

Chlorpyrifos

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from the 9th Circuit to act on chlorpyrifos. The court never ordered the agency to ban the chemical, but made clear its preference.

The 9th Circuit's last decision, issued in April 2021, was written by Jed Rakoff, a U.S. district judge for Southern New York, who was a visiting judge on a three-

judge panel that heard advocacy groups argue for a ban.

EPA's delays "exposed a generation of American children to unsafe levels of chlorpyrifos," wrote Rakoff, who gave the agency 60 days to ban or modify chlorpyrifos' uses. A dissenting judge said the deadline likely made a ban inevitable.

The new lawsuit shifts the issue to an appeals court that covers Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

OTHER PLAINTIFFS

The other farm groups in the chlorpyrifos lawsuit are:

American Crystal Sugar Co., American Soybean Association, American Sugarbeet Growers Association, Cherry Marketing Institute, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association;

Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Iowa Soybean Association, Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative, Minnesota Soybean Growers Asso-

ciation, Missouri Soybean Association; National Association of Wheat Growers, National Cotton Council of America, Nebraska Soybean Association, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association;

South Dakota Soybean Association, Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative and United States Beet Sugar Association.

Anderson: Through the years, farm improved its genetic lines, reputation

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Reed knew from an early age that he wanted to farm, but he had to start from scratch because his dad had also married young and was only 40 when Reed was 20 — nowhere near ready to retire and pass on his property.

The young couple started small. They bought 150 ewes, rented and leased land and lived in a single-wide mobile home.

As pieces of land near them went up for sale, they bought what they could.

The couple had three boys. The eldest died of cancer in the 2000. The younger two became part of the family business.

Reed recalls building fences with Robyn, their diapered boys slung in baby backpacks.

"It's the life they grew up with," he said.

In the early days, the farm handled its own distribution.

Travis Anderson, 33, the youngest son, said he remembers many days as a teenager waking up at 5 a.m. to make van deliveries "before distribution centers gave us the blink of an eye."

Through the years, the farm improved its genetic lines and reputation, but there was an important aspect of the industry that they had little control over: processing.

The family estimates that the number of sheep in Oregon's Willamette Valley fell from more than 500,000 in 1927 to about 70,000 in 2010, and with that decline came processor consolidation, meaning fewer harvest options for sheep producers.

"We were kind of faced with a dilemma," said Reed Anderson.

Around 2011, the family began toying with the idea of creating its own processing facility, which would give it more stability, price control and ability to expand.

In 2012, with "all the money (they) could scratch up" and backing from Northwest Farm Credit Services, they took a \$2.5 million risk to build a plant: Kalapooia Valley Grass-Fed Processing.

Running a vertically integrated business, Reed Anderson said, is "a whole new way of thinking."

The Kalapooia plant

To anyone who's been inside meat plants, the thing that immediately stands out about the Kalapooia plant is how clean and orderly it is.

"It's just about having a sense of pride. When people come to a clean facility, they want to come back. We wanted people to come back," said Travis Anderson, 33.

The Kalapooia facility is a USDA-inspected plant, meaning a USDA inspector must be on the premises during production.

Getting the plant running was no small feat. Travis Anderson said it makes him chuckle to hear people talk about starting processing plants as though it's easy. In reality, he said, it involved



A ewe with her two lambs in the Anderson lambing barn.

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press



Lamb and goat carcasses at Kalapooia Valley Grass-Fed Processing.

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press



Reed Anderson at one of the properties his family leases for their sheep.

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press



An employee at Kalapooia Valley Grass-Fed Processing puts packaged meat in boxes.

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

years of work, certifications and investments.

The 15,000-square-foot plant currently harvests and processes about 25,000 lambs and goats, plus 6,000 head of cattle annually. Harvest is normally once a week, 550 to 600 head in a day.

Though the Andersons primarily built the plant to process their animals — they raise thousands of sheep and about 250 head of cattle annually — they also co-pack for other brands, including Carman Ranch and Painted Hills Natural Grass-Fed Beef. The Andersons raise enough animals for the plant to be self-sustaining, but co-packing provides additional volume.

Over time, the Andersons have added coolers, freezers and a rollstock packaging machine that automatically vacuum-seals meat.

In the near future, the family plans to look into what grant money is available from USDA to support the plant's long-term needs; Reed said the plant needs more skilled meat-cutting employees, for example.

The family members say they try to be sustainable, running a water-reclamation program that reuses water in pastures after it's recycled through the plant's sanitation program.

The most important aspect of the plant, the Andersons say, is its focus on humane handling.

"That's the key to everything," said Travis.

Because most of the Andersons' sheep are pastured within approximately 20 miles of the plant, the short travel distance reduces stress on animals.

It also has economic benefits: Meat from relaxed animals tastes better. Accord-

ing to a 2020 study in the Asian-Australian Journal of Animal Sciences, animal stress and dehydration prior to slaughter negatively affect the flavor and tenderness of meat.

"Our lambs have plenty of water and a short trip," said Reed Anderson.

Prior to building the plant, Reed Anderson talked with Temple Grandin, a prominent animal behaviorist and Colorado State University professor, on how best to design the facility.

Based on Grandin's advice, the family created a curved corral chute animals walk through when they're headed toward the kill floor. The shape of the chute tricks animals into thinking they're headed back to pasture, minimizing their stress.

Anderson Ranches is a Certified Humane program, involving a third-party audit of the operation.

Markets

The Andersons sell into retail and wholesale markets.

Pre-COVID, 70% of the ranch's lamb went to food-service and 30% to retail. Now, it's the reverse.

"When COVID first hit, everyone overnight was devastated by the loss of foodservice and dining, and Anderson Ranches was no different. They were heavily invested in fine dining," said Wortman, of the Lamb Board. "But they were so resilient and they pivoted quickly."

