



Alexandre Family Farm

Bernabe Luna collects eggs from a chicken coop on the Alexandre Family Farm near Crescent City, Calif. The Alexandres turned a small project for their kids into a major business that produces 20,000 eggs a day.

Family activity hatches into full-time egg business

By **CRAIG REED**
For the Capital Press

CRESCENT CITY, Calif. — A chicken-and-egg project to give their young kids something to do has turned into a major operation for the Blake and Stephanie Alexandre family over the past decade.

Alexandre Kids Eggs has grown from a small 4-H and FFA project with 150 chickens laying eggs that were sold at the local farm market to 30,000 chickens laying daily about 20,000 eggs that can be found on the refrigerated shelves in about 500 stores, including Costco and Whole Foods.

“It’s a special story so we’ve been keeping our label, Alexandre Kids Eggs,” said Christian Alexandre, who is now 30. “I now have two kids myself and we live on the egg ranch.”

Blake and Stephanie Alexandre, owners of Alexandre Family Farm, are fourth generation dairy farmers.

With the help of their five children, they’ve blended the chicken-and-egg business into the farm. The dairy and egg operations are certified organic. The farm, by focusing on the health of its ecological system and not just on high yields, has also earned regenerative status as verified by the Savory Institute.

Sons Joseph and Christian Alexandre and daughter Vanessa Nunes became full-time employees of the ranch after each earned degrees at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo.

Joseph Alexandre works on the business side, Christian oversees the outside management and helps with sales and marketing, and Nunes works in sales, marketing and purchasing supplies. The parents are also involved with management and finances.

“It was all about raising kids,” Blake Alexandre said of bringing chickens onto the farm. “We raised our kids to work hard, to understand the farm, the soil and the process and ultimately to connect with consumers. It’s been successful.”

When the Alexandre kids were in middle and grade school, the family visited Pennsylvania and saw a Mennonite family with a mobile coop and chickens. Blake and Stephanie Alexandre saw an opportunity for their children and upon returning home, purchased some chicks. A hay wagon was turned into a chicken coop.

While in high school, Christian Alexandre turned his chicken-and-egg work into a FFA project. The project won state and national poultry proficiency honors. In 2011, the FFA student was named a California State Star Farmer and he and his project were one of four national finalists for Star in Agribusiness honors.

Through the years, there’s been a couple design changes for the coops as the chicken population has increased, but now 60-by-35-foot coops are on sleds. The hatchboxes within the coop have an artificial turf floor that slopes slightly so the laid eggs roll down to a fabric belt. The conveyor belt can then be cranked, carrying the eggs toward a collection point.

Outside each coop, a chicken netting fence encloses about an acre of pasture, keeping the chickens in and for the most part keeping predators like coyotes, rac-

coons, opossums and skunks out. Each paddock contains about 3,000 chickens.

Each Tuesday and Friday, the coop, fencing and chickens are moved to the next acre. Each of the ranch’s 18 coops rotate over 12 to 15 acres of pasture.

“It’s a pretty efficient and protective system,” Christian Alexandre said.

Grazing around the chicken paddocks are dairy cows and calves. Christian Alexandre explained the dairy animals like to graze grass that is 8 to 18 inches tall and then the chicken paddocks are moved onto the grazed ground where the birds like 2- to 6-inch tall grass.

“The cows are free range and the chickens are pasture raised, moving behind the cows,” he said.

Blake Alexandre said that “going the extra mile” in providing for the chickens “has produced an extra special egg” that has developed a following of consumers.

“We produce some of the highest priced eggs, but our chickens are on green pasture and get organic feed,” Blake Alexandre said. “It’s all very natural, we aren’t artificial.”

“It’s a project that turned into a major business,” he added.

Survey helps flood district crews steer clear of brown trout spawning beds

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

A cooperative effort has helped crews clearing portions of the Boise River avoid damaging spawning grounds for brown trout.

Boise River Flood Control District No. 10 maintenance crews avoided about 200 brown trout spawning areas, called redds, over a 16-mile stretch this winter as they cleared flow impediments ahead of irrigation season.

The district, with Boise Valley Fly Fishers and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, last fall identified the redds and marked them using GPS technology. Volunteers scouted the river looking for them.

The district received recognition from the other partners in late March as maintenance season ended.

“It was a successful project because they missed 99% of the redds by knowing where they were,” Troy Pearse, Boise Valley Fly Fishers conservation director, said in a release. The workers, who often drive heavy equipment into the channel, “bent



Troy Pearse

Brown trout caught and released on the Boise River.

over backwards to make sure they didn’t harm the redds while doing winter maintenance work.”

Pinpointing brown trout redds is important because the species spawns in fall to produce fry that emerge in early spring — the same time district maintenance crews are at work. Brown trout make the spawning beds of small-diameter gravel.

Art Butts, Fish and Game southwest region fisheries manager, said the department appreciates the partnership.

“We’ve come a long way in the last 10 years when it comes to managing the Boise River in a sustainable

way,” he said.

The district at the start of last year helped add gravel in some areas of the river to benefit fish. Pearse said in an interview that the recent work to mark brown trout redds should increase fry counts, which are often down in low-water years. Snow-water equivalent in the Boise River Basin tracked about one-third below normal in late March.

The district removes debris and makes repairs before flows increase for irrigation and other uses.

Crews in low-water years can cover more river miles in the service area, which runs from Garden

City to Caldwell.

The work is performed under permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Idaho Department of Water Resources, and a memorandum of understanding with the state Department of Environmental Quality.

“We work with partners on the river,” district Project Manager Mike Dimmick told Capital Press. “It’s easier when folks join hands.”

Pearse said protecting trout and habitat are critical as population growth increases fishing and other pressures. Naturally reproducing brown trout dominate a river stretch in the service area.

Central Washington Agricultural Museum reopens

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**
Capital Press

UNION GAP, Wash. — The Central Washington Agricultural Museum — one of the largest museums west of the Mississippi devoted to agricultural history — had its grand reopening last weekend.

All exhibitions and buildings are now open for the first time since 2019, when many of them were closed due to COVID-19.

The museum, founded in 1978, was designed to collect and showcase the agricultural heritage of the Yakima Valley and Central Washington.

The newest exhibit is the Young’s Cabin — a small, white building that once housed the farmworkers who worked in the region’s orchards and

on the farms. The exhibit tells the history of the cabins, one-room wooden structures that were manufactured from the 1930s through 1950s by Young’s Lumber Co. of Yakima, a company founded by Fred J. Young in 1932.

The cabins were built on skids and were easy to move.

Farmers and orchardists across Central Washington bought hundreds of the small cabins to serve as migrant and seasonal worker housing during that era. Prior to the invention of Young’s cabins, according to the museum, farmworkers generally lived in cars, tents or temporary camps.

The museum also has 33 stations on 15 acres. Other highlights include:

- A farm equipment yard with 150

antique tractors and more than 1,000 pieces of historic machinery.

- A replica of the 1908 Keys Homestead, a historic homestead that belonged to a dairy family.

- The Amos Cabin built in 1917, an example of a pioneer cabin.

- The Lindeman Building, with historic equipment and tractor-related exhibits.

- A working 1930s sawmill with demonstrations.

- The Olde Yakima Letterpress Museum.

- A demonstration of how farmers used horsepower before the steam engine.

The museum will also resume hosting events, including Union Gap’s Old Town Days and Civil War Re-enactment.

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