

Animal rights advocates square off over horse birth control

One group opposes use of contraceptive while another supports treatments

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

An animal rights group will be allowed to defend birth control for wild horses against a lawsuit by another animal rights group that opposes it.

Last year, the Friends of Animals nonprofit filed a complaint seeking to halt birth control treatments of wild horses with a contraceptive known as porcine zona pellucida, or PZP.

The lawsuit claims the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency violated federal

pesticide law by registering PZP for wild horses without fully examining adverse effects on the animals or their environment.

The Humane Society of the United States, an animal rights group that registered PZP birth control with the EPA, has now received permission from a federal judge to intervene in the case as a defendant.

The group said it's committed to birth control treatments because they're a more humane tool than "roundups, long-term main-



Larisa Bogardus/BLM

A 2015 gathering of wild horses from the Beatty Butte Management Area, adjacent to the Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge in southern Oregon. An animal rights organization has filed a lawsuit seeking to stop birth control treatments of wild horses on public land. Wild horses compete with cattle for grazing resources on rangeland.

tenance in holding facilities, euthanasia or slaughter."

Simply removing wild horses from the range doesn't stop high population growth rates while using PZP reduces the need for roundups over time, accord-

ing to HSUS.

On Maryland's Assateague Island, for example, the hazardous horse gatherings have been ended entirely due to birth control, the group said.

Friends of Animals, on the other hand, claims that PZP raises the odds that females will give birth during the wrong season by disrupting their reproductive cycle, which endangers foals due to inadequate food sources.

Repeated use of the contraceptive may also lead to permanent infertility in mares, according to Friends of Animals.

The plaintiff wants EPA to suspend registration of PZP — effectively ceasing its use

— until the substance's toxicity and ecological effects are better understood.

Friends of Animals alleges that studies submitted to the federal government by HSUS weren't sufficiently thorough.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Patricia Sullivan in Pendleton, Ore., has ruled that HSUS has a "protectable interest" in the lawsuit, as it would be negatively affected by PZP's cancellation or the need for additional scientific review.

Also, since the EPA's interests in the case may diverge from those of HSUS, the nonprofit should be allowed to intervene in the case, Sullivan said.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Brian Blake, D-Aberdeen, listens to testimony Jan. 31 in Olympia on a bill to redistribute wolves within the state. Blake opposes relocating wolves to unoccupied regions, but let the bill through his committee, saying current state policy is unfair to northeast Washington.

House committee OKs bill to move wolves

'No' votes from rural lawmakers

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Legislation directing the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to move wolves from east to west passed the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Feb. 1.

The bill, sponsored by northeast Washington Rep. Joel Kretz, was supported by urban lawmakers, but was opposed by Western Washington legislators whose rural districts would be candidates for receiving wolves.

"This is a difficult one for me. I may be a lone wolf on this one and be a 'no' vote. I understand why the bill is needed, and I think it's going to pass here today, and so let's call the roll," said committee chairman Brian Blake, D-Aberdeen.

The committee voted 12-3 to recommend the House approve the bill. Two Republicans who also represent rural southwest Washington cast the other "no" votes.

House Bill 2771 declares that the eastern one-third of Washington has a host of thriving wolfpacks and urgently needs relief. Under the bill, WDFW would start a scientific review to move wolves to suitable regions unoccupied by wolves.

A review could take several years. The department would be required to report to the Legislature on its progress by the end of 2020.

Wolves are well established in northeast Washing-

ton and are showing signs of migrating toward the North Cascades. Wildlife managers also expect wolves to colonize the South Cascades, though WDFW has yet to document a pack in that region.

Wolves are a state-protected species and under current law will be until they are re-producing at least as far west as the Cascades.

Redistributing wolves within the state is an option to spur recovery, according to the state's wolf plan. WDFW, however, says it expects wolves will disperse without help.

Kretz, whose expansive district has a majority of the state's wolves, said he was more concerned about immediately taking pressure off his constituents, particularly ranchers.

"I appreciate people working with me on this," he said.

Although against relocating wolves, Blake said the state's wolf policy is unfair to northeast Washington. "We do have to deal with this," he said.

The vote itself was highly unusual. Committee chairmen rarely allow votes on bills they oppose.

The Washington Farm Bureau and Washington Cattlemen's Association supported the bill at an earlier hearing.

"It is an urgent, dire situation in northeast Washington," the Farm Bureau's director of government relations Tom Davis said, testifying on behalf of both organizations.

