

Oregon winemakers are upbeat — as usual

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon's vineyard and winery operators are a famously optimistic bunch — even a terrible year for grapes would be described as "challenging" instead of bad. But with harvest in various stages determined by variety and geography, people in the industry acknowledge 2017 threw weather curves all season.

"That's agriculture," said Melissa Burr, director of winemaking at Stoller Family Estate in Dayton, Ore. "That's what we farm all year for. We'll be OK."

The winter and spring brought heavy rain, snow and even freezing temperatures to much of the state. Then came an usually hot and dry summer; even Portland went 57 consecutive days without rain. September brought a week of cold rain, followed by a glow of warm days, followed by clouds and drizzle or downpour again as the month faded. October? A little sun, a little rain...

Despite weather fluctuations, the season was marked by healthy vines, a good fruit set and moderate sugar levels in the grapes, said Burr, who



Courtesy Stoller Family Estate/CWK Photography

Melissa Burr, winemaker at Stoller Family Estate, said wine grapes appear to have endured wild weather swings this year without much problem. Pinot noir grapes, she said, are ranging up to 250 berries per cluster, when 150 is average.

is in her 14th harvest year at Stoller.

"There's a lot of balance out there," she said.

Pinot noir vines produced heavier clusters this year, she said. Pinot vines usually average about 150 berries per cluster, but this year range up to 250 berries per cluster, Burr said.

Some vineyards had a bit of sunburn during the long hot spell this past summer. At Forest Edge Vineyard south of Oregon City, on the east side of the Willamette Valley in the Cascade foothills,

grower and winemaker Ron Webb said he had to cut and drop some Pinot clusters due to sun damage. He and his wife, Jan Wallinder, also reported a heavier than usual fruit set this year.

In the Columbia River Gorge, grower and producer Brian McCormick noted another potential twist of 2017: Heavy, lingering smoke from wildfires, especially the Eagle Creek Fire in the Gorge.

McCormick, whose wines include the Memaloose and Idiot's Grace labels, said he hasn't noticed an acute fla-

Online

Willamette Valley harvest updates and "even playlists that are motivating staff with pump-up jams." <http://willamettewines.com/harvest/>

vor impact in early fermentations, but grapes have their own minds about such things.

The heavy smoke was like having cloudy skies during the last two weeks of ripening, he said, and judging ripeness can get tricky in such conditions.

"We're not going to know for awhile," McCormick said.

A roundup of vineyard and winery reports provided by the Oregon Wine Board indicates color and flavor are good, accompanied by generally lower sugar levels. Hot and dry weather meant that some regions, including the Willamette Valley, "needed some more time for the vines and fruit to recover and regain balance," OWB spokeswoman Sally Murdoch said by email. Southern Oregon vineyards began picking early because of heat spikes.

Murdoch based her report on vineyard websites and blogs, conversations and other communications.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington wildlife managers say the Smackout wolfpack hasn't killed any more cattle since two wolves were killed this summer.

Washington lifts kill order on Smackout Pack after two attack-free months

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife won't kill any more wolves from the Smackout Pack, because the predators haven't attacked any cattle for two months.

Under the state's wolf plan and protocols, department director Jim Unsworth can authorize "an incremental removal of wolves," said Donny Martorello, wolf policy lead for WDFW. That includes a period of active removal followed by a period to evaluate whether that action changed pack behavior.

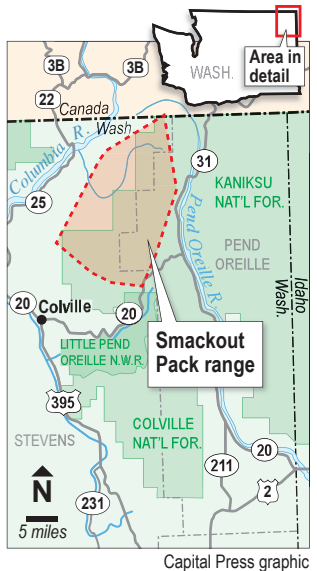
The department captured and euthanized two wolves from the pack July 20-30, and entered the evaluation period July 31.

"We were monitoring the movements of wolves and looking for proximity of wolves and livestock," Martorello said. "We were really trying to see, are these animals co-existing on the landscape without conflict?"

Several ranchers have livestock on federal grazing allotments in the area. They will begin to collect the cattle at the end of the month, Martorello said.

The three ranchers who experienced five documented losses to the Smackout Pack all met expectations for proactive and responsive measures to deter wolves, he said.

In early August, a rancher moved livestock from a



Capital Press graphic

fenced area to join other cows on open-range allotments. The department wanted to see if the wolves' behavior had changed, and did not detect any further depredations on livestock during that time. The department concluded the evaluation period Sept. 21.

The department will continue to monitor wolves and cows, Martorello said.

The state's 2011 wolf plan allows for killing problem wolves if four depredations occur in 10 months, or three in 30 days.

The department estimated 13 to 15 wolves in the pack before the two wolves were removed.

"That pack is still one of our larger packs in the state," Martorello said. "Knock on wood, it looks like the behaviors changed."

Department directors have authorized killing wolves four times in Washington, Martorello said. Members of the Wedge and Profanity Peak packs were killed, and one wolf in the Huckleberry pack was killed.

"This is the first time we were able to remove a couple animals (in) a fairly large pack and it looks as though we've changed that behavior," Martorello said. "It's encouraging that we haven't seen any more conflict."

Registration for high-demand WSU wheat academy opens Oct. 10

Agenda includes glyphosate-resistant weeds, historical climate data

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Drew Lyon has advice for farmers and crop consultants hoping to sign up for this Washington State University's Wheat Academy.

"Each year we've had the class fill up more quickly — the first year it took three

weeks, the second year it took 10 or 11 days and last year it only took eight days to fill," said Lyon, a WSU weed science professor. "If people are interested, they shouldn't dilly-dally."

Registration for WSU's annual academy opens at 8 a.m. Pacific Time Oct. 10. The program runs Dec. 12-13 on the WSU campus in Pullman, Wash.

"We try to bring the science behind the management recommendations we make to growers," Lyon said. "We try to have some hands-on in there so it's not all lecture."

Online

<http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/2017-wheat-academy/>

Lyon believes the program is in such demand because of the connection it provides the audience to researchers or WSU Extension representatives.

"I think it's a niche that kind of has been missing," he said.

Topics include developing glyphosate resistance in weeds such as Russian thistle, updates on wireworms, soil pH effects, planting oilseed

and companion crops and new tools and genetic improvement in wheat breeding.

New offerings include using historic climate information to make farming decisions, what wheat buyers want and how quality is determined.

Sessions are 90 minutes. The program has 12 topics. Participants will have time to attend 10 presentations, Lyon said.

The cost is \$75 for farmers and \$125 for crop consultants and ag industry members. The academy has 38 slots for industry and 37 for growers.

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