



WAG-RICULTURE

FOR THE LOVE OF FARM DOGS

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

GRAND RONDE, Ore. — “Away!” At the command, Marc, a 3-year-old Border Collie, bounded left, driving a flock of Polypay sheep across the hill’s ridgeline.

Water droplets dappled pastures and low-hanging clouds formed a garland around the trees. The morning air smelled earthy.

“Down. Good boy.”

The voice belonged to Piper Klinger, Marc’s owner, who runs this sheep ranch with her husband, Bob Klinger.

Bob, 77, has worked with sheep more than 50 years and made his name as Oregon State University’s sheep herdsman for decades before retiring to full-time ranching.

Publicly, the Klingers are known for high-quality Polypay sheep, innovative pasture management and “agri-voltaics,” meaning grazing sheep under solar panels; privately, they say one of the most significant features of their farm is their dog, Marc.

Capital Press readers are a diverse bunch, emblematic of agriculture. Organic and conventional. Large and small. Readers represent a wide range of crops and livestock species. But one common thread many farmers share is their love for dogs. The farm dog, some say, is the “unsung hero,” “part of the family” and one of the most important parts of rural life.

In December and January, the Capital Press solicited stories from readers about their dogs.



See Dogs, Page 9

Lily, owned by Robin Loznak of Oakland, Ore., shakes off after swimming in the Umpqua River.

Courtesy of Robin Loznak

Unlawful irrigation uncovered on Oregon hemp farms

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Suspicious about unlawful hemp irrigation in Southwest Oregon proved to be well-founded after an audit uncovered violations at one-third of the grow sites visited.

Officials from the state’s Water Resources Department reviewed 187 hemp farms in the region last year and determined nearly 33% ran



afoul of water laws.

“There is a large part of this that’s education and outreach — folks just didn’t know,” said Jake Johnstone, OWRD’s southwest region manager, during a Feb. 18 meeting of the state’s Water Resources Commission.

Most of the violations — 46 out of 61 — related to hemp farmers who irrigated with well water despite lacking water rights, including some who had valid surface water rights. Domestic usage of well water is allowed without a water rights permit in Oregon, but not commercial irrigation.

More than one-third of the violations identified by the

agency resulted in enforcement action, such as having to install water measurement devices on their wells, Johnstone said.

The agency is planning to conduct further reviews in 2021, which will determine whether compliance improved after the initial audit, said Scott Prose, an assistant watermaster in the region.

“What we will see this time around is how valuable that education really is,” he said.

About 42% of the hemp growers visited claimed they’d been trucking in water from municipal sources, which required a “big time commitment” to verify with receipts and contracts, Johnstone said.

“This can be difficult when the individuals on-site don’t keep any of the financial records,” he said, noting that state agencies are working to better maintain contact

See Hemp, Page 9

Nearly a year into COVID-19, seed industry is booming

How a global pandemic lifted U.S. seed companies’ profits

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

Almost a year into COVID-19, the domestic seed industry is flourishing.

“A lot of seed companies are selling out. Some warehouses are empty of seed. They’re having an incredible year,” said Angie Smith, executive director of the Oregon Seed Association.

Industry leaders say when the pandemic hit last March, there was an alarming lull in sales. But from about April on, experts say sales took off in most seed sectors and the momentum has continued into 2021.

The specialty seed sector, including vegetable



Courtesy of Territorial Seed Co.

Territorial Seed Co. workers package and ship seed.

and flower seeds, is booming on the retail level. Last year, Americans nationwide planted a record number of gardens. Extension agents at the time wondered whether people’s interest in gardening would carry into 2021. So far, the answer appears to be “yes.”

“The season started off awfully strong again,” said Tom Johns, president of Ter-

ritorial Seed Co. in Cottage Grove, Ore. “When our catalog came out around January, we had a very high volume of orders that was equal to or surpassed the peak of the pandemic last year.”

Territorial has had so many orders, Johns said, that he and his wife, who usually take off Sundays,

See Seed, Page 9

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