

## People &amp; Places

## Dairyman overcomes challenges

Richard Hughes operates organic farm with unique water source

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press

BODEGA, Calif. — Many Californians in agriculture today have a laundry list of challenges facing them. Dairyman Richard Hughes has several, too.

“I think the biggest challenge facing the dairy industry today is the fact that there is an over-supply of milk, due to large dairies,” he said.

The excess supply tends to drive down milk prices, stressing many dairies, he said.

“However, I would advise anyone who is really interested in getting into the dairy industry today to ‘Follow your dream,’” he said.

Hughes’ dream began in 1964, when he and his wife, Marilyn, moved to Petaluma, Calif., where his parents had purchased a 25-acre farm, and started a dairy with them. As they were purchasing Guernsey cattle Hughes worked in creameries in the Bay Area.

During this time, they bought more cattle until Richard could dairy full-time. After two years there, the Hugheses were fortunate to find a dairy to buy in 1976. It is near the little town of Bodega, five miles from the ocean. “Our dairy is on 182



Richard and Marilyn Hughes hold a Jersey calf at their dairy, Westview Jerseys, near Bodega, Calif. Behind them is the 1.7 million-gallon rainwater catchment pond they built to collect and store water.

acres,” he said “We started here with the Holstein breed and when I was at nearing retirement age, Marilyn recommended we sell the Holsteins and buy Jerseys — or retire. The Holsteins were getting way too big.”

The Holsteins were also having large calves, which injured some of the cows, so they switched to Jerseys.

“We are so happy with these little cows,” Hughes said. “All of our animals are the Jersey breed for two reasons: Jerseys have more butterfat but are also a calmer breed than the Holsteins.”

Westview Jerseys, with 220 cows, now caters to the organic niche, so it does not compete against large conventional dairies.

They market their milk to the Straus Family Creamery in Marshall.

“The owner, Albert Straus, also has his own dairy so he knows how the dairy producers think and feel,” Hughes said.

Water is another challenge, and Hughes has built an answer to his need for it. About a year and a half ago, he put in a water catchment pond that catches the water from the barn roofs via a gutter system.

“We have had riparian water rights from the creek that goes through the bottom of our property,” he said. “With these rights, we were able to have plenty of water for the cows. However, the little town of Bodega also gets its water from the creek.”

With the catchment pond, he said, “we were able to not have to take water from the creek, so the town was able to have more.”

Hughes received the Luther Burbank Conservation Award from Sonoma County Farm Bureau last year for his dedication to the environment, said Steve Dutton, president of the county Farm Bureau.

“He is committed to bettering his dairy through both animal husbandry and land management,” Dutton said. “With endless ideas for conservation and how to be a better steward of his land, Richard sets a great example for others to follow.”

For Hughes, the dream



**Western Innovator**

**Richard Hughes**  
Occupation: Dairyman

**Family:** Wife, Marilyn and two children

**Hometown:** Bodega, Calif.

**Quote:** “Follow your dream.”

remains alive, but he warns that the business is not 9 to 5.

“I’m not talking here about someone who is going into the business by taking over a dairy that has been in the family for generations and is already established,” he said. “My family went into this business with a hope and a prayer. Never any days off because we could not, at that time, afford to have the hired help. Believe me, when I say you won’t be the ‘Big Boss’ overnight if you start from scratch.

“Remember that you will have debt — big debt — if you are starting from scratch. Don’t get yourself in over your head,” He said. “Work out the figures so that, after paying all your bills, you will have a little bit left in your checkbook.”

## Explosion of rats in Eugene linked to chickens, compost

By CHRISTIAN HILL  
The Register-Guard

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — In late 2016, Eugene resident Jim Kocher and his wife, Sally, began hearing strange knocking and pitter-patter sounds in the ceiling and walls of their home.

An exterminator quickly identified the culprits as rats and, over the course of six months, trapped about 10 of them. But after a year of lost sleep and increased anxiety, rodents still are running free somewhere inside their Friendly-area neighborhood home.

