

Washington

State looks to reduce exporters' grain inspection fees

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Agriculture wants to reduce the grain inspection fee it charges exporters.

When exporters have grain inspected, how much they pay for the service is based on how much money is in the program's operating fund.

If the program's fund falls 10 percent below its six-month operating balance, a Tier 1 fee of 25 cents per metric ton is charged.

If the fund is 10 percent above the operating balance, a Tier 2 fee of 20 cents per metric ton is charged.

Under the proposed rule, if the balance hasn't changed in the past six to nine months, the state would charge a new



Port of Longview

An aerial view of the Export Grain Terminal at the Port of Longview, Wash., on the Columbia River. The Washington Department of Agriculture wants to adjust the fee it charges exporters for inspecting grain.

lower Tier 3 fee of 10 cents a metric ton, said Phil Garcia, grain inspection program manager.

The lower fee gives the department a more expeditious way to reduce its fund balance, he said.

Online

<http://bit.ly/2xgkoD0>

The fund's six-month operating balance must be maintained at a certain level. It is currently \$8 million, Garcia said.

In Washington the state Department of Agriculture inspects grain on behalf of the Federal Grain Inspection Service.

"We're a not-for-profit, so under our delegation with USDA, we've committed that we will not have an excess fund balance, that we will do our due diligence to make sure that we're making enough money just to do business," he said.

A public hearing on the

proposal was held Aug. 29 in Spokane, and another was planned for Aug. 30 at the Department of Agriculture in Olympia.

Garcia said he expected those people attending the hearings to support the lower fee.

Stakeholders reviewed the proposal through the grain advisory committee, Garcia said, and the state received positive feedback.

The Federal Grain Inspection Service also approved the change.

After public comment, the proposal would be adopted as a rule.

Garcia said there's no concern that exporters could wait for lower fees to buy wheat.

"We're kind of just a grain of salt in a big bag of salt

when it relates to the bill," he said. "We're talking about 66,000 metric tons per ship, and we do a ship in a day and a half."

The change does not affect domestic customers.

"There's not going to be an impact to the farmer," said Joe Bippert, program director for the Washington Grain Commission.

Farmers and grain elevators pay a fee of \$20 to \$25 per truck or container for grain inspection. That fee structure is not changing, Bippert said.

The commission supports the change, he said.

"We don't expect any problems with this, mainly because the existing fee at the highest rate remains unchanged," Bippert said.



Washington State Department of Agriculture

Washington State Department of Agriculture eradication coordinator Rian Wojahn, left, and entomologist Randy Taylor put down a tarp before removing gypsy moth egg masses found on a tree and in a bush Aug. 4 in Puyallup.

WSDA nips gypsy moth outbreak in the bush

Pest manager: Find saves millions

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture found more than 90 female gypsy moths laying eggs outside a Puyallup, Wash., home this month, averting what the department said could have been a long and expensive campaign to stop an infestation of the leaf-eating pest.

WSDA Pest Program Manager Jim Marra called the find extraordinary. The department has been on-guard for gypsy moths for more than 40 years, but had never spotted females in the act of laying hard-to-detect egg masses.

"To halt the egg-laying activity and remove this infestation before the caterpillars hatched likely saved our state from an extensive, multi-year eradication project that would have cost millions of dollars," he said.

WSDA routinely traps male gypsy moths, which fly into baited cardboard enclosures. European female gypsy moths, however, can't fly and are hidden while each lays up to 1,000 eggs. The caterpillars in the spring are highly destructive and feed on more than 300 species of trees and shrubs, according to the USDA.

Gypsy moths are entrenched in many counties in the East and Midwest, where the USDA

enforces a quarantine to keep the pest from spreading. So far, the USDA and state agriculture departments have kept gypsy moths from being established west of Wisconsin.

WSDA this summer put out nearly 30,000 scented gypsy moth traps statewide. As of Tuesday, 91 gypsy moths had been trapped, including more than 80 in Puyallup and Graham. WSDA put out a large number of traps in the neighborhood of Pierce County communities because two moths were caught there last summer.

The mass capture this year caused WSDA to begin searching for egg masses Aug. 1. Environmental education specialist Karla Salp checked an ornamental plum tree where a male moth had been trapped and uncovered the female moths laying eggs in a bush growing against the tree.

"That was a pretty astounding thing to find," she said.

WSDA checked the neighborhood but found no other female moths, Salp said.

WSDA removed the bush and egg masses. The residence is owned by a rental company and was vacant, Salp said.

The department probably will spray the area with a pesticide in the spring to kill emerging caterpillars, Salp said. Usually, WSDA sprays from the air to cover a large area, but that may not be necessary in this case, she said. "That's definitely a possibility. It could be a ground treatment, rather than an aerial treatment."

Foundation pledges \$1M to WSU wine science

RICHLAND, Wash. — The Wine Spectator Scholarship Foundation will donate \$1 million to the Washington State University Viticulture and Enology Program.

Wine Spectator is a print and online publication with approximately 3 million readers worldwide. It examines the world of wine from the vineyard to the table.

Half of the \$1 million will support build-out of the Life Science Teaching Laboratory at the Ste. Michelle Wine Estates WSU Wine Science Center. The facility, at the WSU Tri-Cities campus in Richland, is one of the most technologically advanced wine science centers in the world.

The other half of the donation will fund viticulture and enology student scholarships at \$100,000 per year for five years.

In recognition of the donation, the atrium at the center will be named "Wine Spectator Atrium."

"We are elated to have the support of such a pre-eminent authority on wine," said Kirk Schulz, WSU president.

"WSU has demonstrated a leadership position in wine education in the U.S. and we are therefore proud to recognize the university's high achievement with our commitment," said Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher, Wine Spectator.

— Dan Wheat

Wheat farmers show reporters farm-to-market chain

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

The Washington wheat industry showed members of the media wheat's path from the farm to markets overseas.

The state's wheat organizations hosted a tour Aug. 24, showing reporters a farm and malting barley harvest in Fairfield and the McCoy Grain Terminal outside Rosalia. Representatives from the state department of agriculture and Washington State University also talked about grain inspection and research.

The tour was designed to explain the process and give media an idea of who to contact if a problem arises, said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. Other agencies representing the industry are the Washington Grain Commission and Washington Wheat Foundation, she said.

Hennings wanted to showcase the diversity of wheat production across the state and clear up misperceptions.

Several upcoming topics



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Hector Castro, communications director for the Washington Department of Agriculture, and seventh-generation wheat farmer Jordan Green are all smiles listening to presentations while on a media tour hosted by the state's grain industry Aug. 24 in Fairfield, Wash.

of concern include funding research on low falling number test results, a starch problem that affects end-use quality, and the 2018 Farm Bill and the importance of maintaining federal crop insurance.

"One of the misconceptions on crop insurance is (farmers are) making money off of it," Hennings said. "That's not true — we are putting money into it to hopefully break even if we have a devastating crop.

It's one of our only risk management tools. Farmers cannot control the weather and what's beyond their control."

Marci Green, vice president of WAWG, and her husband, Lonnie, opened up their farm for the tour. Questions asked on the tour included the cost of their equipment, how the timing of this year's harvest compares to other harvests and ways to remain profitable when wheat prices are down.

The tour provided an opportunity "for them to have an understanding of what we do," Green said. "We are making an effort to take care of the land and provide a quality product. We are at the mercy of Mother Nature and government regulations. So when (reporters) are doing a story that's related to agriculture, they have a better understanding of whatever the issue is, how it's affecting agriculture."

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