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Opinion

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Our View

Breaking the silence about opioid epidemic

Every day we get the latest on the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. How many people tested positive, and how many have died. The number rolls higher and higher every day as our political leaders struggle to find a way to slow its spread.

But there's another, more deadly, epidemic that has swept across the U.S. over the past decade: opioids.

Call it the Quiet Epidemic.

While newspapers and other media have reported on its impact on urban America, reporting on its impact on rural counterpart has been all but missing.

Yet between 2008 and 2017, nearly 274,000 Americans died in the rural U.S. In the rural Pacific Northwest, 1,347 have died.

Nationwide, a survey found that 3 in every 4 farmers and farmworkers have been directly impacted by



Gado Images/Associated Press

Opioids are pain relievers. If improperly prescribed or abused, they can lead to a downward spiral of addiction.

opioid abuse. Even worse, the same percentage reports that it is easy to access large amounts of opioids without a prescription — but only one-third say it is easy to obtain addiction treatment.

Those are stunning statistics, yet few are willing to talk about it.

In much of rural America, the stigma of a “drug overdose” creates a bubble of silence around the victim,

the family and the community.

To address a problem, we first need to talk about it.

That was the realization leaders of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Farmers Union came to. Those two organizations rarely find themselves on the same side of a political issue, but when it comes to the matter of saving rural lives from opioids, they speak as one.

Together, they launched “Farm Town Strong,” a campaign aimed at breaking the silence. Their website, farmtownstrong.org, offers help to families and others who are impacted by opioids.

The tendency is to think about opioids in terms of teens and young adults experimenting with illicit drugs such as fentanyl, but there's more to the story.

It is common for people who do hard physical labor to be injured. When that happens, doctors prescribe

pain relievers, many that have an opioid as an ingredient. If the injury persists, so does the prescription, until the patient is hooked.

From there, the patient can become trapped in a downward spiral. Without help, he, or she, is doomed.

Opioids are not the only drugs threatening rural America. Methamphetamines continue to pose a huge problem. Other addictive substances, including alcohol, add to the potential for rural Americans to become caught up in a web of problems.

Farmers and ranchers tend to be independent thinkers. They are also self-reliant, an asset in the world of agriculture.

But sometimes a problem arises that can overwhelm even the most independent person or family. When that happens, it's OK to talk about it with a neighbor, or a friend, or a counselor.

It's OK to seek help.

How farmers can keep geese at bay

By MARIE GADOTTI
Oregon Farm Bureau

In recent months, I've had several inquiries from farmers about how to obtain a goose depredation permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

As many farmers in Oregon's Willamette Valley know first-hand, along with an increasing number of growers in other parts of the state, goose depredation on crops is a very frustrating, and very expensive, problem.

A few years ago, it was estimated that geese wintering in the valley caused a minimum of \$15 million in crop damage each year, a number that is doubtlessly much higher today.

Oregon Farm Bureau members and OFB staff have worked extremely hard on the goose depredation issue for decades. We've traveled to Alaska numerous times, attended Pacific Flyway Council meetings in the various participating states, including last August in Portland, and attended four days of meetings in Seattle to pursue lowering the Cackler Population Target Numbers (without success).

But we've also had some successes.

These include eliminating check stations, opening up hunting for the full 107 days (which gave us seven days a week of hunting) allowed by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and getting Oregon farmers the ability to obtain a kill

GUEST VIEW

Marie Gadotti



permit.

The first step is to calculate the cost to your farm. Only those who suffer damage from geese and who have tried nonlethal measures to prevent or minimize bird damage are eligible for USFWS goose depredation permits.

The permit application asks for a description of the impact on your farm.

To help Farm Bureau members calculate the full cost of damage, we created a survey. See the Farm Bureau Goose Damage Survey at OregonFB.org/geese.

Included are sections on hazing costs, extra fertilizer and pesticide expenses caused by geese damage, and yield loss.

By using the survey, farmers can get permits that not only authorize the killing of a limited number of geese, which helps growers move the birds off their crops, but also provide the authorities an idea of just how much damage geese inflict on Oregon farmers.

Currently, the federal goose depredation permits give farmers who qualify the authority to kill 20 geese. If a farmer reaches the limit, they can ask for an increase in the 20-geese cap.

There is no statewide cap for

take of resident geese. Wintering geese kills are capped at 500 per year in Oregon.

The cost to obtain a permit is \$100 and can be used for both migratory and resident geese, provided the applicant requests that provision in the permit application. Depredation permits for wintering and resident geese can be used only on non-hunting days.

One permit covers all land in production by a farmer.

Permittees do not need to take geese they kill to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife check station. However, there are instructions about burying the geese. Please refer to the permit for details.

It is still illegal to kill Canadian dusky geese — and the populations of duskies are closely monitored.

Find the USFWS Migratory Bird Depredation Form 3-200-13 — and helpful tips for filling it out — at OregonFB.org/geese.

USFWS applications must also include a Form 37 from USDA Wildlife Services in Oregon before becoming eligible for the depredation permit. Contact Wildlife Services at 503-326-2346 to start that process.

For more information about the goose depredation issue and how to apply for a permit, please call me at 503-543-6573.

Marie Gadotti chairs the Oregon Farm Bureau's Goose Depredation Committee and is president of Columbia County Farm Bureau.

Farming, coronavirus and herd health

By BEN LACROSS
American Farm Bureau

GUEST VIEW

Ben LaCross



The NCAA just banned fans from attending any men's or women's college basketball tournament. Good.

