

Oregon

Bill would remove Oregon egg-grading requirement

Direct-to-consumer sales of ungraded eggs already common

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Eggs that haven't been graded for size or quality are commonly sold directly to consumers in Oregon, but the custom doesn't strictly adhere to state law.

Though the Oregon Department of Agriculture isn't likely to drop the regulatory hammer on ungraded eggs, proponents of farm-to-con-



Capital Press file photo

Under House Bill 3116, ungraded eggs could be sold at Oregon roadside stands, farmers' markets and other direct-marketing venues as long as they're labeled as such and are examined with a candling light for inner defects.

sumer marketing nonetheless want to reconcile the statute

with convention. Under House Bill 3116,

ungraded eggs could be sold at roadside stands, farmers' markets and other direct-marketing venues as long as they're labeled as such and are examined with a candling light for inner defects.

"This is closing the gap between the intent of the law with real world practice," said Lynne Miller, a small egg producer from Benton County, Ore., during a March 27 legislative hearing.

Ungraded eggs haven't caused food safety problems in Oregon and would still be subject to temperature controls and other regulations, said Rebecca Landis, policy adviser for the Oregon Farmers' Market Association.

Grading isn't required by federal law and grade standards developed for chicken eggs aren't applicable for farmers who sell duck or turkey eggs, she said.

Unless they're following very exacting recipes, consumers generally aren't troubled by the lack of uniformity in cartons of ungraded eggs, Landis said.

"The size differences are not considered a minus," she said.

The bill is intended to prevent a burden on small-scale egg producers, in light of the Oregon Department of Justice advising ODA that ungraded egg sales aren't currently allowed, said Rep. Pam Marsh,

D-Ashland, who sponsored HB 3116.

"It adds unnecessary complexity to the process," she said.

Enforcing the grading requirements isn't a priority for ODA, but HB 3116 would clarify state policy regarding egg sales, said Stephanie Page, the agency's food safety and animal health director.

Direct marketing is valuable for small and mid-sized farms in Oregon, which is among the top 10 states in farm-to-consumer sales, which generate about \$44 million annually, said Ivan Maluski, policy director for the Friends of Family Farmers nonprofit, citing USDA data.



Associated Press File

A helicopter prepares to apply pesticides. A bill in the Oregon Legislature would require 15 days advance notice if a timber company wants to apply pesticides to forestland.

Notification proposed for Oregon aerial pesticide spraying in forests

Opponents argue requirements are overly burdensome, unnecessary

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Proposed notification requirements for aerial pesticide sprays in Oregon forests are intended to enhance communication with neighbors, but opponents say they're unnecessarily onerous.

Timber companies would have to notify the Oregon Department of Forestry within 15 days of an aerial application under Senate Bill 892, then perform the operation within two days of the scheduled date.

Information about the operation, including which pesticides were applied and under what conditions, would also be submitted within five days of its completion.

The Oregon Department of Forestry would disseminate that information to interested neighbors through an online tracking system that's already being built by the agency.

Proponents argue the notification system would help neighbors anticipate pesticide sprays and improve the medical response if drifting chemicals harm them.

"I would argue their concern is real and legitimate," said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, sponsor of SB 892 and chairman of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, where the legislation is under review.

Several representatives of the timber industry testified against the bill at a March 23 hearing, arguing that such reporting would greatly complicate on-the-ground operations.

The Seneca Jones Timber Co. voluntarily notifies interested neighbors about expected pesticide sprays, but only about 12 percent of them request the information, said Ted Rice, a forester for the company. The remaining 88 percent of landowners are other timber companies that don't ask for the notifications.

"ODF would be tracking a whole lot of applications that, quite frankly, we're the only

ones who care about them," Rice said.

Because the right weather conditions for aerial spraying are often fleeting, timber companies would be forced to change the anticipated operation dates again and again, he said.

"That would cause more confusion and anxious neighbors than we really want," Rice said.

Barry Bushue, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau, noted that lawmakers had already created a "pesticide use reporting system" in the 1990s but then defunded the program in 2007.

Stakeholders involved in creating that original system agreed not to substantively alter it until the law sunsets in 2019, he said. "I'm concerned about re-inventing a well-thought-out and already workable wheel."

Proponents of SB 892 claim that off-site pesticide drift has exposed people in forested areas to hazardous chemicals and caused illnesses, which justifies better notification.

"Voluntary notification is not dependable and rural residents should not be left guessing whether a timber company will contact them," said Laurie Bernstein, who lives in Tiller, Ore.

Idaho honey production increased in 2016, but neighboring states dropped a bit

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Life was sweeter in Idaho in 2016 but took a dip in Oregon and Washington, according to honey production figures released by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

NASS said Idaho's 2016 honey production was 3.3 million pounds, about 16 percent more than 2015. Washington produced 2.9 million pounds, about 8 percent less than the previous year, and Oregon produced almost 2.6 million pounds, down 4 percent from



Dan Wheat/Capital Press File

A honeybee works apricot blossoms in an East Wenatchee, Wash., orchard.

2015.

The number of hives in all three states increased in 2016 over the previous year, but the yield — pounds of honey per

colony — decreased in Oregon and Washington.

Generally, beekeepers this year report continued problems with colony collapse disorder and illnesses caused by mites and parasites. Freezing weather over the winter didn't help matters.

Beekeeper Kathy Porter of Salem said colony collapse is particularly vexing. Research is continuing on the phenomenon, in which adult worker bees simply disappear from the hive.

"You can have a perfectly healthy hive, and go back two weeks later and there's not be

one in it," Porter said.

Here's the statistical breakdown from NASS:

- Idaho: 97,000 colonies producing an average of 34 pounds of honey per colony, selling at \$1.72 per pound. Total value \$5.7 million.

- Washington: 84,000 colonies yielding 35 pounds per colony, selling at \$1.88 per pound. Total value was \$5.5 million.

- Oregon: 74,000 colonies yielding 35 pounds per colony, selling at \$2.06 per pound. Total value was \$5.3 million.



Courtesy of ODFW

Wildlife managers say wolves attacked chickens and geese near Flora, Ore.

Wolves attack chickens, geese at rural NE Oregon residence

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Wolves killed at least eight chickens and a goose March 23 in a pack attack that left feathers, chicken parts and "hundreds" of wolf tracks around the site, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The flock owners told ODFW they heard wolf howls about 4 a.m. and later found piles of feathers and fresh

internal bird parts near their chicken hutch. According to ODFW, the owners reported they had 16 chickens and eight geese the evening of March 22 and were "missing 16 chickens and seven geese the next morning."

An ODFW investigator found hundreds of wolf tracks around the open chicken hutch entrance and at "feeding sites" that were marked by piles of feathers. ODFW identified parts from at least eight

of the chickens and one of the geese.

Data from a GPS tracking collar worn by OR-41, a wolf from the Shamrock Pack, showed it was about 300 yards from the attack site at 6 a.m. on March 23.

The attack happened in the Flora area, at the northern edge of Wallowa County. The Shamrock Pack previously injured a calf about 24 miles to the southeast in November 2016.

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