

# Capital Press

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**“After harvest starts, within two to three weeks, I’m a thousand deep in test requests.”**

Anita Holman, Oregon State University faculty research assistant

# Passing the test

**Seed growers, researchers screen grass straw to protect livestock from fungus**



Straw bales sit in a field in the Willamette Valley in August.

Carl Sampson/Capital Press

By ALIYA HALL  
Capital Press

**C**ORVALLIS, Ore. — On a typical summer day, Anita Holman, an Oregon State University faculty research assistant, will have around 1,000 tall fescue or perennial rye grass samples waiting in the laboratory for her and 11 student workers to test.

Their goal: to check if there is a toxic level of endophytes in the grass straw.

“After harvest starts, within two to three weeks, I’m a thousand deep in test requests,” Holman said.

Holman works at the OSU Endophyte Service Laboratory, one of the few labs in the world that test for the poisonous alkaloids in endophytes. An endophyte is a fungus that can live within a grass plant. It helps protect the plant from drought and pests. But the same bioactive compound that keeps pests away can also be harmful to animals that eat too much of it.

Past problems with overdoses of endophyte sickening livestock have sparked a heightened awareness among grass seed growers about the importance of testing the straw byproduct of their seed production before using it for livestock feed. The industry has now reached a balance by working together to protect animals and keep customers happy, along with developing innovative new methods of controlling the toxin.

### Endophyte dangers

Three diseases are caused by endophyte alkaloids: ryegrass staggers, fescue toxicosis and ergot toxicosis. The ryegrass staggers cause muscle weakness, tremors and spasms in horses

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Aliya Hall/Capital Press  
Anita Holman, Oregon State University faculty research assistant, stands by the machine that generates the data a technician uses to calculate the amount of a specific alkaloid in a grass straw sample.

# Majority of Washington falls into drought

California, Oregon set August heat records

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

Washington’s hottest August on record worsened precipitation deficits, leading to more than half the state being classified Thursday as in “moderate drought,” according to climatologists.

California and Oregon also sweltered through record-hot Augusts, but they were wet compared to Washington. An unusual and persistent atmospheric condition off

the coast has blocked the Evergreen state from getting its normal summer splash of moist and cool air, Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said.

“I think we’re seeing it kind of fade away. I say that with some hesitancy because the atmosphere has a lot of tricks up its sleeves and doesn’t always play fair,” he said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Sept. 7 released its August review of U.S. weather, while the

U.S. Drought Monitor issued its weekly report on drought conditions.

Washington’s average temperature for the month was 5.2 degrees above normal, while Oregon’s was 5.9 degrees. California’s average temperature was 4.1 degrees above normal, tying August temperatures from 1967 and 2012. Idaho saw its 11th hottest August on record.

Some 19 percent of Idaho and 8 percent of California were in drought, little changed from the week before.

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Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington’s hottest August on record worsened precipitation deficits. California and Oregon also sweltered through record-hot Augusts, but they were wet compared to Washington.



Courtesy Washington Governor’s Office  
Washington Gov. Jay Inslee sits on a panel discussing climate change March 23 at the United Nations in New York.

# GOP invites Inslee to get into well issue

Senator to governor: Time to lead

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Senate Republicans pressed Washington Gov. Jay Inslee Tuesday to get more active in negotiating legislation to reopen rural parts of the state to well drilling, seizing on a new study that asserts the

state risks losing \$6.9 billion a year in economic activity.

Republicans said the report, commissioned by the Building Industry Association of Washington, was evidence they are right to refuse to pass a \$4 billion capital budget until Democrats agree to blunt the state

Supreme Court’s Hirst decision.

“Both bills are vital to our state,” according to a letter to Inslee signed by 21 senators. “However, rural families seeking to build a home on their property should take precedence over investment in government buildings. A real Hirst solution must come first.”

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