

People & Places

Small-scale rancher raises small-scale cattle

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

KALISPELL, Mont. — When Tami Riley decided to start raising cattle, she wanted a smaller breed to suit her 10 acres.

She found it in Dexter cattle, which are native to Ireland.

Riley sells the beef, and hopes to get into milking them.

The average height of a Dexter steer is 40 inches tall, and 700-900 pounds. An Angus steer is almost double that weight.

“The Dexter, you can raise on half the land, and for half the expense,” Riley said.

Riley raises the cattle as part of her family’s Life of Riley Ranch in Kalispell. The overall operation includes three generations of farmers and ranchers.

Riley currently has 13 head, and hopes to grow to 20. She’d eventually like to begin renting more land, but doesn’t want more than 30 animals.

Her cattle are bred to be unhorned, an extra precaution.

“They’re very gentle — for having children around, they’re one of the gentlest breeds,” she said. “They have good temperaments, and they don’t have calving problems when they have their babies.”

It’s common practice to grass-finish Dexter cattle



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Tami Riley with her Dexter cattle on her ranch in Kalispell, Mont.

because there’s less excess fat and more flavor in the meat.

“It’s very tender meat,” Riley said. “Part of that is because we hold them a little bit longer, about 28 months, to full butchering age.”

Riley hopes the cattle will sustain and pay for themselves within the next four years.

Dexter cattle are dual-purpose animals, offering both meat and milk, said Stefanie Millman, Region 2 director for the American Dexter Cattle Association, based in Auburn, Wash.

“They will lay down some

fat, and their milk is very rich,” she said.

The association has 1,825 members and added nearly 300 in the last year. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Millman said, “people want to do their own thing, raise their own beef and milk their own cow for products.”

Millman estimates the average herd size is three or four, but notes that some breeders run up to 60 head.

Large-scale ranchers rejected the animals in 1970s because they didn’t produce the needed quantities of beef and milk, Millman said, add-

ing that they are more suitable for a homestead or hobby farm.

“Some of the heavy milkers will do 5 to 6 gallons a day, which is more than enough milk for a family,” she said. “If they have just a couple acres, they’re able to own a cow that they can milk.”

Riley is in the growing stage, so she’s balancing the costs of getting established by working two part-time jobs, with the Montana Emu Ranch and the Lasalle Equine Clinic.

“She’s very responsible and has a vision, and I think

Western Innovator

TAMI RILEY

Occupation: Owner, Life of Riley Ranch

Age: 26

Hometown: Arlington, Wash.

Current location: Kalispell, Mont.

Education: High school diploma, local expo classes

Family: Single. “I have a big family though, surrounding me.”

Website: lifeofrileyranch.org

she’ll do well,” said Don Collins, owner of the Montana Emu Ranch in Kalispell.

“Her character is impeccable,” said farmer Bruce Riley, no relation to Tami Riley. He sells hay to Tami Riley and knows her from church.

“She has great character,” Bruce Riley added. “She’s honorable, honest and trustworthy. Her heart is in the right place. She’s a role model, for sure.”

Invasive jumping worms wiggle way across Oregon

By MIA RYDER-MARKS
Capital Press

After hitchhiking a ride from Asia, jumping worms have been wiggling themselves across Oregon since 2016, said Sam Chan, an invasive species specialist at Oregon State University.

The *Amyntas agrestis*, known as the “jumping worm,” gets its name from erratic thrashing of its body. They range from 1.5 to 8 inches long and are a glossy brown or gray color with a milky white band around its middle.

“If you see this worm that looks like an earthworm that has an unusually snake-like movement, and it wiggles and it literally jumps off your hand, then it’s very likely that it’s a jumping worm,” said Chan.

Jumping worms thrive in climates with hot summers and cold winters, but in Oregon they are not as picky. Populations can be found along the Interstate 5 corridor in moist, warmer weather and sprinkled along Pendleton’s Interstate 84 section with its dry, warm climate. They are commonly found in home gardens and can live in nurseries.

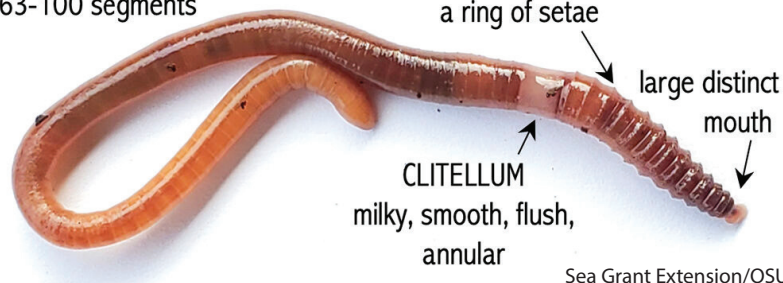
However, there have been no reports of the worms in commercial greenhouses in Oregon.

Adult jumping worms create cocoons that are about the size of a grain of rice. The eggs hatch in April and May. The worms will grow into

JUMPING WORM

Amyntas agrestis

SIZE: 70-160mm x 5-8mm
63-100 segments



adults in the summer until they are ready to reproduce in August and September. In late fall to early winter, the adult jumping worms begin dying off due to the cold weather. The cycle picks up again in the spring.

The worms are extremely invasive, and are unintentionally spread, often by people in the agriculture industry.

Fishermen also buy them as bait, and they are used in compost bins.

