

New beef campaign highlights animal care

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Consumers today want to know how and where their food is raised, and a new campaign funded by the Beef Checkoff intends to give them the inside story on beef.

The campaign focuses on putting the industry’s Beef Quality Assurance program front and center with consumers. The voluntary program trains and certifies cattle producers on best management practices for animal care, addressing cattle handling, health, nutrition and transportation.

BQA is a rancher-led educational program to promote animal-care practices based in science and aligned with governmental regulations.

It began more than 30 years ago with ranchers, veterinarians, nutritionists and animal scientists focusing on how to up the game to yield better quality beef, said Josh White, executive director of producer education at National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff.

“BQA has achieved really



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

Cattlemen are promoting how they raise cattle under the Beef Quality Assurance program.

good results,” he said.

Those results are more beef grading prime and choice and less defects, he said.

Prime and choice are the highest USDA grades of beef, and more than 80% of U.S. beef today hits that mark.

The new campaign is “a great way to brag on the program,” he said.

It’s also a way to congratulate cattle producers on that success, he said.

More than 85% of beef produced in the U.S. comes from farmers and ranch-

ers who are BQA certified, according to the Beef Checkoff.

Research shows consumers are particularly concerned with animal welfare, and BQA has a strong theme of animal welfare, he said.

The campaign is taking the formerly producer-facing program to consumers, and limited marketing research on BQA showed it resonated really well with consumers, he said.

“The BQA program offers consumers assurance that there are consistent animal-care standards in place

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across the beef industry,” he said.

It exemplifies farmers’ and ranchers’ commitment to caring for their animals and providing families with the safest and highest-quality beef possible, he said.

The BQA push is part of the “Beef. It’s What’s for Dinner” campaign, which relaunched two years ago with the Rethink the Ranch effort, Hillary Makens, NCBA director of media relations, said.

The new initiative is a full marketing campaign that includes videos of how beef is raised on farms and ranches across the country. It will also be promoted on Hulu and other connected devices and will allow consumers to learn more and get their questions answered through interactive “BQ&A” Instagram stories, she said.

Court halts BLM sage grouse revisions

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The Bureau of Land Management’s 2019 Sage Grouse Plan Amendments in seven Western states are on hold following a ruling Wednesday by a federal judge in Idaho.

U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winnill granted a preliminary injunction enjoining the agency from implementing those plan amendments in Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Northeastern California and Oregon.

The environmental law firm Advocates for the West filed the motion for a preliminary injunction in April on behalf of Western Watersheds Project, the Center for Biological Diversity, WildEarth Guardians and Prairie Hills Audubon Society, which sued the Department of Interior and BLM in March.

The 2019 amendments revised the 2015 Obama-era amendments to sage grouse resource management plans and went into effect in March 2019.

The amendments came at the requests of western governors to better meet the needs of their states and to align federal conservation with state initiatives to conserve the species.

The plaintiffs allege BLM failed to make a rangewide analysis and evaluate climate change impacts and removed protections for sage grouse, a move that was unjustified by science or conditions on the ground.

Winnill granted the injunction, stating the plaintiffs were likely to succeed in their case because BLM failed to consider reasonable alternatives other than management alignment with states, failed to take a hard look at the environmental consequences when

it ignored comments from Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and failed to consider cumulative impacts over the entire sage grouse range.

The environmental groups said the 2019 plans would allow expanded drilling, mining, grazing and other activities across 51 million acres of sage grouse habitat.

BLM “deliberately undermined protections for the sage grouse then had the audacity to claim these roll-backs would not impact the species,” Sarah Stellberg, an attorney with Advocates for the West, said.

Livestock producers, however, had hailed the plans as a more workable solution than the 2015 plans.

The revisions addressed problems with habitat objectives such as grass height requirements that inappropriately reduced grazing compared with the resources, Ethan Lane, executive director of the Public Lands Council and senior director of federal lands for National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, said in an earlier interview with Capital Press.

Lane is now NCBA’s vice president of government affairs.

The earlier federal plans resulted in lands that hadn’t been grazed enough, resulting in too much fuel for large wildfires, which destroy sage grouse habitat, he said.

In addition, the amendments would improve conservation because they better align with state plans, which are working, he said.

