

Oregon

Old pest makes a return to Northwest fruit, nut trees

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Invasive, crop-damaging insects such as Spotted Wing Drosophila, Japanese Beetles and Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs cause alarm and get research attention, but the latest problem bug to emerge is a home-grown pest that hasn't been a factor for decades.

Researchers in Oregon and Washington say they're hearing reports of damage from Pacific Flatheaded Borers, a beetle that seeks out weakened plants and can kill young fruit and nut trees. Oregon State University staff recently found several damaged trees in its new cider apple nursery beds, which were planted as a research response to the increasing popularity of hard cider drinks.



Pacific Flatheaded Borer

Nik Wiman, an assistant professor and orchard specialist with OSU, said he knows of a young commercial cherry orchard that was hit hard and said the borers are a threat to "all those brand new hazelnut trees out there."

The damage to trees is caused by the beetle larvae, which bore into trees and chew "galleries" or "mines" between the bark and wood. They can "girdle" and kill a young tree by chewing their way all the way around it.

Wiman and others said borers are a difficult pest to work with because there are no traps or pheromones developed to attract them. Spraying for them is problematic because they spend much of their life sheltered under bark. They begin to emerge in late spring, but there doesn't seem to be a regular schedule for that.

To that end, Wiman is collecting infected wood from damaged trees, the idea being to rear larvae under controlled conditions and learn more about when adult beetles fly. "We want to get an emergence curve," he said. "We want a predictive model."

Flatheaded borers are not a new pest. Scientific literature on the borer dates to the 1930s or 1940s, but it hasn't been studied for decades, said Betsy Beers, a professor and entomologist at Washington State University's Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center in Wenatchee.

"We've seen so little of it here in Washington, I think most entomologists have forgotten about it," Beers said. "The ones I saw a couple of years ago were the first ones I'd seen in my professional career."

In that case, damage reports surfaced from tree nurseries in British Columbia. Washington State obtained borer larvae and reared them as a research project.

An OSU Extension publication from 1982 said the boring larvae almost always begin their work on the sunny side of a tree, and may bore 1 to 2 inches deep. If they tunnel all the way around, they can kill the tree or infested branches. Growers should look for darkened areas of bark and fine bits of sawdust low on the tree.

Adult borers are up to a half-inch long, with metallic copper-colored spots on their wings, according to the OSU publication.

The adults fly for three to five weeks and make a buzzing sound when flying, according to the publication. "They are active insects, and will quickly conceal themselves or fly away when approached. Being sunlovers, they are inactive and rarely seen on cloudy days," it said.

James LaBonte, an entomologist with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, said Flatheaded Borers and similar pests take advantage of trees damaged by equipment or weakened by sunburn, drought or even excess water. The act of planting can stress young trees as roots are disrupted, he said.

ODFW will collar coastal cougars

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon's cougar population is growing to the point that the big cats are dispersing into new territory in the state's Central Coast Range.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is hearing of more sightings and damage complaints along the coast, and will take a closer look at the problem by putting tracking collars on 10 adult cougars this fall.

The work will take place in the Alsea Wildlife Management Unit, which includes parts of Benton and Lincoln counties. Wildlife biologists have studied cougar home ranges, popula-



EO Media Group File
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists are studying the growing cougar population in Benton and Lincoln counties.

tion and diet in the Cascade Mountains and in Eastern Oregon, but not in the Coast Range.

Oregon has approximately 6,400 cougars, perhaps 40 to 50 times the number of wolves in the state. An estimated 950 cougars live in ODFW's Coast and North Cascades Zone, which includes the Alsea study area.

Department biologists will work with volunteer trackers who have hounds and will tree cougars in the study area. They'll be darted, immobilized and fitted with GPS tracking collars. Location data will be used to calculate the cougars' home range and habitat selection.

Researchers also will use specially trained dogs to find cougar scat, which will be analyzed for diet information, and to estimate the cougar population

size and density. Cougars primarily eat deer, elk and small mammals in the wild, but sometimes follow prey into developed areas. A recent Facebook post from a La Grande, Ore., resident said cougars had killed two deer in a yard across the street from her house.

ODFW spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy said cougar mortality numbers provide a reading on human-cougar conflict. She said 17 cougars were killed in the Alsea unit — the study area — in 2008. The number jumped to 35 in 2016 and 27 have been killed so far this year. The 2016 mortality figure includes 16 cougars killed for livestock depredation; the rest were shot by hunters or hit by vehicles.

Fire destroys barn belonging to Oregon Farm Bureau president

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

BORING, Ore. — A fire that destroyed a barn on the property of Oregon Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue may have been started by an electrical problem, but a fire inspector could not pinpoint the cause because the building was a complete loss.

