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Opinion

Editorial Board

Publisher
John Perry

Editor
Joe Beach

Managing Editor
Carl Sampson

opinions@capitalpress.com

Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

OUR VIEW

Wolf management idea makes sense

If one follows the wolf issue long enough, occasionally a nugget of common sense appears.

Such is the case with a recent suggestion the folks at the Washington State Department of Fish and wildlife offered. Speaking during a conference call with the state Wolf Advisory Group, WDFW wolf policy coordinator Donny Martorello offered this idea: that dead livestock be considered “qualifying” victims of wolves if the time, circumstance and location of their deaths parallel other confirmed depredations.

In other words, if a carcass is found near those of other wolf victims but scavengers have destroyed the evidence directly linking the attack to wolves, state wildlife managers could label it a



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife managers are offering an idea they believe would help them manage wolves more effectively.

“qualifying” attack.

Previously, such cases were considered “probable” attacks

and were not counted against a wolfpack. Under the Washington wolf plan, managers can kill only

wolves that are responsible for four confirmed depredations within a year.

While this may seem to be a bureaucratic splitting of hairs, it’s critically important for managing wolves. Under the new idea, if wolves are found to be responsible for four depredations, including any that are “qualifying,” managers could take steps to get rid of the wolves.

A study found wolfpacks that are thinned soon after attacking cattle or sheep get the message that attacking livestock is unacceptable. By including qualifying attacks, managers could act quicker to thin the ranks of wolves instead of waiting weeks or months for another confirmed depredation.

If managers thin a wolfpack after a long period of time, the wolves have no idea whether it is linked to a depredation, according to the study.

The idea is to manage wolves in a way that is both effective and assures ranchers and others that each step is effective.

That in itself is good reason for the department to adopt such a common sense rule.

It’s also something wolf managers in other states would do well to consider.

The state Wolf Advisory Group will discuss the idea during a March 29-30 meeting in Olympia. We urge the group to take a close look at it, as common sense can be a rare commodity when dealing with wolves.

OUR VIEW



The Janicki Omniprocessor prototype in Sedro-Woolley, Wash.

Courtesy of Janicki Bioenergy

New technology a game changer for dairy industry

Washington legislators last week were asked to invest in revolutionary technology that could distill cow manure into dry fertilizer and clean water, making polluted runoff from dairies a problem of the past.

To quote two legislators who heard the presentation, “Wow.” This could well be the innovation that takes care of huge physical and regulatory problems for the dairy industry.

Peter Janicki, CEO of Janicki Bioenergy in Sedro-Woolley, Wash., has worked with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to convert sewage into drinking water in developing countries. That technology works.

The prototype of the Janicki Omni Processor was put in operation in Dakar, Senegal, in 2015. It is designed to process 4,000 tons of

fecal waste a year. There’s a YouTube video that shows Bill Gates drinking water from the machine extracted minutes earlier from sewage sludge.

Now, there are differences between a human waste stream and what’s produced by the business end of a dairy cow. But Janicki says the basic technology can be adapted to the purpose.

“It makes the dairy farm a zero-discharge dairy,” he said. “You take the water coming out of the back end of the cow and feed it back into the front end of the cow. So there is nothing that ever leaves the barn.”

Janicki estimated that with \$2 million he could build and install equipment to showcase purifying the manure from a 1,000-cow dairy. He predicted the cost would quickly drop to as low as \$500,000 as the

technology is developed.

It sounds like a game changer to us. Whether Washington taxpayers will or should provide the development funding is open to debate. But if they don’t, someone will, eventually. Janicki’s machine is a huge opportunity that someone will exploit.

Our larger concern is that regulators give the technology a fair examination.

This technology is good news for the commercial dairy industry, and bad news for special interests that have been trying to shut down large-scale animal agriculture on the grounds that it’s bad for the environment.

Taking waste management issues off the table makes that a harder case to argue.

How farmers can help reduce famine

By PHILIPPA SOLOMON
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Philippa Solomon



One would have to have a heart of stone not to be moved by the image of the starving child that accompanied the editorial “The Face of Starvation” in the Capital Press (March 3, 2017). I share the editorial board’s conviction that we have an obligation to help the millions of people facing starvation and provide food aid immediately.

In 1965, economist Lester R. Brown worked with President Lyndon Johnson and organized the largest movement of grain between two countries in history. They saved India from famine. Brown’s memoir, “Breaking New Ground,” details the race against time and the willpower and ingenuity that it took to accomplish this feat.