The American Farm Bureau recently canceled its Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference. Good.

Universities across the country are going to all-online learning for the rest of the semester. Good.

It is our responsibility, as citizens of the United States, to take precautions in the face of a global pandemic. The preceding three examples of events being canceled or limited show responsible behavior that can help mitigate the effects of the coronavirus.

Why does a farmer know this? Herd health.

Although I'm a fruit farmer, not a livestock producer, I know how my friends care for animals on their cattle ranches and hog farms and in their chicken barns. Those farmers, and the veterinarians they work with, are the experts on animal care and herd health. I trust them more than anyone else on this issue.

Livestock farmers are well equipped with knowledge and medicine, under the direction of a veterinarian, to be able to treat a few of their animals. When a small percentage of their herd is sick, farmers can care for the sick animals in between their regular chores and the rest of their busy day. Farmers take a very proactive approach to overall herd health management. They routinely follow veterinarian-approved and prescribed vaccination protocols. They also take the issue of biosecurity very seriously, restricting access to their facilities to minimize the risk of disease transmission.

But, God forbid, if a major percentage of his/her herd got sick all at once, the farmer would be overwhelmed with the care of all of those sick animals. Some may die. More might get sicker. It could be a disaster. That's what our health care system is up against in facing the coronavirus pandemic.

All Americans are part of the collective herd of “citizen-livestock” in our country. Yes, we have the freedom to live how we want to live, but we also have a responsibility to the citizen herd health of the country.

If, in a month or two, the coronavirus outbreak is contained and people scream,

“See, it was a media hysteria,” good. It means we did our job and limited a potential catastrophe.

But if we don't take some pretty responsible precautions to help inoculate the collective human herd from COVID-19, that's on us. All of us.

Farmers are busy right now, prepping their planters, selecting their seeds and watching the ground dry out from a soggy winter. Yes, watching ground dry is sometimes very productive work on a farm.

These farmers need to get their grain in the ground in the next 60 days or so. If American ports, shipping and logistics are impacted, will these farmers have enough fuel, seed and fertilizer to grow the bread that the breadbasket of America is famous for?

As I write this, the Food and Drug Administration announced the suspension of all inspections of foreign food facilities until April. How will that impact your grocery store? Eat local may have just taken on a whole new meaning.

What happens to our meat and dairy suppliers if processing plant employees are ill because we didn't take enough early precautions? Heard of the impossible burger? That's when it's impossible to get a burger anywhere, anytime.

Our modern food system is a miracle, though, co-operated by farmers, ranchers, harvesters, truckers, processors and grocers. I'm confident that farmers will find a way to grow an abundant crop this year.

I urge everyone to consider the “herd health” approach to this virus. Immediate precautions now and in the next month will assist health professionals in containing the spread.

Meanwhile ... farmers taking herd health precautions with their livestock remains an important part of the sturdy bedrock of our nation's food supply chain.

Ben LaCross, a fruit farmer and Farm Bureau leader in Michigan, is a former chair of the American Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. Visit his personal website at www.benlacrossbooks.com. His column appears courtesy the American Farm Bureau.

READERS' VIEW

Coronavirus and Trump

It is despicable that the coronavirus outbreak is being weaponized and politicized against President Trump. Trump responded quickly to stop people from China and other countries from coming into the U.S. The corona outbreak began at Wuhan, China. Trump loves America and is not a globalist. He is hated by China, Democrats, globalists, most mainstream media, never Trumpers and Establishment Deep State people.

The virus is not a mass killer, but is much like influenza, which also kills people with respiratory and weak immune system problems. The average age of death is 80. Corona does not seriously affect children and young people.

On the other hand, Influenza kills on the

average 30,000 people per year or 2,500 per month. It does seriously affect children.

Corona is being used to cause unrealistic fear and panic with the assistance of the mainstream media. Also, they are trying to destroy the U.S. economy.

Why are so many people supporting Socialist Bernie Sanders and other Democrat candidates? It is because our education system including Common Core teaches socialist propaganda. The false philosophies of Dewey, Marx, Darwin, Freud and Keynes are largely taught in schools.

Socialism destroys a country by distributing and controlling our wealth and stealing private property and killing those opposed. Castro, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler and Mao have killed millions after the people were disarmed.

Daily, we see Saul

Alinsky's “Rules for Radicals,” being promoted by liberal socialists and much of the mainstream media. Hillary Clinton wrote her thesis on Alinsky. Obama quoted him. Alinsky's main rules are: polarization to divide people; demonization of those opposed to the socialists agenda and; deception by fake news and lies. The end justifies the means!

We must stop teaching socialism to our students and return to our Judeo/Christian, Constitutional Republic heritage to preserve individual liberty and freedom.

A concerned citizen,
Adrian Arp, Ph.D.
Filer, Idaho

Governor's dam stance would damage E. Oregon

Why is our governor so bent on destroying

the economy of the rural part of Oregon?

The article on the front page of the East Oregonian newspaper says on the right hand side that she wants to help flood victims, which she should.

On the left hand side she wants to help destroy the economy of Eastern Oregon by endorsing the breaching of the lower Snake River dams.

First, it slaps our neighbors to the north in the face by killing their local economy. Next, she helps nullify all the work the ports in Umatilla and Morrow counties have done to get our products to market. She even damages the Port of Portland. The grain shipped from there comes from as far away as the Dakotas.

I just don't think the knee-jerk things she proposes are very well thought out.

Dennis Culp
Hermiston, Ore.