

People & Places

# Raising cows and telling ag's story

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press

WARNER SPRINGS, Calif. — Katie Ostrander recalls the first time she “dipped her toe” in the cattle industry her senior year of high school by raising and showing a steer at an FFA event.

“I was absolutely awful at showmanship and my steer knew it!” the Escondido native said.

Today, it’s a different story, she said. “My husband Elmo and I live on a sixth-generation ranch where we raise kids and cows.”

Their 160-acre ranch is in a small, picturesque mountain town in San Diego County, a little over an hour’s drive from the beach. This is a tight-knit ranching community where many families have known one another for over 100 years.

“Our brand was first registered in 1922,” she said. “We still follow a lot of traditional ranching methods that my husband’s great- and great-great-grandfather used.”

The family traditions will carry on, she said.

“Our two girls are very involved in all of the ranch happenings. If you ask them today what they want to be when they grow up you’ll hear ‘barrel racer’ from one and ‘cattlemoan’ from the other,” Ostrander said. “How cool is that?”

Hannah Gbeh, executive director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, says Ostrander is an example of



**Katie Ostrander, a rancher in San Diego County, Calif., says the mountainous area is home to many farm and ranch families who have lived there for five generations or more.**

what the future of agriculture should look like.

“She is an active and vocal advocate for agriculture in the county and has dedicated countless hours of volunteer time organizing events, creating fundraisers and as a fundamental leader and mentor for many young farmers and ranchers interested in livestock production,” Gbeh said.

In addition to Angus cross cattle, Ostrander raises heritage pigs, broiler chickens, a few laying hens and heritage and broad-breasted turkeys.

Raising livestock in San Diego County is unique because it’s primarily known for its beaches and

palm trees, but it’s really an agricultural powerhouse known for its nursery crops, avocados and citrus groves.

It is also one of the “greenest” counties in the U.S. There are 5,732 farms in the county that produce crops and livestock worth \$1.7 billion each year, according to the Farm Bureau.

“The county is full of innovators trying to find new ways to reduce our carbon footprint and be good stewards of the land and sea,” she said. “We try to offset the waste stream and recycle what we can into animal feed. In addition to traditional grain-based diets we also feed our

animals waste food from local sources: spent brewers’ grains from local craft breweries, apple peels and cores from bakeries and discarded food from distribution centers.”

They market directly through word-of-mouth and social media for “on the hoof” beef and pork for customers’ freezers and whole chickens and turkeys.

Ostrander says she tries to tell those customers about what goes into raising market-ready animals.

“We’re on a mission to remind folks that for every steak on their plate, there’s an entire ranching operation behind it,” Ostrander said.

There is another issue

**Western Innovator**

**KATIE OSTRANDER**

**Home:** Warner Springs, Calif.

**Age:** 36

**Occupation:** “Momboss,” “Gategetter,” rancher

**Activities:** San Diego Cowbelles, California Women for Agriculture, member of the San Diego Farm Bureau board of directors

**Family:** Husband Elmo and two daughters

**Personal quote:** “Home is where the herd is.”

the county Farm Bureau’s Livestock Committee is currently taking by the horns.

“Our biggest challenge is the lack of USDA slaughter facilities,” Ostrander said. “California doesn’t have a state meat inspection program so we must rely on the very few available USDA facilities. We are invested in our animals’ well-being from the day they were born and all the way to the end. We’re not going to haul the animals five or six hours to the nearest facility.

“The animals are here, we just need a facility.”

# Oregon wolf tracked near Yosemite park

San Francisco Chronicle and Capital Press

BRIDGEPORT, Calif. (AP) — A young male wolf has been spotted near Yosemite National Park, the farthest south a wolf has been tracked in California in more than a century, officials said.

Researchers have been monitoring the wolf dubbed OR-93 via his tracking collar and said the animal departed Oregon earlier this year, likely in search of a new territory, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

The wolf dispersed from the White River Pack southeast of Mount

Hood. He was collared last June by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Oregon, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

OR-93 was tracked through Modoc County, Calif., and crossing state highways 4 and 208. It recently moved into Mono County, just east of Yosemite, the newspaper said.

“Given the time of year, we assume OR-93 has traveled such a long way in search of a mate,” Center for Biological Diversity wolf advocate Amaroq Weiss said in a statement. “I hope he can find one.”

This is the 16th gray wolf to have

shown up in California, according to the department. Most have been from Oregon.

Previously, the farthest south a gray wolf was spotted in recent decades was the Lake Tahoe Basin. That wolf, OR-54, eventually headed back north.

Earlier this month, another male wolf, OR-85, was tracked to California’s Siskiyou County, just south of the Oregon state line.

Gray wolves were eradicated in California early in the last century because of their threat to livestock. Their reappearance in the state has riled ranchers, who say wolves have preyed on their livestock on public or

private land.