Kocher, who has owned his house for 30 years, said he’d never seen a rat inside his home before last year.

“We’re traumatized,” said Kocher, who estimated the couple has spent well over \$1,000 on pest control. “If we hear a sound in the middle of the night now, it’s just a horrible feeling.”

The Kochers are hardly alone.

About 100 people in the neighborhood in south-central Eugene have reported seeing or hearing rats in their homes

or around the neighborhood within the past few months.

In response, the neighborhood association has formed a group, known as the Rodent Action Team, or RAT, to coordinate efforts to best the pests.

“Rats have been present all along,” said Jason Blazar, a landscape ecologist who lives in the neighborhood and leads the group. “We hit this tipping point, and it’s kind of added up.”

Blazar and other neighbors say the problem is bigger than they can handle and are seeking help from City Hall. Eugene city councilors, at the request of Councilor Emily Semple, who represents the neighborhood, have agreed to have a discussion Monday night.

Residents “have been doing a good job with responding, but it’s too big,” Semple said.

The Friendly area isn’t unique. There are reports all over the city of an increased rat population, including along River Road, downtown and the northern and western neighborhoods of the city.

Rodents are well-known as carriers of infectious diseases.

Dr. Patrick Luedtke, Lane County’s health officer, said there has been no increase in reports of infectious diseases that can be traced to rats. They include bubonic plague, hantavirus, leptosporosis and rat-bite fever.

Humans can get these diseases if they are bitten by an infected rat or inhale or ingest microorganisms in the rat’s feces or urine.

“We’re not seeing that, which is good,” Luedtke said.

He added the risk of bubonic plague spreading in the community is theoretical.

“It certainly would be possible here, but it would be unlikely to happen.”

Lane County Public Health does not have a rodent eradication program.

Representatives of four local pest control companies told The Register-Guard last week that they’ve seen a marked increase in calls about rats over at least the past year. City officials also have noted a similar increase in public complaints about rodents.

“We’re seeing an explosion in the rat population,” said Ed Byerly, the owner of Oregon Pest Control.

The pest control representatives said that typically there is a spike in calls about rats with the onset of cold weather as rodents seek warm shelter. But Byerly said he received two calls a week about rats last summer, compared with one a month in a normal year.

Grant Williams, who owns Ultimate Pest Control, said he’s receiving three times more calls about rats than normal, and his supply ordering is barely keeping pace.

The representatives all identify as a primary culprit the prevalence of chicken coops, compost piles and backyard gardens around Eugene. They noted that weather and increased development also can be factors.

In 2013, city councilors relaxed regulations for urban farming. The change increased the number of chickens that a resident within city limits can have from two to six. In addition, a resident now can have up to six chicks.

Robin Morrison, branch manager for Bug Zapper Pest Control, said the chicken coops, compost piles and fall-rotting fruit are a magnet for rodents.

“That’s like a free buffet for rats,” he said.

Kocher, who has an enclosed compost bin, said there are open compost piles near his home.

Rats are prolific breeders, and they will spread out as the competition for food among a burgeoning rodent population grows. They also are adept at finding “chinks in the armor” of nearby houses, including a crack in the foundation or a hole in a crawl space vent, Williams said.

Byerly noted that a rat can fit through an opening the size of a quarter.

And once inside, rodents can create havoc, chewing on walls and wiring and urinating and defecating widely.

Steve Barron, who lives in the Gilham neighborhood in north Eugene, said he spotted his first rat in his garage in October. He has owned the house for 14 years, and the encounter was his first there.

He trapped one but kept seeing and hearing more of them, including one rodent that he observed scaling down the bicycle he hung from his ceiling like it was a jungle gym.