How we help requires not only engagement of our hearts, but using our intelligence and the best information available to guide our actions. We are not only dealing with natural causes; as you correctly point out, the current famines are the result of war, drought and political corruption. The warming of our world also increases the duration and frequency of droughts and flooding, both of which destroy crops.

How can farmers in a wealthy nation like ours deal with and prevent famine around the world?

Opening our granaries and shipping food to stricken areas is not the singular ideal response to famines. Often the time required to send food halfway round the world means that it arrives too late, and local farmers frequently suffer severe economic losses from competition with lower priced or free grain shipped from the U.S., losses which are particularly harmful if shipments arrive at harvest time.

In the short term, aid agencies, such as the widely respected Oxfam, recommend sending cash assistance distributed directly to individuals. Oxfam’s humanitarian director, Nigel Timmins says, “If we act now with a massive injection of aid, backed with diplomatic clout and driven by the imperative to save lives, we can prevent a catastrophic loss of life. Without an urgent influx of cash, the humanitarian system will not be able to cope and many more people will die.” Government aid helps them buy food from areas close by without distorting the local food and commodity markets, which results in local farmers losing their land. For more information, please see <http://bit.ly/2mCX5OI>.

In the long term we also support the spread of improved cultivation techniques such as the system of rice intensification (SRI) and to reduce and manage the risks from warming of the global climate. It is the latter aspect of the security of the world food supply that I

am addressing in this discussion. To put the brakes on global warming, we must reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We can do this by (1) reducing our use of fossil fuels and (2) removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. If we are to adequately control CO₂ levels we will need to use both approaches simultaneously.

The Citizens’ Climate Lobby’s plan seeks to reduce our use of fossil fuels via a carbon fee and dividend. This, economists agree, will speed up our transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources over the next 50 years (see www.citizensclimatelobby.org).

Farmers can reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced, for example, by reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides derived from fossil fuels. We can also reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere by increasing the amount of organic matter in soil, which increases fertility and capacity to retain water as well as helping to sequester carbon.

Research on ways to increase soil health and soil carbon content is increasing and there are good examples of farms using these methods. What we lack are ways to speed up the application of this research to working farms, which often requires trial and error due to the wide variation in crops, climate, soils and cultivation methods.

Is there a way to encourage regenerative agriculture so that soil is built up by increasing the amount of organic matter (carbon), thus increasing the microbial content and the capacity to store water? How can we support farmers willing to work on improving soil health and cutting the CO₂ burden in our atmosphere? Can farmers take up this challenge and engage not only in discussion of storing more carbon in the soil, but in transitioning to a lower-till, lower-carbon future for agriculture?

Oxfam agrees with you. It states: “The world stands on the brink of an unprecedented four famines in 2017 due to a catastrophic failure of the global community to uphold its obligations to the world’s most vulnerable people.”

As you note, these people will become refugees and it is our moral duty to act now, as “Every minute, and every life, counts.” Thank you.

Philippa Solomon taught chemistry at Rutgers University and worked as a freelance editor of college science texts. She is a certified Rutgers New Jersey Environmental Steward, volunteered at the Cook College (Rutgers University) organic farm and is currently a volunteer with Citizens Climate Lobby.

Readers’ views

GMO tests were influenced

A recent letter about GMO tests left a few important things out. First, land grant universities were always fully funded. Then interestingly, decisions were made to not fully fund, and the chemical and seed corporations who would benefit stepped in immediately to “support” the universities. Conveniently, a win-win for them!

How frustrating when the funding was a drop in

the bucket to fund them compared to the ever growing demands of the military. There is plenty of money to kill but not to feed people.

Secondly, recently compared studies between independent versus corporate funded research showed corporate “scientific” funded results were almost always in favor of corporations, whereas independent results were substantially just the opposite. The famous French Seralini study showed mass tumors, liver and kidney toxicity,

and hormonal disturbances caused by GMO maize fed to rats. Leaked emails now show Monsanto had the study retracted by the editor, after the appointment of a former Monsanto employer ... to the editorial board.

There are literally hundreds of studies that bring into question the safety of GMOs on humans and animals. Instead of meetings to have open discussions, name calling and scare tactics occur from the corporations who are frightened of loss of profits. The EPA

accepts corporations’ own safety studies for approval to the general population. Kind of like the fox protecting the hen house, but on a far grander scale, just follow the money. Anyone who opposes gets dragged through the mud, name called, fired and vilified.

The power of these large chemical and seed corporations are indeed influencing the results of studies worldwide. To pretend otherwise is sheer nonsense and negligent thinking.

Carole Landt Reardan, Wash.