations. A bill to create a separate and more stringent set of rules failed to pass last year. The bill was not re-introduced this year.

According to L&I figures, workers are more likely to be injured in some other types of agriculture, such as poultry and egg production, and crop farming.

UFW organizer Indira Trejo said she hears complaints from dairy workers daily and that the dairy industry should be pressed to show safety training will help workers.

Wood and Dominique Damian, a Washington Farm Bureau safety director, told lawmakers that the dairy industry has long embraced safety. The Farm Bureau has had a program to reduce injuries in agriculture since 1984.

"I'm actually glad for the opportunity we had today. I think what we shared with them was very positive news about the dairy industry's efforts," Wood said after the meeting.

Chobani hires Nestle executive, Tim Brown, as president

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Chobani announced this week that it has hired Tim Brown as president and chief operating officer, reporting to Hamdi Ulukaya, founder, owner, CEO and chairman.

Brown, a Nestle executive, will oversee Chobani's operations, sales, marketing, legal and finance teams as the company looks to further increase its category leadership while continuing to deliver on its founding mission of making better food for more people, a company announcement stated.

"Tim and I clicked the moment we met. He's an amaz-



Tim Brown

ing leader with views and values I really respect and believe in," Ulukaya said.

"With his deep experience in consistently delivering quality growth, he's the perfect person to partner with me in continuing to lead the new wave of better food for more people. Chobani's in

a very strong position with greater potential than ever before, and now with Tim joining we'll grab it," he said.

"Joining a company like Chobani to partner with someone like Hamdi and this great team is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Brown said.

"I've been following Chobani for years as they have changed the food landscape in this country. I'm thrilled and honored to be coming aboard at a time of such momentum and incredible potential," he said.

Brown has more than 30 years of experience in the food business. Most recently at Nestle Waters North America, he led the third-larg-

est nonalcoholic beverage company by volume in the U.S. Overseeing a portfolio of brands including Perrier, San Pellegrino and Poland Spring, he was responsible for \$4.3 billion in annual net sales, supported by 8,500 employees, 29 plants and operations in more than 140 communities.

Chobani, which remains independently owned, has announced several product and production expansions in the past year.

In May 2016, it announced a \$100 million investment in its plant in Twin Falls, Idaho — the world's largest yogurt manufacturing facility — to meet demand for new and

existing products. On the heels of its Chobani "Flip" product success, Chobani also announced its expansion and investment beyond the yogurt aisle with the Drink Chobani beverage.

The company's market share of the overall spoonable yogurt category is currently 19.8, which translates into a 37.6 share of overall Greek yogurt. Sales growth percentage is up double digits year-over-year.

The company currently receives up to 5.5 million pounds of fresh milk daily from local farms in New York and Idaho and employs more than 2,000 people.