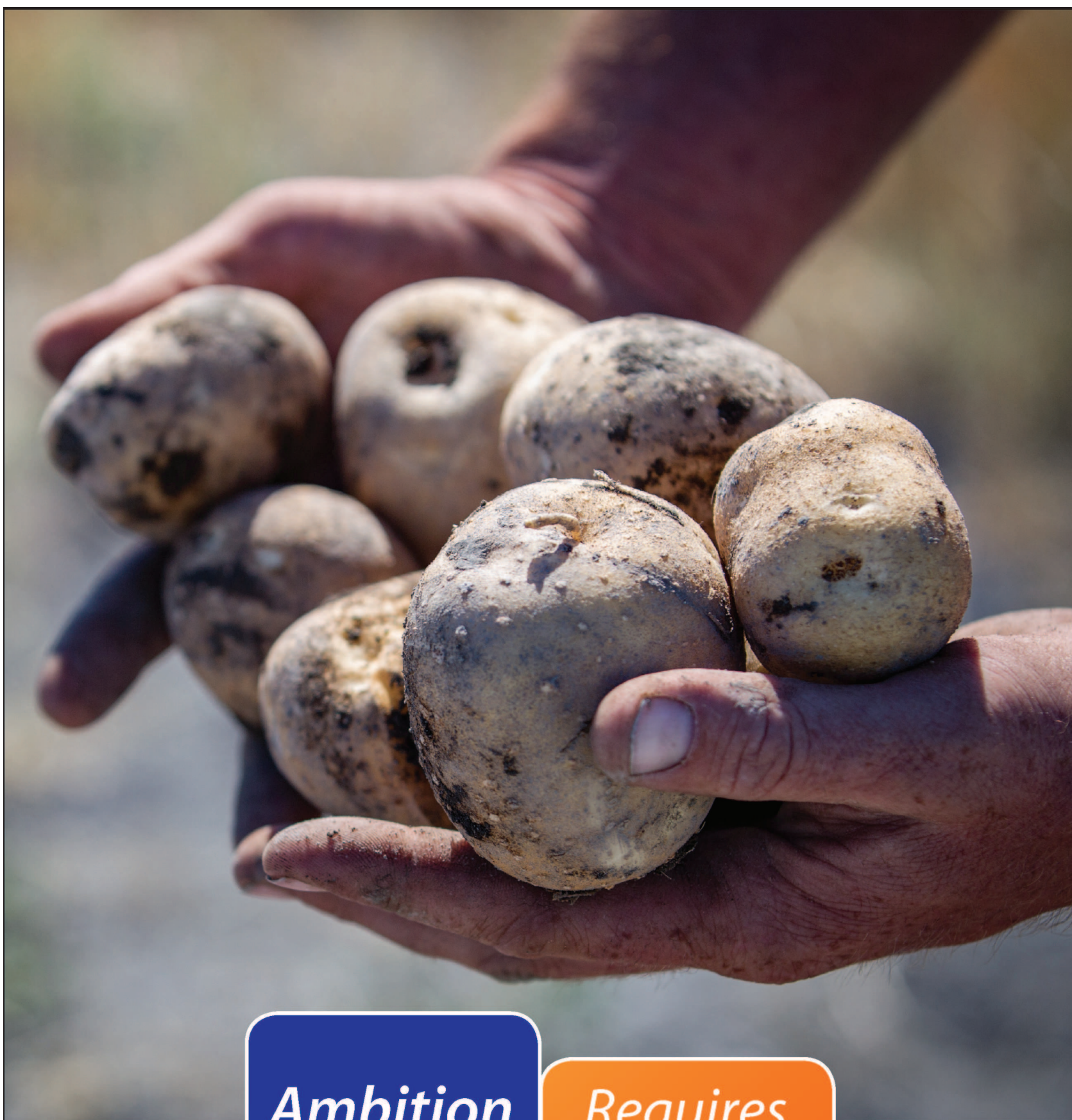
Clackamas Fire District #1 spokesman Steve Hoffeditz said the cause will be listed as "undetermined." The district estimated damage from the Oct. 26 fire at \$40,000 to the building and \$40,000 to the contents, which included equipment.

A passer-by saw the fire at Bushue Family Farm and reported it at 1:30 a.m., about the time the property owner awoke and did the same. Clackamas Fire, aided by firefighters from nearby Gresham, Ore., was able to confine the fire to the barn. No one was injured; the family was able to release goats that were in a corral next to the barn.

Bushue Family Farm grows berries and vegetables and at this time of year also has a pumpkin patch and hosts tours for schoolchildren. The farm resumed tours despite the fire. Barry Bushue could not be reached for comment.



Courtesy of Clackamas Fire District #1
Firefighters responded to an early morning barn fire at Bushue Family Farm in Boring, Ore. The fire destroyed the barn and shop equipment inside. The property is owned by Barry Bushue, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau.



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