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**Thursday, Jan. 4**

Ag Tech Boot Camp. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Roy F. Christensen Building, Idaho State University campus, Pocatello, Idaho. Presenters will feature the latest innovations in crop and livestock production. Sponsored by University of Idaho Extension officials, private industry representatives and state commodity group leaders. Cost: \$30

**Friday-Wednesday Jan. 5-10**

2018 American Farm Bureau Federation Convention and IDEAG Trade Show. Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, 2800 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tenn. Celebrate the accomplishments of leaders in agriculture and witness powerful keynote speakers in the general sessions. Explore the IDEAG Trade Show floor to gain a stronger industry network, shop featured

products, learn about innovative technologies, and enjoy TED-style talks on the Cultivation Center stage. Website: <http://bit.ly/2iUS9t3>

**Wednesday, Jan. 10**

Developing or Expanding Your Farm Stand or Agritourism Operation, Part 3. 5-8 p.m. OSU Extension, Auditorium, SOREC, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Are you interested in developing or expanding a farm stand or agritourism operation? Jan. 10 is Accepting Food Stamps/SNAP/EBT at a Farm Stand or CSA and Feb. 6 is Starting a Farm Stand/Agritourism Operation. Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms>

**Wednesday-Friday Jan. 10-12**

Potato Expo 2018, 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Rosen Shingle Creek, 9939 Universal Blvd., Orlando, Florida. Over the last 10 years, the Potato Expo has gained the reputation as the best setting for conducting business and getting caught up on industry issues. Talk about new equipment, products, technology and innovations in the potato industry. Website: [potato-expo.com](http://potato-expo.com)

**Thursday-Friday Jan. 11-12**

Oregon Essential Oil Growers League Annual Conference. Sallis-

han Lodge, 7760 US-101, Gleneden Beach, Ore. This is the annual conference of the Oregon mint industry. Website: [oregonmint.org](http://oregonmint.org)

**Monday, Jan. 15**

Sheep Producer Workshop. Etchamendy Sheep Company, 24394 Highway 46, Wasco, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability by applying innovative management practices and technologies. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

**Tuesday, Jan. 16**

Soil Health Workshop. Emigh Livestock, 2838 Goose Haven Road, Suisun City, Calif. California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability by applying innovative management practices and technologies. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

Soil Health Workshop with Brendon Rockey & Steve Kenyon. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. The Gathering Place, 510 South Main, Three Forks, Mont. We have a number of great

presenters lined up throughout the week that will share their own experiences in building and maintaining soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2ZGUuZC>

**Wednesday, Jan. 17**

Sheep Producer Workshop. Chico State University Sheep Unit, 311 Nicholas C Shouten Lane, Chico, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

Soil Health Workshop Featuring Brendon Rockey & Wendy Taheri. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Holiday Inn, 1100 5th St. S, Great Falls, Mont. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2BpzYNT>

**Wednesday-Thursday Jan. 17-18**

Idaho Noxious Weed Conference. Riverside Hotel, 2900 W. Chinden Blvd. Boise, Idaho. A variety of presenters will offer information important to weed control. Website: [www.idahoweedcontrol.org](http://www.idahoweedcontrol.org)

**Thursday, Jan. 18**

Sheep Producer Workshop. UC Hopland Research and Extension

Center, 4070 University Road, Hopland, Calif. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

Soil Health Workshop Featuring Brendon Rockey & Steve Kenyon. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Big Horn Resort, 1801 Majestic Lane, Billings, Mont. We have a number of great presenters lined up throughout the week that will share their own experiences in building and maintaining soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2ZGUuZC>

**Friday, Jan. 19**

SAIF Agri-Business Banquet. 6-9 p.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. The SAIF Agri-Business Banquet is a celebration of the agricultural community and its impact on the mid-Willamette Valley. The Salem Area Chamber of Commerce prioritizes hosting this event along with title sponsor SAIF and presenting sponsor KeyBank because agriculture is a key part of Oregon’s economy. The banquet will feature guest speaker Steve Gilliland’s humor, inspiration and business insight. There will also be recognition of an outstanding FFA student for leadership in shaping the future of the agricultural industry. Website: <https://salemchamber.org/>

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## Index

Dairy ..... 11  
Livestock ..... 11  
Markets ..... 13  
Opinion ..... 6  
Wolves ..... 5

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