As processors rerouted lamb to retail, something unexpected happened: Sales went up.

According to USDA's Economic Research Service, the highest lamb consumption in the past 100 years was 5 pounds per con-

sumer in 1912. Then lamb got a bad rap during World War II, when returning servicemen wanted nothing to do with it after years of eating canned mutton.

By 2011, the average American consumed 0.6 pound of lamb yearly.

Lamb resurged during COVID, with home chefs and adventurous millennial eaters driving demand. Per capita consumption in 2020 was 1.1 pounds.

It didn't slow down. According to Peter Camino, chairman of the Lamb Board, per capita lamb consumption in 2021 was 1.36 pounds.

That's still niche compared to other proteins — the average American eats 60 pounds of beef, 100 pounds of chicken and 50 pounds of pork annually — but sheep producers are still excited.

Prices, too, are strong. According to a March 2022 American Sheep Industry Association report, the sheep and lamb industry saw prices reach "historic levels" in 2021. Feeder and slaughter lamb prices hit a record high with price gains of more than 40%.

Reed Anderson estimated the family's products are in about 60 retail stores, and the farm sells to restaurants through about 12 distributors.

The Andersons say their success has largely been tied to growing consumer demand for lamb that is local, humanely handled and grass-fed.

The farm

The Anderson farm is a quilt of properties pieced together over decades: green pastures, blue hills, flocks of grazing sheep. It looks like a postcard.

But behind the idyllic picture lies dirt-under-the-fingernails hard work.

Jake Anderson, 35, Reed and Robyn's son, is responsible for the farm side of the business.

According to Jake, the family has about 3,000 ewes, sold about 50 rams as breeding stock last year and had between 3,500 to 4,000 lambs born this spring. The farm also buys feeder lambs.

The Andersons raise their sheep on open ranges and pastures with unlimited grazing. They mainly raise Dorsets and Suffolks, English breeds tailored to their microclimate. A few times, Jake has imported genetics from Australia and England.

Reed Anderson said the family breeds sheep for three main traits: hardiness on pasture, good maternal traits and animals that produce large racks, loins and legs — high-value cuts.

The family has innovated in many ways: doing multi-species grazing with cattle and sheep, installing French drain tiles in waterlogged fields and running sheep on annual ryegrass during the cold months, whose seed the family later harvests as a secondary income source.

That's what Jake loves most about farming: the variety.

"It's something different every single day. You're not stuck in the same place doing the same thing," Jake said.

But the farm also faces difficulties.

"Labor is a huge challenge," said Robyn Anderson.

Reed agreed, saying the pending overtime pay rule for workers will be hard on farm businesses.

The Andersons are also grappling with rising costs, especially for fuel and fertilizer. Although lamb prices are high, input costs are also high, so they say profit margins are static.

One of the greatest difficulties is predatory pressure. On average, the farm loses 3% to 4% of its sheep annually to predators, including eagles, coyotes and cougars, although losses have been as high as 20%.

The day the Capital Press visited, the family spotted a cougar on one of their ranges via a trail camera. Reed Anderson said Oregon's rules around hunting cougars have sometimes made it difficult to protect livestock.

Despite challenges, however, Reed said he loves farming and wants to help young farmers succeed.

A legacy

Jake Anderson said he thinks what makes the family business work is that each family member has a role and space to work independently.

Reed said that was part of his parenting style and business strategy.

"I'm not a micro-manager," he said. "I didn't chew my boys out. They got their independence."

Reed and Robyn say they've enjoyed watching their kids and grandkids grow up on the farm.

The Andersons have also helped others outside their family circle.

A young sheep ranching couple in Southern Oregon, Woody Babcock and his wife Cora Wahl, say the Andersons helped them get off their feet.

Babcock recalls meeting Reed Anderson at a country music festival years ago and offering him a plate of his mom's cookies in exchange for advice on how to run a successful sheep business.

"That plate of cookies got me further than anything else in life," Babcock joked. "The Andersons have been a huge inspiration to me. From my perspective, it's a really big team effort."

As the Andersons gear up for another Easter, they say they're excited about their industry with young farmers at the helm.

"But I'm not ready to stop," said Reed Anderson. "I'll be 63 in May, but I don't feel 63. I'm still ambitious."

Grazing: 'Economic harm never outweighs irreparable environmental harm'

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"There are a lot of other places the cattle can go," said Mac Lacy, attorney for the environmental groups during oral arguments March 28. "The permittees, we believe, have greatly overstated the harm they may suffer."

Grazing in the 13 pastures must end to allow for research

into its impacts on sage grouse habitat, which has already been delayed to the detriment of that species and the environment, he said.

"Economic harm never outweighs irreparable environmental harm," Lacy said.

The environmental plaintiffs would suffer "severe" hardship from continued grazing, but the impact on BLM would be min-

imal while the affected ranchers have been on notice for years that livestock would be barred from the pastures for research, he said.

"It's hard to accept the permittees were somehow caught by surprise," Lacy said, noting that the plan to stop grazing was enacted seven years ago, while the ranchers were formally notified two years ago.

Attorneys for the BLM and Cahill Ranches, which intervened in the lawsuit, argued that a temporary restraining order isn't justified because livestock grazing won't cause irreparable harm to sage grouse populations, the environment or the nonprofits.

Barring livestock would be an "extraordinary remedy" that would be far more detrimental to

the ranch than any harms to the environmental plaintiffs if grazing continues another year, the defendants argued.

"At core, the plaintiffs' argument is one of impatience rather than harm," said Arwyn Carroll, attorney for BLM. "They have not identified any data that would be lost or not collected if the closures don't happen this season."