

McLeod Family: Farming for more than 100 years

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press



Justin McLeod

Justin McLeod has been farming near Nez Perce, Idaho, for about a dozen years.

"This was a century farm that's been in our family a long time, but when I came back to the farm my dad and my uncle were farming it together," he said.

"I started buying out my uncle's share, and my dad and I have been farming for about 10 years. Last year my dad retired, so now it's just myself and my wife, Polley. We also own a title company, and she is the president of that company."

McLeod does most of the farming himself, with help from two part-time employees who work for him through most of the year.

Currently the main seed crops on the farm are fall wheat and bluegrass. Rotational crops have included lentils, peas, garbanzo beans and canola. The legumes add fertility to the soil between seed crops.

"We used to grow quite a bit of canola but the price has not been very good lately; we haven't grown canola

for the past two years," McLeod said.

The grass seed he grows is purchased by Jacklin Seed, a subsidiary of Simplot. This seed company supplies a full line of turf grass varieties for lawns and golf courses. Markets for Kentucky bluegrass seed have been very good lately, with the growth in the housing industry and overseas markets.

"I think the market will be good again this year, but there are some indications that it will soften after that," he said.

The grass seed is harvested a little differently than cutting the fields for hay or grain. "We swath and then combine it. At first we used our regular combines and just put pick-up headers on them to pick up the rows of grass, and set the combines a little differently. The main difference is that we don't use our regular semi-trucks. Instead we use semi vans that have been converted for hauling seed, with

the tops taken off them. We dump into those, for hauling the seed to the cleaner," McLeod said.

Seed has to be clean and weed-free. It is certified through the Idaho Crop Improvement Association.

McLeod has been growing grass seed his whole farming career, and his father and uncle grew seed for 30 years before that.

"This is all high-end grass seed that goes to golf courses, horse farms — for paddocks that get a lot of wear and tear — and lawns." These are durable turf varieties that can handle a lot of pressure and not get beat out by heavy use.

McLeod and his wife have three boys ages 7, 9 and 11.

"They are still too young to help much, but they all enjoy riding on the equipment and would like to drive it. They have lots of ambition right now, and don't mind going out to help pick rock and other chores."

Family farms in this region just keep growing larger to survive.

"To stay competitive, the reality is to get bigger, but it's challenging with the price of land," he said.

SPEAR RANCH

FREE STANDING PANELS

The Last Panel You Will EVER Need To Buy!



24 Ft Long HEAVY DUTY

- **STANDARD 4-ROD -\$400**
- **DELUXE 5-ROD -\$435**
- **STANDARD PANEL W/GATE -\$435**
- **DELUXE PANEL W/GATE -\$470**



Easy To Move Around with a Loader Tractor or Skid Steer

- **CORRALS • FEEDLOTS • SHIPPING PENS**
- **ARENAS • SORTING ALLEYS • CALVING FACILITIES**

S19-3/104

Cell: 509.429.0760

Office: 509.223.3010

Call Bart Spear Today!

www.spearranch.com

LOOMIS, WA

CHOOSE FROM 50 TILTS

IN STOCK PLUS

- **Dumps • Enclosed**
- **Utilities**
- **Car Haulers**
- **Flat Beds**
- **Stock Trailers**



From PJ, Great Northern, Iron Panther, M.H. EBY, Banans, Others

Diamond



Trailer Sales

Halsey, OR

Your All Service Dealer

CALL 541-369-2755 OR 541-740-5135 OR 541-953-7548

VIEW OUR INVENTORY: diamondksales.com



TRUCK BEDS
starting at \$2,400

S19-1/100