

People & Places

# Small cows, big rewards for ranchers

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press

OAKDALE, Calif. — The sight of shaggy Scottish Highland cattle grazing on tall grass causes regular traffic jams outside Oakdale.

While the breed can be found in all 50 states, the pint-size cattle originally from Scotland still catch the eye of curious drivers.

First, a little about these unique cattle.

If the creators of the Muppets had designed a cow it would likely resemble the Scottish Highland.

Their short, shaggy stature, combined with a gentle disposition, make them an attractive alternative to standard cattle, especially for newbie hobby ranchers who are more interested in pasture pets than meat production.

Two enterprising ranchers outside Oakdale have discovered that market. Kera and LeeAna Brichetto — who are also sisters-in-law — are raising the Scottish Highland cattle, aiming to fill a niche created by newcomers to the rural lifestyle.

“The Highland cattle are a good fit for acreages, plus they are docile and easy to handle,” LeeAna Brichetto said.

She and Kera began talking about the market they saw developing and



Kera Brichetto

**Sisters-in-law and ranchers LeeAna Brichetto, left, and Kera Brichetto raise Scottish Highland cattle for pets and breeding stock. This 4-month-old bull calf is part of their fold, the Scottish term for herd.**

decided to venture into the Scottish Highland breed together. They bought cows from California, Oregon and Wisconsin.

Though the extended Brichetto family farms cherries, walnuts, almonds and runs a feedlot operation in the Central Valley, the Scottish Highlands were new to them.

“In our experience so far, the animals are lovely to

raise but not for their meat or milk,” Kera said. “Highlands are a slower maturing breed of cattle and their shaggy coats make up for their lack of fat insulation like other breeds have. Beneath all that soft hair, they are relatively leaner animals.”

But they are a rugged breed and will eat just about anything. The fold runs on about 50 acres of irrigated pasture.

The Brichettos’ fold — groups of Highlands are called folds instead of herds — varies from 39 to 50 inches hook height, which is measured at the hip.

Part of the focus is to breed small framed Highlands. They have two bulls.

Smaller cows tend to bring higher prices — into the thousands of dollars for a registered calf.

Highland cattle are known

**Western Innovator**

**KERA BRICHETTO AND LEEANA BRICHETTO**

**Residence:** Oakdale, Calif.

**Occupations:** Ranchers

**Family:** Kera is married to husband Joe, and they have a son. LeeAna is married to husband John, and they have a daughter.

for being easy to raise, docile and curious and take longer to mature and reproduce than most other breeds.

However, they live longer and can reproduce well into their teens.

“Since buying our first few Highlands near the end of 2020, LeeAna and I have grown our fold to 20, have raised and sold a few calves and have fall 2021 calves on their way,” Kera said. “We are excited to expand our fold and continue to educate curious bystanders on the breed.”



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to set the record straight.

# Drive-thru Ag Fest a hit with families

By BRENNA WIEGAND  
For the Capital Press

CANBY, Ore. — In the past 34 years, Ag Fest organizers have always kept the event focused on making agricultural education fun and hands-on, executive director Michele Ruby said. “Given the pandemic, we can only stick to one: making ag education fun.”

This year’s drive-thru version — state COVID rules prevented the usual up close and personal experience — was like starting over, with a fraction of the usual planning time, but the board, volunteers, sponsors and ag community pulled together and were pleased with the result.

Setting the stage for the drive-thru event was a sprawling table — set for 168 diners. “That’s the average number of people a farmer can feed every day,” Ruby explained.

The next stop was a pio-



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press

**Dairy Princess Ambassadors Samantha Arnold, left, and Libby Glassley pass out Ag-venture goody bags at this year’s drive-thru Oregon Ag Fest. The princesses educated visitors about the dairy industry.**

neer scene complete with a covered wagon, open fire cooking and Cynthia Christensen of the Yamhill Valley Heritage Center operating a

spinning wheel.

“The kids like to stop and chat a little bit, but when I’m spinning, they’re much more intent,” Christensen said.

“Spinning always gets people’s attention.”

The parade of cars and mini-vans then rolled through a display of an antique tractor followed by the latest in farm machinery.

“The kids can’t take their pictures inside the giant tires, but they still ‘ooh’ and ‘aah’ over it,” Ruby said.

Next up, Cole Wilson, 8, displayed his chickens and calves and greeted guests with enthusiasm. His flock of 13 chickens — not counting the chicks — kept him busy and yielded eggs.

His two calves are bottle-fed. “They don’t really recognize me right now because normally I’m in my pajamas when I feed them,” he said.

Amy and Gerry Preston toured Ag Fest in their mini-van with their children. They said they found the event a good conversation-starter on all things ag.

“We both have farming

and ranching backgrounds, and we want the kids to know about this stuff,” Amy Preston said. “It was fun to get out on a Friday afternoon and do something together; it’s a real success and all the giveaways were a nice treat.”

Since kids couldn’t get their hands dirty at the show, the Oregon Association of Nurseries handed out information and bags of plants for children to take home and grow.

