

Idaho Innovators

Digging for data helps farmers

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

MOSCOW, Idaho — Brenda Schroeder's work ranges from investigating a foreign grass pathogen that can kill livestock to determining the best soil for growing potatoes and how to most effectively cure onions.

"A theme to my work is trying to get knowledge into the hands of stakeholders about the biology of their systems,"

said the University of Idaho associate research professor of entomology, plant pathology and nematology. "And the biology of their system includes the pathogens, but also aspects of beneficials. If we can get that information into the hands of stakeholders, they can make educated and sound decisions based on data as opposed to supposition."

The Moscow-based



Kurtis Schroeder

Brenda Schroeder, in an on-farm laboratory, inoculates onion cultivars to determine different resistance responses to pathogens when onions are in storage.

Schroeder is part of a national team that for the past eight years has been researching a grass pathogen that could pose a biosecurity risk if it enters the U.S.

She studies rathayibacter, a group of bacteria that cause gummosis in grass seed heads. A close cousin of these bacteria in Australia causes toxic staggers and is fatal if grazing animals consume it. She is working to determine the distri-

bution of the U.S. bacteria and is studying their genetic profiles to determine if they have the potential to produce the toxin.

The bacteria require a nematode to vector the pathogen from soil to plant. The team is working to determine if nematodes here could vector the Australian pathogen should it enter the U.S.

Schroeder said that knowledge could affect how

BRENDA SCHROEDER

Age: 53

Occupation: University of Idaho associate research professor, entomology, plant pathology and nematology. Member American Phytopathological Society.

Education: Ph.D., Washington State University; M.S., North Carolina State University; B.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Home: Pullman, Wash.

Family: Husband Kurtis Schroeder, UI cropping systems agronomist and associate professor. Two children.

Hobbies: Family activities, skiing, camping, crocheting.

a U.S.-bound shipment of grass seed or hay is handled if it is found to have the Australian pathogen.

"We are now focusing on nematode-bacterial association to try to quantify the native strains in association with their nematode vectors," she said. The nematode vectors will be studied in a high-biosecurity lab in Maryland, which has a sample of the Australia strain.

Schroeder is also working with a national group to investigate the micro-biome of potato soils. The four-year project is in its second year.

"The goal is to identify the biochemical and biological parameters of what healthy potato soil is for Idaho," she said. "We are just at the beginning of looking at what microbes are present in a healthy soil compared to a soil that is not as beneficial for potato production."

Data likely will show which organisms are present and at what densities in healthy potato soil.

The work could ultimately show soil productivity potential, pathogen risk "and beneficial organisms

that we may not have known were present in the soil prior to this analysis," Schroeder said.

It also has the potential to show a producer which microbes could be added to help soil rebound after fumigation.

Another project focuses on onions.

Schroeder for years has been researching how to best protect onions from post-harvest bacterial diseases.

Growers' tools for ridding onions of excess moisture include field curing, and adding air flow and heat after they're stored.

Ironically, some curing temperatures can alleviate problems with one pathogen and elevate the risk of damage from others, Schroeder said.

If the crop is at risk for bacterial problems, "then it is much better to cure onions at a lower temperature for a longer period of time than at a higher temperature for a short period of time" before they are stored, she said.

This story first appeared March 26, 2021.

Startup business supports local agriculture

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Local meat and potato producers and processors are the foundation of a new, first-of-its-kind business in south-central Idaho that delivers local, high-quality beef, pork, chicken and potatoes to customers' doorsteps.

The Meat and Potato Company began operations in 2020 and is already seeing high demand for its restaurant-grade products.

The business is the brainchild of Travis Dixon, who spent 25 years in foodservice sales.

"Our purpose is to give our customers the experience and flavor of a steakhouse delivered right to their door," he said.

A little more than eight years ago, Dixon started thinking about a home-delivery service that could provide local, high-quality products directly to consumers.

"I always thought there was going to be a need for something like this," he said.

He started looking into website domain names and purchased meatandpotatoco.com.

"I was hoping to do something in the future, figuring people would be buying things online," he said.

