

People & Places

Hemp advocate advises caution

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — No one can accuse Washington hemp advocate Bonny Jo Peterson of being pollyannaish. As founder and director of the Industrial Hemp Association of Washington, she said that she knows she should be “rah-rah hemp.” Nevertheless, she talks more about the risks of hemp. “If you like to make money, don’t get into hemp right now,” Peterson said.

Crop’s rebirth
Peterson’s dark assessment of the state of the hemp industry comes during the plant’s rebirth. Unshackled, partly, from federal restrictions, hemp took off in 2019. The advocacy group Vote Hemp reports 511,442 acres of hemp were licensed nationwide this year, up 455% from the year before.

Peterson warns, however, about losing one’s head in the hemp rush. Sure, some people will make money, she said, but others will lose cash searching for that vein of hemp.

Don’t plant too much, *don’t* plant without a buyer and *don’t* think hemp will save the farm, she said during an interview in a coffee shop. The cups and saucers rattled with each “don’t.”

“You can put in there she was pounding her fist on the table,” she said.

Family ties
Peterson, 46, traces her passion for hemp to farmers on her father’s side of the family who grew the crop in Illinois during World War II. The U.S. Department of Agriculture promoted growing hemp for military uses, such as rope, boots and parachutes.

“I’ve been hearing about



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Bonny Jo Peterson, founder and director of the Industrial Hemp Association of Washington, stands Dec. 17 in the state Capitol rotunda decorated for Christmas. Peterson counsels caution in joining the rush to plant hemp.

hemp all my life,” she said. Peterson said she waited decades for hemp to again become legal. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized states to license hemp farmers to do “research.” In 2017, Peterson applied for a research license, but learned the Washington State Department of Agriculture had suspended the program because of a budget shortfall.

Hemp association
That’s when Peterson founded the Industrial Hemp Association. She lobbied state legislators to finance the program until there were enough fee-paying hemp growers to support it. She also became a source of information for people mystified by the twists that hemp policy takes.

“She cares very greatly about Washington state getting off on the right foot,” said Robert Cook of the Columbia Valley Hemp Co., which grew 20 acres of hemp in the Tri-Cities. “She is very candid.”

Peterson said she’s never made any money direct-

ing the association, though she said she hopes to someday. The association plans to become for the first time a dues-paying organization Jan. 1.

The association has about 500 members, Peterson said, but all they’ve had to do was join online for free. The board of directors has yet to set the dues, she said.

As is her association, the hemp industry is still taking shape, Peterson said. “I’m stuck between ‘rah-rah for hemp’ and supporting hemp and at the same time making people understand the risks,” she said.

Multiple problems
The risks are many, said Addison Pettit, who with two partners planted 300 acres of hemp in Pasco this year for hemp’s hottest product, cannabidiol, or CBD.

An early October frost wrecked 100 acres. Pettit said he had buyers for the rest of the crop, but they backed out.

So the 2019 crop is being stored. Pettit said he still hopes to sell it, but prices

have dropped sharply and he’s not sure he could sell the harvested plants at any price right now. “It’s a very opaque marketplace,” he said.

“I would urge people to have patience and rationality,” he said. “I really don’t recommend speculatively producing. You need someone sitting in front of you willing to buy it and who is sincere.”

CBD drives boom
The hemp boom has been based on demand for CBD. The Food and Drug Administration approved CBD as a prescription drug to treat two rare and severe forms of epilepsy, but it issued an advisory in November warning consumers that CBD has not been proven safe for unsupervised consumption.

Hemp seeds can be consumed. The network to process and distribute hemp for other non-food purposes, such as clothing or building materials, has not yet developed, Peterson said.

Farming basics such as crop protection also haven’t firmed up. The Environ-

BONNY JO PETERSON

Occupation: Founder and executive director of Industrial Hemp Association of Washington

Age: 46

Residence: Tacoma, Wash.

Education: Associate degrees from Pierce College in communications, geology and early childhood education

mental Protection Agency recently took comments on applications to label 10 pesticide products for hemp. The American Farm Bureau commented that “hemp growers remain without vital crop protection tools needed to improve crop quality and maximize yield.”

The USDA’s interim hemp rules also could present a problem. Beginning next year, the rules will change for testing whether a field of hemp has too much THC, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana.

