



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Martin and Joy Dally pet a Valais Blacknose lamb. The Dallys estimate this little ram will sell for \$15,000 to \$20,000.

DOWN SHEPHERDS LANE

Trailblazing sheep breeders improve U.S. industry through imported genetics

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

LEBANON, Ore. — A group of lambs bounded forward, leaping across pasture and irrigation pipes. Nearby, border collie puppies yapped and a peacock rustled his fan.

Joy Dally, 62, scooped up a little ram. Her husband, Martin, 74, ruffled its chin.

This little guy, one of the first purebred Valais Blacknose lambs born in the U.S., will fetch \$15,000 to \$20,000.

The Valais Blacknose is a heritage breed native to the Swiss Alps. The lambs, with their small black faces, ears, boots and kneecaps contrasted against white-wooled bodies, look like stuffed animals that belong in a toy store window.

“People say they can’t exist, they must be Photoshopped,” said Joy Dally.

The Dallys were the first to import Valais Blacknose genetics into the U.S. But the novelty importation is just their latest genetic venture.

Martin Dally was one of America’s earliest pioneers of laparoscopic artificial insemination, or LAI, in sheep. He and Joy have helped improve genetics in American fiber, meat, dairy and heritage sheep sectors. The couple has selected, purchased and imported genetics for 29 breeds, and on behalf of clients, imported 13 others.

“You find me somebody that knows more about the sheep industry than Martin and Joy, I’d like to meet them,” said Hank Vogler, a Nevada sheep rancher who runs about 10,000 Merinos. “They’re like the walking encyclopedia of sheep genetics.”

As the Dallys grow older, they’re traveling less for AI work and doing fewer importations, focusing instead on Valais Blacknose and their wool business. When the Dallys eventually retire, breeders say they wonder who will fill the gap.



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

A Valais Blacknose lamb.

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Hemp prices ‘race to the bottom,’ souring grower enthusiasm

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Stockpiles of unsold hemp are weighing down prices for the crop and souring enthusiasm among farmers who’d until recently hoped for a lucrative new market.

In a dynamic that’s not

uncommon in agriculture, hemp production has over-shot demand, which was once thought to be expansive, said Barry Cook, a hemp seed grower in Bor-ing, Ore.

“The consumer component of it was assumed, a bit like the Field of Dreams: Grow it and you will sell it,” he said.

That assumption turned out to be overly optimistic, as some growers are still sitting on dried hemp inventory from 2019, when the fervor to plant the crop was at its highest, Cook said.

Farmers are now being offered \$1 per pound or less for dry hemp biomass, which is roughly half as much as it costs to produce it, even among the most efficient growers, he said. “It just doesn’t work.”

In Oregon, a frontrunner



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Hemp plants dry after harvest. A surplus of hemp has driven down prices and reduced acreage of the crop.

in the hemp industry, acre-age soared after the crop was legalized at the national level in 2018. Growers planted nearly 64,000 acres in 2019, up from 11,500 acres the year before.

The economic problems facing hemp production became widely apparent that autumn, when many farm-ers weren’t able to access

enough harvesting and pro-cessing equipment.

Oregon’s production in 2020 dropped to 28,500 acres and appears to be fur-ther declining in 2021, with only 3,800 acres currently registered for planting — down roughly 50% from this time last year, according

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Appeals court: Declare chlorpyrifos safe or ban it

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

An appeals court panel April 29 ordered the Envi-ronmental Protection Agency to ban chlorpyrifos on all food crops within 60 days, unless the agency can definitively declare the resi-due left on food is safe.

The 2-1 ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals “virtually guaran-tees” the EPA will revoke chlorpyrifos tolerances on food, according to the dis-senting judge, Jay Bybee.

He said his colleagues overreached, substituting its opinion for the EPA’s and moving to ban one of agri-culture’s more important pesticides.

An EPA spokesman said the agency was reviewing the ruling.

“The agency is com-mitted to helping support and protect farmworkers and

their families while ensuring pesticides are used safely among the nation’s agricul-ture,” the agency said in a statement. “EPA will con-tinue to use sound science in the decision-making process under the Federal Insecti-cide, Fungicide and Roden-ticide Act.”

The ruling’s roots go back to a petition two anti-pesticide groups filed in 2007. The petition claimed chlorpyrifos was unsafe for infants and children. The petition started a long-run-ning dispute that has now involved the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations.

The Obama adminis-tration tentatively pro-posed banning chlorpyrifos in 2015, but resisted court orders to make a final deci-sion until the Trump admin-istration was in charge. The Trump administration

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