He also started thinking about partnerships with local ranchers, producers and processors. But with a busy family life and his



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Travis Dixon, owner of the Meat and Potato Company, with some of the products he offers for home delivery.

job as a district sales manager for a full-line foodservice distributor it was easy to lose focus.

Growing requests from friends and acquaintances wanting restaurant-type products they couldn't get at retail stores got him back on track.

They were looking for things like aged products for steakhouses, higher-end products like giant potatoes and colossal shrimp — products that allow restaurants to provide a good eating experience, he said.

His business can deliver on those items, as well as high-quality, affordable items people can get in grocery stores.

"We're trying to hit a couple of niches," he said.

The business also deliv-

TRAVIS DIXON

Owner: Meat and Potato Company

Age: 44

Location: Twin Falls, Idaho

Background: 25 years in foodservice sales

Affiliations: Approved by the Idaho Potato Commission, working toward a local supplier listing with the Idaho Beef Council

Education: Studied business at College of Southern Idaho

Family: Wife, Jamie; son, Teylor, 18; daughter Alyx, 20

Online: For more information, visit: meatandpotatoco.com

ers on consumers' growing desire for local foods from a locally owned business that keeps money in the local economy, he said.

The company's aged beef comes from cattle raised at Five Rivers feedlot in Malta, Idaho, southwest of Burley. All of the cattle are from the Northwest, and 63% are from Idaho. All of the feed for the cattle is

grown in the Mini-Cassia area.

The company's jumbo russet potatoes and unique blend of rainbow fingerling potatoes, sought after by top chefs, are grown in the Magic Valley and Mini-Cassia areas.

Dixon has also partnered with Independent Meat of Twin Falls to provide a wide variety of quality pork

products, and he sources his hormone-free, antibiotic-free chicken from Draper Valley Farms in Oregon and Washington.

He wants product that is "the closest I can get it and the best I can find," he said.

The business sources product from more than 300 family farms in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest.

In addition to local meat and potatoes, the company provides lobster tails and jumbo and colossal shrimp.

The company offers free local delivery and is currently shipping to 38 states, sending out a couple of hundred boxes a month.

"I have orders going out all over the place," he said.

Another plus for environmentally minded customers is that all the company's packaging is recyclable or biodegradable.

This story first appeared Feb. 26, 2021.

Call Now & Keep Checking Back on Well Stem Pipe!

9/16 Used Cable in Stock We Deliver Straight to You!

ROCKY MOUNTAIN STEEL

- USED CABLE
- ALL FENCING HARDWARE AVAILABLE
- CABLE CLAMPS

Direct Ship & Cutting Available

400 3rd Ave. North Nampa, ID 83687
800-851-8612
208-466-0036
rockymtnsteel@integra.net

5274195-1

WESTERN TRAILERS
BOISE, IDAHO

WWW.WESTERNTRAILER.COM
ALL TRAILERS IN STOCK & READY FOR DELIVERY!

2014 50' Timpfe Super Hopper
Price on Request

2018 42' Timpfe Hopper Tandem Axle
Price on Request

2005 53' Western Elite Quad Axle
Price on Request

2008 48' Western Elite with Rear Sliding Axle **\$16,500**

888.344.2539

Great Dane

5274266-1

FRESH FEED MATTERS

Livestock feed loses nutrients as its ages on store shelves. We make it fresh, daily, at our Idaho Mill.

TO LEARN MORE COME MEET OUR KNOWLEDGEABLE SALES TEAM

Pride
by Simplot

PACIFIC NORTHWEST LOCATIONS

CALDWELL
(208) 459-0806 • 101 Rodeo Ave • Caldwell, ID 83605

JEROME
(208) 733-6145 • 1100 W. Main St. • Jerome, ID 83338

BURLEY
(208) 878-7224 • 1001 W. Main St. • Burley, ID 83318

SUNNYSIDE
(509) 836-0267 • 304 Yakima Valley Highway • Sunnyside, WA 83605

For More Info. & Bulk Sales Call: 800-632-3005

Simplot
WESTERN STOCKMEN'S

5277103-1