However, Chan said this is not recommended as it continues the spread of the population.

Despite looking relatively harmless, jumping worms are detrimental to landscapes.

They live near the soil surface, unlike other earthworms, which inhabit the lower organic layer. This allows the jumping worms to devour

the organic matter and leaf litter that plants depend on to grow and survive.

Unlike earthworms, they can burrow deep tunnels in the soil and release feces as they go. The castings resemble cooked hamburger, said Chan. In their path, they leave behind loose soil with a texture similar to coffee grounds. The soil can no longer retain moisture and lacks nutrients.

Also, worm activity eliminates insulation around plants and allows heat to penetrate the soil.

Another notable characteristic of the worm is its giant mouth, which opens like a mechanical excavator.

“It’s a little bit like that from the horror movie,” said Chan. The worms have insatiable appetites and can out-compete other native organisms.

Minimizing spread

It is impossible to tell just how many jumping worms are in the state, said Chan. However, they occur at higher densities than other earthworms. In one square yard of soil, thousands of jumping worms can be found.

Right now, there are no biological controls or certified pesticides that can be used to eradicate the jumping worm. Some early work looked into fertilizers containing saponin, which is plant-derived glucose that can repel the worms.

“The best way to minimize their spread right now is just be able to recognize them,” said Chan. If detected in gardens or crops, he advised contacting the Oregon Invasives Hotline and submitting a photo for identification.

If there is a contained population in a landscape, jumping worms can be placed in plastic bags and exposed to the sun. This will generate a temperature of up to 160 degrees, “which is more than enough to be lethal to the worms,” said Chan.

To stall the spread when gardening or cultivating crops, tools and work gear such as boots should be cleaned, as cocoons can stick to them and spread. Despite the vast population in Oregon, there are still opportunities to stop the population from growing further.

“We still have a chance to keep them contained, because they’re not everywhere,” said Chan.

Huge antique tractor collection to be auctioned

By MIA RYDER-MARKS
Capital Press

HERMISTON, Ore. — In the early 1980s, Tony Amstad bought a John Deere Model R diesel tractor, and his collection only grew from there.

“That was always kind of my favorite tractor,” Amstad said. “After I bought that one, I got the disease.”

Amstad has collected more than 100 John Deere and Caterpillar tractors — most of which he personally restored with the help of his nephew, Todd.

With his wife, DeAnn, Tony Amstad owns a 2,400-acre farm in Umatilla County, where they grow potatoes.



Courtesy of Booker Auction Co.

Tony and DeAnn Amstad with a portion of their tractor collection at their Hermiston, Ore., farm.

For the past two years, Amstad has been toying with the idea of

parting with his tractors and “trying to get the courage to do it.”

Now, he is ready to pass his collection on.

On Aug. 21, the Amstads will auction their collection and a handful of classic automobiles.

Booker Auction Co. is in charge of the auction, which will be at the Amstad farm in Hermiston, Ore. Booker Auction is a multi-generational company based in Eltopia, Wash., and has been doing business with the Amstads for years.

“We’re super excited about being able to showcase his legacy,” said Camille Booker, a third-generation auctioneer.

An auction preview will be from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 20 and

from 9 a.m. to noon Aug. 21 at the Amstad farm, 79480 Canal Road, Hermiston.

A band will play in the afternoon, and food and beverages will be provided for visitors, said Booker.

The collection will also be available for online preview on Aug. 20. More information can be found about registration at www.bookerauction.com.

The auction will begin at noon Aug. 21 on-site and online.

“I’ve enjoyed them over the years and I just feel it is kind of time for me to get rid of them,” Tony Amstad said. “I mean, I got good health, but I still think it’s time for somebody else to enjoy them.”

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY AUG. 11-12

Soil Health Institute Annual Meeting (virtual): The two-day event will cover soil health topics with a lineup of agricultural leaders, scientists and practitioners. Website: www.soilhealthinstitute.org

THURSDAY-FRIDAY AUG. 12-13

Idaho Milk Processors Association Annual Conference:

Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, Idaho. The conference will focus on issues facing processors and include an industry leader panel discussion. Website: www.impa.us

MONDAY-TUESDAY AUG. 16-17

Idaho Water Users Association Water Law & Resources Issues Seminar: Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, Idaho. The seminar will provide updates on important issues to water users, including wildfire, water supply and the future of irrigation

systems. Website: www.iwua.org

TUESDAY AUG. 17 Intro to Experimental Statistics: 8:30 a.m. This course will teach statistical thinking concepts that are essential to learning from data and communicating key insights to your organization, clients, or suppliers. Join Catherine Cantley, extension professor at the University of Idaho and TechHelp processing specialist, as we explore the fundamentals of “storytelling with data” in a practical industry-based approach.

Website: <https://bit.ly/3AF17f3>

WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY AUG. 18-20

Farwest Show: Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland. The Farwest Show, the biggest green industry trade show in the West, is produced by the Oregon Association of Nurseries, a trade organization that represents and serves the interests of the ornamental horticulture industry. For more information, go to www.FarwestShow.com

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

TUESDAY-THURSDAY AUG. 10-12

2021 Cattle Industry Convention & Trade Show: Gaylord Opryland Resort, Nashville, Tenn. The convention will include educational seminars, exhibits and networking. Website: <http://convention.ncba.org>

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Index

Markets 12
Opinion 6

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