Instead of the entire plant, only the top part of the plant will be tested, and that’s the part most likely to have too much THC. If a plant tests over the THC limit, the entire field has to be destroyed.

Farmers who don’t plant hemp varieties naturally low in THC will risk losing their crops, Peterson said. “I’m really tempted to tell people not to plant.”

Three finalists vie for Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

SALEM — Three finalists are competing to become Oregon’s 61st Dairy Princess Ambassador, promoting the dairy industry at events and in classrooms across the state.

Oregon Dairy Women, a nonprofit volunteer organization, began the Dairy Princess Ambassador program in 1959, providing outreach on behalf of dairy farms while developing personal and professional skills for young women.

The 2020 finalists include Jaime Evers, 20, representing Klamath County; Taysha Veeman, 18, representing Marion County; and Araya Wilks,



Taysha Veeman

18, representing Tillamook County. Becky Heimerl, president of Oregon Dairy Women, said whoever is crowned can expect to be busy. The Dairy Princess Ambassador gives presentations at schools, fairs and other community events, highlighting dairy products, nutritional benefits and farming practices.

“It’s not just about sitting on a float and waving and smiling,” Heimerl said. “It’s about really connecting with the consumer, and getting out there.”

Oregon is home to



Araya Wilks

approximately 250 licensed dairy farms and 126,000 milk cows. Milk was the state’s fifth-most valuable agricultural commodity in 2018, at \$473.2 million.

Heimerl said the Dairy Princess Ambassador is a public face for the industry, educating the public about issues from animal welfare to environmental sustainability. The program is also focused on helping women ages 17-23 become better public speakers and leaders.

“It’s definitely not just a farming program,” Heimerl said. “It’s really a personal, professional development



Jamie Evers

program. We work really hard with the girls throughout the year.”

Evers, a 2017 graduate of Banks High School, was born on raised on a dairy farm and showed her own string of Ayrshire cattle at county and state fairs. She is currently a student at Oregon Tech in Klamath Falls, studying biology and health sciences, and plans to attend chiropractic school in the future.

Veeman graduated from St. Paul High School earlier this year. She grew up on her family’s dairy farm and was active in 4-H and FFA, and is now a student at California

Polytechnic State University studying animal science.

Wilks grew up helping to feed calves on her grandparents’ dairy farm every weekend. She graduated from Tillamook High School in 2017, and is now working as a rehabilitation assistant at Tillamook Adventist Hospital while pursuing a license in massage therapy.

“All three girls are ready to go,” Heimerl said. “It’s going to be a tough contest. We’ll see who rises to the top.”

The coronation banquet will be held Jan. 18 at the Salem Convention Center. Tickets are \$50, and must be purchased in advance before Jan. 6. For tickets and more information, visit www.oregondairywomen.com/ events.

CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

MONDAY, JAN. 6
Idaho Range Livestock Symposium: 8 a.m., American Legion Hall, Marsing, Idaho. Adapting to a changing rangeland environment. Registration is required. Contact: Scott Jensen, 208-894-4104, scottj@uidaho.edu Website: <https://bit.ly/2DMjylR>

TUESDAY, JAN. 7
Idaho-E. Oregon Alfalfa and Clover Seed Growers Meeting: 8 a.m., Caldwell Elks Lodge, 1015 N. Kimball Ave., Caldwell, Idaho. Alfalfa and clover seed growers from Eastern Oregon, southwest Idaho and the Magic Valley of Idaho will have their annual meeting. Contact: Benjamin Kelly, 208-888-0988, benjamin@amgidaho.com

Idaho Range Livestock Symposium: CSI Herrett Center, 315 Falls Ave., Twin Falls, Idaho. Adapting to a changing environment. Registration required. Contact: Benton Glaze, 208-736-3638, bgglaze@uidaho.edu Website: <https://bit.ly/2DMjylR>

TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY, JAN. 7-8
Cropping Systems Conference: 9 a.m., Three Rivers Convention Center, 7016 W. Grandridge Blvd., Kennewick, Wash. The two-day event features something for everyone with a trade show, general

and breakout sessions, and research poster sessions. Sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association. Website: <http://directseed.org> Contact: agmgt@agmgt.com, 509-585-5460.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 8
Idaho Range Livestock Symposium: 8 a.m., Bannock County Veterans Memorial Building, 300 N. Johnson Ave., Pocatello, Idaho. Adapting to a changing environment. Registration required. Contact: Benton Glaze, 208-736-3638, bgglaze@uidaho.edu Website: <https://bit.ly/2DMjylR>

