

POLLUTION UPDATE

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recently sent Columbus, Ohio-based **Hexion Inc.** a pre-enforcement notice regarding multiple hazardous waste law violations at Hexion's facility along the Willamette River in Springfield. DEQ observed numerous hazardous waste labeling violations during a May 2 inspection, as well as an "open 55-gallon drum of phenol contaminated insulation from a leaking pipeline." DEQ characterized phenol as "a highly toxic hazardous waste." DEQ also discovered that Hexion had failed to conduct weekly hazardous waste inspections, and that Hexion hadn't conducted these inspections since January 1. DEQ characterized the violations observed during the inspection as "pos[ing] the risk of significant environmental harm," and has referred them to its Office of Compliance & Enforcement for additional enforcement.

Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

A story in the June 8 issue of *EW* gave the wrong date and time for two performances by **Dear Lemon Trees** and stated incorrectly that the shows were sold out. The trio will perform at 8 pm Sunday, June 18, at the Axe and Fiddle in Cottage Grove. Admission is free. The story also gave incorrect information for a June 14 concert at Territorial Vineyards.

In our June 1 Summer Guide we ran a listing about a **solar eclipse viewing** on August 21, from 9-11:30 am at Alton Baker Park, hosted by the Eugene Astronomical Society. Oops. That event in the park is not occurring but Oregon State University is holding a three-day eclipse celebration, check it out at communications.oregonstate.edu/space/events/festival-information.

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY INFORMATION

Weyerhaeuser Company, 541-746-2511, plans to hire Strata Forestry Inc, 541-726-0845, to spray 80.8 acres near Deerhorn Road off the McKenzie Highway, with Garlon 3A, Forest Crop Oil and/or High-Light Blue. See ODF notification 2017-771-06981, call Brian Dally at 541-726-3588 with questions.

Dan Kintigh, 541-746-1842, plans to spray 168.9 acres south of Deerhorn Road and Hendricks Bridge Park off the McKenzie Highway, with Roundup Pro, Garlon 3A, Polaris SP, Forest Crop Oil and/or AD-Wet 90 CA. See ODF notification 2017-771-07209, call Brian Dally at 541-726-3588 with questions.

Giustina Resources, 541-485-1500, plans to hire Strata Forestry, 541-726-0845, to spray 6.2 acres southwest of Finn Creek with glyphosate and/or sulfometuron methyl. See ODF notification 2017-771-07223, call Brian Dally at 541-726-3588 with questions.

Mason Bruce & Girard, 541-973-1953, plans to hire Nick's Timber Services Inc, 503-910-1120, to spray 408.9 acres north and south of Highway 126 between Florence and Mapleton and near South Canary Road with glyphosate, imazapyr, metsulfuron methyl, sulfometuron methyl, aminopyralid and metsulfuron methyl and/or MSO Concentrate. See ODF notifications 2017-781-07114 and 2017-781-07120, call Brian Reel at 541-997-8713 with questions.

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NEWS

BY JESLYN LEMKE

LOCALLY RAISED LAMB
PROCESSED AT THE FAMILY
OWNED USDA CERTIFIED
MOHAWK VALLEY MEATS



PHOTO: TRASK BEDORTHA

MUCH NEEDED SLAUGHTER

Demand for locally raised meat has grown

I'm peering in at a cluster of dusty, nervous sheep in a cattle chute while standing next to sheep farmer Lynne Miller. She just drove four of her lambs down from Corvallis to the Mohawk Valley Meats slaughterhouse outside Springfield.

It's the sheep's last couple minutes on Earth, as the other end of the chute leads to the slaughterhouse's knocking box where they'll be shot in the head with a captive bolt gun. They are pretty quiet; there's no bleating. A sign on the exterior of the chute reads, "ANY ANIMAL LEFT UNATTENDED MUST HAVE ACCESS TO WATER."

Inside the slaughterhouse, it's a different story. The machine that grinds the meat into ground beef is terrifically noisy. Hundreds of pounds of raw beef are mechanically lifted into a hopper, which cuts the ground beef into even smaller pieces. A team of employees is shaving big wet slabs of red beef off a cow carcass, their long knives deftly slipping through the flesh as though through potter's clay.

The closure of three slaughter facilities in Lane County and its environs over the past five years (most recently Stanton's Slaughter House in Albany in January and Custom Meat Co. in Eugene last June) has shifted new customers onto the four remaining slaughterhouses in the area, creating intense pressure on them to meet increasing demand from the farm-to-table food movement. But fewer entrepreneurs in the Willamette Valley these days are willing to start the gritty affair of a full-time slaughtering business.

Much of the Willamette Valley's obsession with locally raised lamb, beef and pork comes through the doors of Mohawk Valley Meats, or the three smaller mobile slaughter facilities in the region.

"My parents raised me with the philosophy that we are omnivores, a little more on the carnivore side, and it's okay to eat animals. It's also our job to treat them humanely and responsibly for the time they are here," Miller says. Her farm, Slippery G Family Farm, brings roughly 50 to 55 lambs down to Mohawk Valley Meats for butchering each year. She sells lamb cuts at the Corvallis Farmer's Market.

Farmer's Helper in Harrisburg, Elmira Meat Locker in Veneta and 4-Star Meat in Eugene are all mobile processing facilities and make house calls to smaller backyard farmers with a slaughter truck. It's a different clientele than the customers of Mohawk Valley Meats. The ongoing closures of their competing busi-

nesses, like Custom Meats Co. in Eugene, means these remaining slaughter facilities are often booked several months in advance during the busy season.

"Elmira Lockers and 4-Star Meat in Eugene there, we all picked up some work from them [Custom Meat Co]," says Colt Ross, owner of Farmer's Helper. "If you want my opinion, it's a dying breed."

Ross and facilities like his work with the many backyard farmers in Lane and Linn counties, who may just have two or three lambs, pigs or beef for a 4H or Future Farmers of America project.

"If you drive around the countryside, if you pay attention to people's backyards, there's a lot of people who have animals. People wanting to know where their meat comes from is bigger than ever," he says.

Not everyone is experiencing the local slaughter boom. "Mom's not home-cooking a meal anymore," says 71-year-old retired butcher Jerry Gates in Cottage Grove. He's talking about how fewer and fewer families are willing to buy a cow as a half or quarter carcass. There's weariness in his creaky voice on the phone as he tells me his dad's USDA-certified facility closed down in 1989, and his own stationary slaughterhouse closed down about five years ago. Now, Gates Family Tradition mostly sells jerky. He reminisces about the days in Lane County when farmers could let their cattle roam free along country roads.

"When they changed the laws, you're liable for your beef running into a car. You can't do that no more," Gates says.

Another boon to the backyard meat movement is that the Willamette Valley, specifically, produces really, really good grass.

"The Willamette Valley has a really long grazing season, probably eight months of grazing in a year, which is considerably longer than a lot of places. It grows great grass," says Rebecca Thistlethwaite, program manager for Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network, which runs out of Oregon State University in Corvallis.

On the state level, the farm-to-table movement is slowly bulking up the number of USDA-certified facilities available, Thistlethwaite says.

"Cinder Butte Meats in Redmond, Oregon, is in the process of becoming USDA certified. A plant in Roseburg that used to do meats closed a few years ago. Someone recently purchased that plant and is resurrecting it as a USDA plant. So those are positive signs," she says. ■