WDFW has culled wolfpacks five times since 2012 to stop chronic attacks on livestock.

WSU Bread Lab receives \$1.5 million endowment

Organic grain research funded

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Washington State University's Bread Lab in Mount Vernon has received a \$1.5 million endowment from Clif Bar & Company, King Arthur Flour Co. and 11 other donors to fund research on growing organic grains.

The endowment will generate at least \$60,000 a year, the lab's director, Stephen Jones, said.

"We already have organic research. This helps support that," he said. "This allows us to have a stable funding source. After I'm gone, the money is still there."

The Bread Lab conducts research on breeding wheat, barley, buckwheat and other small grains for baking and malting. The lab includes the King Arthur Flour Baking School.

Clif Bar contributed \$850,000 and King Arthur Flour contributed \$500,000



Washington State University

Kim Binczewski, managing director of the Bread Lab at Washington State University's research station in Mount Vernon, makes whole wheat scones. The Bread Lab has received a \$1.5 million endowment to conduct research on organic grain.

to the endowment. Nine individuals and two organizations contributed \$150,000.

"The Bread Lab serves as a model for other regions of rural America to replicate," said Matthew Dillon, Clif Bar senior director of agri-

cultural policy and programs, in a written statement.

Jones said the money will help the lab assist farmers interested in growing organic grains.

"In general, there is not enough organic wheat to fill

the demand in the country," Jones said.

Western Washington is well positioned to supply organic grains, he said. Grains grow well in the moist soil and can be planted in rotation with other crops, he said.

USDA delays federal milk marketing order for California

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

California dairymen will have to wait even longer to see where things stand on joining the federal milk marketing order system.

USDA has announced it is pausing those proceedings while it awaits the outcome of an unrelated U.S. Supreme Court case, which could call into question the appointment of USDA's administrative law judge presiding over the FMMO proceedings.

That case, Lucia v. Securities and Exchange Commission, will determine whether administrative law judges appointed by federal agencies are employees of the agencies or "inferior officers" of the government. Inferior officers are subject to the appointment clause in the Constitution and must be appointed by the president, a department head or a court.

USDA has worked under the assumption that its administrative law judges are employees. Depending on the court's decision, the agency might be required to make some changes. It is delaying the process to preserve the integrity of the proceedings, said a spokesman for the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

The court is expected to render a decision on or before the end of its term on June 30.

The news is a double whammy for California dairy farmers, who were just



Capital Press File

Cows are milked at VanderWoude Dairy near Merced, Calif. The USDA has delayed a federal milk marketing order for California pending the outcome of an unrelated court case.

denied a hearing on increasing milk prices by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, which cited the pending federal order.

Producers have been awaiting a final decision by USDA on a California FMMO, hoping to bring their milk prices up to par with other major milk-producing states.

"We need to get USDA's final decision for a California FMMO out and its fate into the hands of producers who are suffering under the uncertainty the delay in this process is creating," said Annie AcMoody, director of economic policy for Western United Dairywomen.

"This delay is very disappointing because it seems neither government agency will be able (USDA) or willing (CDFA) to assist struggling California

dairy families soon," she said.

California Dairy Campaign and Milk Producers Council are likewise disappointed by the delay.

"We're really disheartened by it; we thought we were pretty close to getting a final decision," said Lynne McBride, CDC executive director.

Dairy producers want to move ahead with the process. It's disappointing that the industry will now have to sit back until an unrelated court case is decided, given the current economic situation. Milk prices are \$13 a hundredweight, and cost of production is \$18, she said.

"Dairywomen are incurring really significant losses and questioning how long they can stay in business," she said.

Geoff Vandenhuevel, MPC board member and economic consultant, said he thinks USDA is being overly cautious in delaying the process.

"It's a disappointment. We're ready to go, and I think USDA is ready to go. You hate to see the lawyers hold it up," he said.

He doesn't see any similarity between the court case and USDA's process. In that case, the SEC administrative law judge levied an enforcement action and the other side is trying to get out of it with the appointment issue, he said.

It's hard to imagine how that applies to the California FMMO, where the administrative law judge only gathered information and doesn't make any decisions, he said.

Upcoming Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training

Oregon
Department of Agriculture

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?
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Cost to attend: \$25

To register, visit: producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu or contact Sue Davis at sdavis@oda.state.or.us
503-807-5864

Funding for these trainings was made possible by Grant Number 1U18FD005889-01 from the FDA.

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