

Researchers refine diagnostic tool to quickly identify plant pathogen

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

A team of researchers has developed a method that speeds up diagnosis of crown gall disease, which can damage or kill valuable nursery stock, berry bushes, grape vines, roses, and nut and fruit trees.

The testing procedure marks a "huge step forward" in eventually allowing growers to test for crown gall on-site, providing results in about 30 minutes, said Jeff Chang, an associate professor at Oregon State University. Now, testing takes about 2.5 hours, with growers taking or sending plants to OSU's plant clinic for identification of diseases.

There is no cure for crown gall disease, but quicker, on-site confirmation of the pathogen's presence will allow growers to isolate, remove and destroy infected plants, potentially halting the spread of the disease.

"They can accelerate that (detection) process and save on how many plants they have to throw away," Chang said.

Crown gall is caused by a soil-borne bacteria called *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, which enters plants through plant tissue wounds caused by such things as pruning cuts, boring insects and freeze damage. The pathogen genetically modifies plant tissue, stimulating it to produce swollen knobs called galls.

The disease can kill young plants and disfigure nursery stock to the point that it can't be sold and



Courtesy Oregon State University

Swollen knobs on the stem of a woody plant are the sign of crown gall disease, which can kill or damage valuable nursery stock, fruit and nut trees, grapevines and other plants. An Oregon State University-Oregon State University research team developed a method for detecting the disease much more quickly than previous diagnostic tools.

must be thrown away.

The researchers, funded by a grant from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, developed molecular tools to diagnose crown gall.

Chang and post-doctoral researcher Elizabeth Savory co-wrote a report on the study. Skylar Fuller, a recent OSU graduate, designed the detection mechanism under Chang's and Savory's mentorship. Other collaborators were Alexandra Weisberg, also a post-doctoral researcher, and Melodie Putnam, the plant clinic director. The team used variations of gene sequences originally developed by OSU Professor Walt Ream.

Death of Oregon hemp bills considered 'mystery'

Hemp legislation dies despite lack of opposition or hefty price tag

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Bills that aimed to bring industrial hemp into the mainstream of Oregon agriculture have died despite lacking strong opposition or a hefty price tag.

Hemp seed could be tested for purity by Oregon State University under House Bill 2371, which would also have brought the crop under an official OSU research pilot program.

A new industrial hemp commission devoted to raising funds for research and promotion would have been created under House Bill 2372, similarly to several other Oregon agricultural products.

Both proposals unanimously passed the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee in April but then languished in the Joint Ways and Means Committee until the end of the 2017 legislative session.

"It's the biggest mystery I've ever bumped into in this building," said Rep. Carl Wilson, R-Grants Pass, the bills' chief sponsor.

The work of the Oregon Industrial Hemp Commis-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Hemp grows in a field in Oregon in this 2016 file photo. Two bills that would have brought industrial hemp into the mainstream of Oregon agriculture have died without explanation in the 2017 legislative session.

sion would have been paid by grower assessments, while the research and seed testing program would have "minimal impact" on OSU and an "indeterminate" cost for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which could charge fees to hemp farmers.

"There was zero opposition and some pretty substantial reasons why they should pass," said Matt Cyrus, a hemp grower from Deschutes County who lobbied for the legislation.

Oregon's hemp industry finds itself in a "slight gray area" under federal law, but HB 2371 would have brought OSU research activities into alignment with federal language in the 2014 Farm Bill, which allows some hemp production, he said.

"It was more of a techni-

cal housekeeping bill," Cyrus said. "It was a fairly important bill for the industry."

Without the proposal's approval, OSU will be constrained in communications and advice to hemp growers, said Jay Noller, head of the university's crop and soil science department.

The university can still conduct research without the bill, but it's not permitted to provide Extension services to hemp producers, he said.

"We're kind of hamstrung here," Noller said.

If HB 2371 had passed, ODA-registered hemp producers would have automatically become OSU research program participants, giving OSU greater leeway to work with them under federal law, he said.

"It means we'll be waiting

until things get cleaned up," Noller said.

When asked about the hemp bills' failure, the co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, said that fewer than "one-in-three bills were able to move through the committee and pass both chambers, due to time constraints and other factors."

Wilson, the bills' chief sponsor, said he met with leaders of the Ways and Means Committee, as well as Gov. Kate Brown, to explain the significance of the legislation.

"I am absolutely stunned by this development," Wilson said. "Everybody in this place knew what this was about and what it would do. I can't figure out who the enemy was."

While the industrial hemp commission would have been "nice to have," the statutory language changes in HB 2371 are imperative to bring Oregon's hemp industry in line with federal requirements, he said.

Wilson said he never received any feedback about why the latter bill shouldn't be passed and plans to reintroduce it in 2018.