Wolves are protected under California’s Endangered Species Act. Trump administration officials in November stripped Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in most of the U.S., ending long-standing federal safeguards and putting states and tribes in charge of overseeing the predators.

“We’re thrilled to learn this wolf is exploring deep into the Sierra Nevada, since scientists have said all along this is great wolf habitat,” Weiss said of OR-93. “He’s another beacon of hope, showing that wolves can return here and flourish as long as they remain legally protected.”

# Thief steals livestock guard dog pups from Idaho ranch

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Three pups being trained as guard dogs were stolen from the Soulen Livestock Co. sheep ranch near Letha, Idaho, last December, and a felony warrant has been issued for a Washington state man in the case.

A man drove by the ranch on Dec. 16 and picked up the three livestock guardian pups, according to the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission.

Rancher Harry Soulen’s three young dogs were penned with about 50 sheep to protect and bond with them.

A neighbor talked to the suspect and got his business card.

Soulen later talked to the man by phone and requested he return the

**TO CONTACT SHERIFF**

Gem County Sheriff’s Office: 208-365-3521

dogs immediately. The dogs were not returned.

The Gem County Sheriff’s Office website shows a warrant has been issued for a Ridgefield, Wash., man. The Feb. 9 warrant sets the bond at \$25,000.

A call to the sheriff’s office spokesman was not returned immediately.

“There’s nothing new, and unfortunately we’ve just kind of got to wait until the process plays out,” Soulen told the Capital Press Feb. 25. “It’s wait-and-see.”

He said if the dogs spend too

much time around people, they can become less effective at guarding sheep.

“I was readying them to go with bands in the spring,” Soulen said. Now, “even if I got the dogs back, they may not work out as sheep guard dogs.”

Each of the three dogs is valued at around \$1,800.

“We put a lot of effort into training and caring for these dogs,” Soulen said. “They’re the best non-lethal tool we have to protect our sheep from predators.”

The commission also said it has been getting more reports of people picking up livestock guardian dogs on Idaho range and forest land, thinking they are abandoned or lost.



Soulen Livestock Co.  
**One of the pups stolen from the Soulen Livestock Co. near Letha, Idaho.**



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

# Did a restaurant close in your rural community? Tell us.

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN  
Capital Press

The Capital Press is working on a story about rural restaurant closures across California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho during the pandemic.

In rural areas, where a single restaurant or cafe is often the central

meeting place of a small community, its loss can mean a lot to residents’ social lives and the local economy.

Can you name a restaurant in a small or rural community that permanently closed during COVID-19? If so, please contact Capital Press reporter Sierra McClain at 509-699-9099 or smclain@capitalpress.com.

**CALENDAR**

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

**TUESDAY, MARCH 9**  
**Intentional Adulteration-Food Defense (online):** 8 a.m.-noon. This Food Defense Course will help you mitigate the risks and hazards of intentional contamination in food operations by protecting vulnerable elements in the agrifood chain and food production operations. We will explore Food Defense Plans to help you build barriers around vulnerable points to prohibit intentional adulteration. The course fee is \$495/each individual. Janna Hamlett, 208-731-9363, jannahamlett@techhelp.org

**THURSDAY, MARCH 11**  
**Idaho Wheat Commission Direct Seed Workshop:** 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Hilton Garden Inn, Idaho Falls. In-person event to cover direct-seeding challenges, opportunities, economics and research. Limited seating. Advance registration encouraged. Cost: \$15 in advance, \$25 at door Website: https://bit.ly/2MsCDBc

**TUESDAY-THURSDAY, MARCH 16-18**  
**Oregon FFA State Convention (virtual):** Convention 2021 will be virtual due to current COVID restrictions. Website: https://oregonffa.com/

state-convention/  
**TUESDAY-THURSDAY, MARCH 23-25**  
**Public Lands Council 2021 Legislative Conference (virtual):** The conference will focus on legislative strategies to advocate for the livestock industry in the nation’s capital. Website: http://www.publiclandscouncil.org

**TUESDAY, MARCH 30**  
**Practical Sensory Programs for Factories and Quality Managers (online):** 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The Practical Sensory Program course is designed around a learn-and-apply model. Each participant will get a kit to have hands-on activities to reinforce the concepts learned. He or she will walk away with practical skills that can be applied immediately. The course fee is \$285/each individual. Contact: Catherine Cantley, 208-426-2181, catherinecantley@tech-help.org

**FRIDAY, APRIL 16**  
**AgForestry Leadership Class 41 Graduation:** 5 p.m. Red Lion Hotel, Wenatchee, Wash. Celebrate the graduation of AgForestry Leadership Class 41. This celebration was rescheduled from its origination April 10 date. Table sponsorships are available. Cost: \$60/adults, \$20/child. Website: http://agforestry.org/graduation-class-41/



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