



Easterday pleads guilty to fraud, faces civil charges, too

By DON JENKINS AND GEORGE PAVEN
Capital Press

Washington ranch co-owner Cody Easterday defrauded Tyson Foods of \$233 million and another company of \$11 million by selling more than 200,000 head of cattle that only existed on invoices, according to a plea agreement unsealed April 1. Easterday, former manager



Cody Easterday

of the Easterday Ranches feedlot in Pasco, pleaded guilty March 31 to one count of felony wire fraud and faces up to 20 years in prison. He also faces civil charges filed March 31 by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for

allegedly reporting false or misleading information to the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Easterday, 49, entered the plea to the criminal charge in U.S. District Court for Eastern Washington. Federal Judge Stanley Bastian in Yakima accepted the plea and set sentencing for Aug. 4. According to the plea deal, prosecutors agreed not to bring additional charges.

“For years Cody Easterday perpetrated a fraud scheme on a massive scale, increasing the cost of producing food for American families,” Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas L. McQuaid of the Justice Department Criminal Division said in a statement. Efforts to reach Cody Easterday or his attorney, Carl Oreskovich, were unsuccessful by deadline.

CFTC allegations

The CFTC alleges Cody Easterday violated the Commodity Exchange Act by reporting false or misleading information about the ranch’s cattle inventory, purchases and sales to the CME, the world’s largest financial derivatives exchange.

The false statements were

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LIVING IN FARM COUNTRY

Rural developments a challenge for newcomers, and farmers

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Soon after moving to a small acreage near Caldwell, Idaho, last September, Colleen Agresta noticed a parade of trucks on the highway that bisects the area.

Each truck was piled high with sugar beets. “There were lots and lots of them,” she said. “And there was a lot of dust and dirt.”

She knew she wasn’t in California anymore. Colleen and her husband, Greg, had been looking for a home in the country and had scouted several parts of southwest Idaho before buying outside Caldwell.

After they arrived they absorbed the farm and ranch activities around them. Greg captured a video of cattle in a neighboring pasture



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

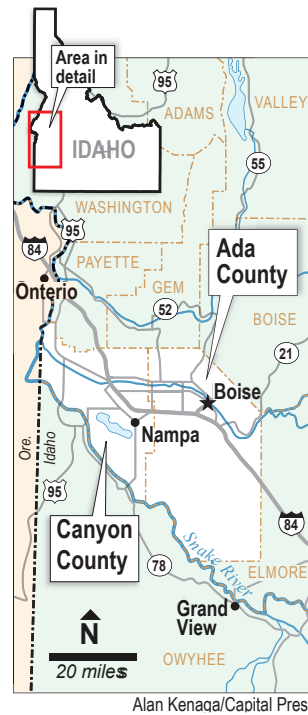
Greg and Colleen Agresta

and both of them got to experience the sights and sounds of harvest time.

“I couldn’t be happier with our home,” he said.

The Agrestas are among a growing number of Americans who are moving to the country. Whether they are retiring or escaping high taxes in states such as California, the COVID-19 pandemic or just looking for a change of scenery, hundreds of thousands of Americans are choosing a rural lifestyle on a handful of acres in farm country.

Nationwide, the American Farmland Trust estimates that nearly 7 million acres of



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

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Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Development on former farmland in southeast Meridian, Idaho.

Proposed ban on large Oregon dairies sparks debate

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Despite being dead on arrival, a proposal to ban new Oregon dairies with more than 2,500 cows has sparked a fierce debate in the state legislature.

State regulators would be prohibited from authorizing the construction or expansion of such “industrial” dairies under Senate Bill 583, which was killed by a

legislative deadline last month.

Although the bill can’t move forward this session, it’s nonetheless concerning for the agriculture community — especially in light of a similar bill that would prohibit milk farms, said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

The implication is that if a lawmaker dislikes a certain sector of the farm industry, the Legislature is willing to consider banning it, she said.

“That should be very scary for anyone in agriculture.”

While SB 583 has died in this session, the basic concept could still be incorporated through an amendment to viable legislation, she said.

Apart from this practical concern, the proposal is worrisome from a communications perspective because such ideas have recurred in several recent legislative sessions, Cooper said.

Meanwhile, proponents remain

undeterred and appear to have become more aggressive.

“We’re very concerned about the level of misinformation and rhetoric that’s still out there,” she said.

During an April 1 hearing, supporters and critics of HB 583 laid out their arguments before the Senate Energy and Environment Committee.

“Mega-dairies are not farms. They are industrial polluters,” said Emma

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