THURSDAY, JAN. 9
Idaho Range Livestock Symposium: 8 a.m., BYU-Idaho Ag. Science Center, 525 S. Center St., Rexburg, Idaho. Adapting to a changing environment. Registration required. Contact: Benton Glaze, 208-736-3638, bgglaze@uidaho.edu Website: <https://bit.ly/2DMjylR>

THURSDAY-FRIDAY JAN. 9-10
Oregon Mint Growers Annual Meeting: 8 a.m. Salishan Resort, 7760 North Highway 101, Gleneden Beach, Ore. Make your plans to attend the 71st annual meeting, where you’ll hear the latest on the mint industry. Contact: <http://oregonmint.org>, 503-364-2944

TUESDAY, JAN. 14
Introduction to Food Safety & HACCP Workshop: 8 a.m. U of I

Food Technology Center, 1902 E Chicago St., Caldwell, Idaho. This is a one-day overview course designed for line workers, QC personnel, sanitation professionals, supervisors, and other employees of food processing operations. Participants will spend part of the day learning about food safety prerequisite programs, which are used to ensure food products are free from nonhazardous objectionable contaminants. Cost: \$355 Website: <https://bit.ly/2DJSOSP>

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15
Farm and Ranch Success Planning Workshop Series: 1-4 p.m. Multnomah Grange No. 71, 30639 SE Bluff Road. Gresham, Ore. Register now for this free series of workshops on farm and ranch succession. Workshops are held every other Wednesday from Jan. 15 to Feb. 26 In addition to these courses, no-cost, confidential, one-on-one business counseling is provided free by an experienced Farm and Ranch Small Business Development Center adviser. Let us help you identify issues and evaluate options in passing your farm and business on to the next generation. A complimentary light lunch is provided at 12:30 p.m. There is room for 50 people. Presented by: Clackamas Small Business Development Center and the East Multnomah & Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Questions? Call Diana Tourney at 503-594-0732.

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY, JAN. 15-16
Introduction to Safe Quality Food: 8:30 a.m. U of I Food Technology Center, 1902 E Chicago St., Caldwell, Idaho. Instructor Jana Hamlett will provide knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the SQF practitioner and how they ensure supplies are in compliance with an internationally recognized and accredited Food Safety Management System which will support compliance to the FSMA rules. Website: <https://bit.ly/2LmrlS3>

Idaho Noxious Weed Conference: 8 a.m. Riverside Hotel, 2900 W. Chinden Blvd., Boise, Idaho. The 2020 Idaho Noxious Weed Conference features a variety of topics dealing with vegetation management. Website: <http://www.idahoweedcontrol.org>

WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, JAN. 15-17
Northwest Agricultural Show: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday. Oregon State Fair and Expo Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. The 50th edition of the Northwest Ag Show will feature over 120 exhibitors and partners and seminars and workshops covering a variety of topics important to farmers and ranchers. Admission on Wednesday and Thursday is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors, and free for children 12 and under. Admission on Friday is free, courtesy of the Oregon Ag in the Classroom Foundation. Contact:

503-364-4431 <http://northwestag-show.com>

FRIDAY, JAN. 17
SAIF Agri-Business Banquet: 6 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. This year, Jim Bernau of Willamette Valley Vineyards is the featured speaker. <https://saif-agribusiness-banquet/events/saif-agribusiness-banquet/>

SATURDAY, JAN. 18
Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador Contest: 5:30 p.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. Join the excitement as the county dairy princess ambassadors demonstrate their dairy knowledge and public speaking and communications skills. Online: <https://oregondairywomen.com/events/>

FRIDAY-WEDNESDAY, JAN. 17-22
American Farm Bureau Annual Convention and Trade Show: Austin Convention Center, 500 E. Cesar Chavez St., Austin, Texas. This is your opportunity to help set the agenda for the leading voice of agriculture. Participate in educational workshops to advance your leadership skills, expand your business acumen and gain deep insight into the trends and realities impacting food production. Contact: <https://annualconvention.fb.org/>

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