PLC and NCBA issued statements on Wednesday.

“The claims lodged by the plaintiffs are not based in science,” Bob Skinner, PLC president, said.

Madsen named WSU’s new oilseeds agronomist

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

When Isaac Madsen helped plant spring canola variety trials earlier this year, he had no idea he’d later be taking on a leadership role.

Madsen began Sept. 1 as Washington State University’s new oilseed cropping systems extension agronomist, based in Pullman.

“I had worked really closely with everybody on the team,” he said. “Either way, even if I hadn’t gotten the position, I would be helping somebody else transition into it.”

He replaces Karen Sowers, who departed to work as executive director of the Pacific Northwest Canola Association.

“Isaac’s involvement with the Washington Oilseeds Cropping Systems project as a grad student and post-doc

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are a definite bonus for transitioning in to the extension agronomist position,” Sowers told the Capital Press. “He is well-connected in the ag and canola community and I am confident he will be a great asset to the WOCS project in the coming years.”

Madsen said his position is primarily extension, but now includes research and teaching responsibilities.

Madsen would particularly like to study canola stand establishment and winter survival further, particularly to help farmers save on seed costs.

“If you can actually get more of

your seeds up and doing their jobs, that’s better,” he said.

Madsen received his bachelor’s and Ph.D. degrees at WSU. He was doing post-doctorate work when the position became open. Oilseeds featured in his work, he said, looking at bionutrients and root growth, particularly with canola and flax.

Madsen was drawn to the chance to work with farmers, hear their ideas and develop research plans and innovative practices.

“I think that’s the thing I’m most excited about, that opportunity to build relationships and cooperate with all farmers, but especially the ones that are really trying some crazy new ideas, I really like that,” he said.

Oilseeds provide crop diversification to a region that grows wheat particularly well, helping to ease insect or disease problems, Madsen said.



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California 4-H'er Receives Highest Congressional Honor



Margaret “Sissy” Sugarman

Margaret “Sissy” Sugarman from Olivenhain Valley 4-H, received the Congressional Gold Medal from Rep. Mike Levin at the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C.

The congressional award is the highest honor Congress can give a civilian recognizing achievement, initiative and service in America’s youth, ages 14-23. To earn a congressional award, participants set and achieve individual goals in four areas: Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and Expedition/Exploration.

Recognizing that children in her community are disconnected from animals, agriculture, and nature, Sissy Sugarman organized and led tours and classes at her farm and at local schools promoting agriculture, beekeeping, and connection with animals. Her pollinator education program, “The Honey Bee Road Show,” earned national recognition from the American Agri-Women Foundation. Sissy also served at a veterans’ camp in Alaska, Camp Battle Dawgs, which uses sled dogs and other outdoor activities to help veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries reintegrate back into every day life.

Currently, Sissy is connecting people to animals and agriculture by hosting veteran groups, disabled adults and youth groups for free Goat Yoga classes at her family farm in Olivenhain.

Sen. Ron Wyden presented Sissy with the added distinction of being a S.T.E.M. Star for her Honey Bee Road Show initiative. Ray Kerins from Bayer, a national 4-H partner, presented her with her STEM Star achievement pin.

The Honey Bee Road Show is a program Sissy developed after learning about bees in 4-H. Sissy had cared for her bees on her family farm and found them to be a source of endless fascination. She has hosted hundreds of groups of children on tours to her family farm and was always surprised to encounter children who were afraid of bees or had no appreciation for bees. Sissy created the Honey Bee Road Show as a way to teach schoolchildren about bees and their vital role in our world.

Sissy took her program to elementary schools and did many presentations at the Encinitas Farm Lab, which is an ecology center run by the local school district. Sissy taught the children all about the inner workings of the beehive and invited children from the audience to join in her presentation in a starring role by acting out the different roles of the honeybees.

Sissy’s years in the sewing project came in handy as she crafted and sewed costumes for the children to wear in their bee hive skit. And all those years of presentations and demonstrations paid off. — Courtesy of Elizabeth Sugarman/California 4-H Youth Development Program

From left, Elizabeth Sugarman, Sissy Sugarman, Ray Kerins of Bayer Corp. and Shawn Sugarman at the Congressional Gold Medal award ceremony.



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