"I plan to bring this one back," he said.

Courtney Moran, attorney and lobbyist for the Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association, said she was equally mystified by the bills' demise.

At a Portland farmers' market, a young entrepreneur makes his mark



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Cole Laube, 12, stands ready to greet berry buyers at the weekly Moreland Farmers' Market in Southeast Portland July 5. Cole's family operates Greens Bridge Gardens in Jefferson, Ore., and he is allowed to keep the proceeds from selling berries that he personally picked.

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Remember all that talk and worry about the next farmers? Who are they? Where are they coming from? How will we replace the retiring generation?

Relax. Kids such as Cole Laube are already taking charge.

Cole, who is 12, and his younger brother, Jake, 9, are the sons of Julie and Jason Laube, who operate Greens Bridge Gardens in Jefferson, Ore., about 60 miles south of Portland.

The parents grow berries, vegetables, pumpkins, silage corn, wheat, grass seed and more. They have a fruit and veggie stand at their farm, and also sell at farmers' markets in Salem, Beaverton, Lake Oswego, Lebanon and — every Wednesday — at the Moreland Market in Southeast Portland.

The boys are part of the family economy. Jake polished up some petrified wood pieces in a tumbler and sold them at one of the markets. Last week, Cole was helping his mom at

the Moreland Market as they sold raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, tayberries and a selection of vegetables.

Cole was keeping an especially keen eye on sales of Columbia Star blackberries. He marked containers filled with berries that he personally picked, and got to keep the proceeds from those sales. He estimated he's earned \$50 this season. His mom said the money goes into the bank, and there's a lesson in the arrangement.

"They go pick it, they can sell it," Julie Laube said. "There are a lot of ways for kids to make money. I'm not just going to give it to them."

The operation may require some negotiation in the future. The boys provide the picking labor, sure, but so far haven't been assessed a share of input costs and so on.

"Right now it's 100 percent profit," Julie Laube said.

Cole said he wants to be a berry grower when he grows up, and he's already showing an awareness of business practicalities. He chose to sell Columbia Star blackberries "because they're the biggest berries my dad grows" and quickly fill picking containers.

"And they're thornless," his mom added.



Courtesy U.S. Custom and Border Protection

A truck is greeted by a Mexican security guard in June 2016 as it leaves Mesa de Otay, Mexico, and crosses into the Cargo Pre-Inspection point at the Otay Mesa, Calif., port of entry.

9th Circuit rejects challenge to Mexican truck permits

Past dispute over Mexican trucks led to steep tariffs on farm goods

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

U.S. trucker groups have failed to convince a federal appeals court that Mexican trucks have been allowed into the U.S. in violation of administrative law.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that it lacks the power to overturn the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's permits for Mexico-based long-haul trucking companies to operate within the U.S.

In the past, disputes over Mexican trucks have blown back adversely on U.S. farmers when their goods were subject to steep retaliatory tariffs in Mexico.

Growers reported millions of dollars in lost sales of potatoes, Christmas trees, tree fruits and other crops before the tariffs were lifted in 2011, when Mexican trucks were most recently allowed into the U.S.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association claimed the FMCSA's permits were based on a faulty study on the

safety of Mexican trucking companies.

The study, which was a prerequisite for issuing such permits, was faulted in an internal government audit for basing its conclusions on an insufficient number of Mexican trucking firms.

However, the 9th Circuit has ruled that Congress didn't impose "any requirements of sample size or statistical validity" on the study's results, effectively meaning federal courts have no yardstick to gauge FMCSA's decision.

The U.S. trucker groups had argued that FMCSA's permits for Mexican firms were based on "arbitrary and capricious" reasoning, contrary to the Administrative Procedure Act.

"However, arbitrary and capricious review does not apply in the absence of a statutory benchmark against which to measure an agency's exercise of discretion," the 9th Circuit said.

The U.S. and Mexico have sparred over trucking issues for 35 years, going back to a 1982 law that blocked entry to trucks from Mexico because that country wasn't providing access to U.S. trucks.

The North American Free Trade Agreement was supposed to resolve the dispute, but the U.S. imposed conditions limiting where Mexican trucks can travel.

Those restrictions were lifted by the Bush administration in 2007 but were soon re-imposed when the Obama administration came into office.

As a result, Mexico slapped tariffs of up to 25 percent on \$2.4 billion worth of U.S. goods — including roughly 100 farm goods — until the U.S. again agreed to accept Mexican trucks in 2011, following the completion of a pilot program safety study.

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2013 CHEV MALIBU
VIN = 1G11B55A4DF197798
Amount due on lien \$3124.00
Reputed owner(s) JAVIER MARTINEZ AMERICREDIT FINANCIAL

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Amount due on lien \$2104.47
Reputed owner(s) BURTON BODDA
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