There were also rotating exhibits of dogs herding ducks and llamas and sheep being sheared.

Dairy Princess Ambassadors Samantha Arnold of Clackamas County and Libby Glassley of Yamhill and Polk counties greeted mini-vans and cars with “Ag-venture” goody bags and pointed them toward the Oregon Dairy Women and their ice cream, milkshakes and grilled cheese sandwiches.

# Idaho dairy welcomes triplets

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS — Reed’s Dairy beat the odds with the birth of triplet female Holstein calves on Feb. 23.

“It was quite a deal to have them all as healthy as they were. They were big calves,” Alan Reed, president of Reed’s Dairy, said.

The calves were born about 6 a.m. and were only a little smaller than what a single calf would be. They were all healthy, well and survived, he said.

The triplets were born to a cow about five years old, and it was her third birth. She was big, and Reed and his herdsman wondered if she might be carrying twins. But they were completely

**REED’S DAIRY**  
For more information, visit: [www.reedsdairy.com](http://www.reedsdairy.com)

surprised by triplets.

The dairy occasionally gets twins and has had one other set of triplets, but they didn’t survive.

“It was just amazing we had triplets and all survived. It was just a fun thing, so unusual, just fun to have it on your dairy. We were just thrilled about it,” he said.

The calves were born without assistance, and no pulling was needed.

“It was really something that that mom just had those calves,” he said.

Statistics on triplet births in dairy cattle and the chance of all-heifer triplets are hard to come by.

A 2016 article in the Lansing Journal referenced a 2015 Polish study that put the occurrence of triplet births in dairy cattle at 1 in 100,000, with the odds of having all heifers at 1 in 8 triplet births. A 2016 Associated Press article pegged the occurrence of triplet heifers at 1 in every 700,000 births.

Neither Reed nor his herdsman know of anyone having surviving triplet calves, he said.

Reed has two of the calves in the petting area at his Idaho Falls dairy and ice cream store. The petting area houses other animals as well



Reed’s Dairy

**Alan Reed with the new triplet calves.**

and only has room for two calves. The two calves will probably stay there another month, he said.

The triplet calves will join Reed’s herd of about 185 Holsteins to produce milk for Reed’s Dairy products, which include bottled

milk, cheese, ice cream and other products.

The third-generation dairy operates a home delivery service in Idaho Falls and the Treasure Valley. It also has two ice cream shops in the Idaho Falls area and two in the Boise area.

**CALENDAR**

Frundle, sfrundle@clarkcd.org  
**THURSDAY-SATURDAY MAY 6-8**

**Junior Livestock Show of Spokane (live):** 9 a.m. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center, 404 N. Havana, St., Spokane Valley, Wash. The Junior Livestock Show of Spokane will be in person this year. A live auction will be May 8. Face masks and social distancing are required. Website: [www.juniorshow.org](http://www.juniorshow.org)

**WEDNESDAY MAY 12**  
**Poop in the Pasture? Ideas for Pasture Management (virtual):** 6-7:30 p.m. Join Clark Conservation District to learn about best

management practices for your pasture. Whether you continually graze or rotational graze, there are solutions to improve productivity. Lisa Schuchman from USDA-NRCS will teach you how to get the most out of your pasture system while also keeping poop out of surface waters. This is the second of a three-part webinar series, Manure Matters. Contact: Sam Frundle, sfrundle@clarkcd.org

**THURSDAY-SATURDAY MAY 13-15**  
**Washington FFA Convention (virtual):** The convention will maintain its traditional agenda, with one session streamed on Thurs-

day and Friday evenings and two on Saturday. The new state officers will be announced Saturday evening. Website: [www.washingtonffa.org/91st-convention](http://www.washingtonffa.org/91st-convention)

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY MAY 14-16**  
**California FFA’s 93rd State Leadership Conference (online):** This year California FFA members from all corners of the state will have access to the premier leadership event offered by our association as it will be delivered through a multi-faceted online platform. The conference will be three days jam packed with learning, growth and inspiration. Website: [www.calaged.org](http://www.calaged.org)

**WEDNESDAY MAY 19**  
**Manure Matters — Keeping Poop Out of the Water (virtual):** 6-7:30 p.m. Have you ever wondered what effect your critters’ poop is having on our watersheds? Join Clark Conservation District to learn about the monitoring Clark County does on bacteria in our waterways. Experts Brent Davis and Eric Lambert from Clark County will present on county regulations and cover what you can be doing to keep our local watersheds free of your livestock and horse manure. This is the third of a three-part webinar series, Manure Matters. Contact: Sam Frundle, sfrundle@clarkcd.org

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

**WEDNESDAY MAY 5**  
**Got Manure? Great Ideas for Manure Management (virtual):** 6-7:30 p.m. Do you have horses, livestock, or other critters that are making managing their manure difficult? Join Clark Conservation District for a presentation by Alayne Bickler of Horses for Clean Water about creative and practical solutions to solving your mud and manure issues and keeping our streams clean. This is the first of a three-part webinar series, Manure Matters. Contact: Sam