

Oregon slaughter facilities face challenges

Slaughter, processing skills tough to replace, expert says

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

After roughly four decades in operation, the Custom Meat Co. of Eugene shut down in June.

While employees and clients still hope the mobile custom slaughter and meat processing company will be bought and re-opened, they acknowledge the business fell into disarray after owner Victor Hastings succumbed to cancer in January.

Hastings didn't leave a will and key licenses for the facility lapsed, contributing to its closure, said Shannon Hughes, the company's manager.

Unless an investor takes over the company, Keith Cooper, who raises hogs at nearby Sweetbriar Farms, is worried about traveling much greater distances to process carcasses.

The facility and its workers were instrumental in helping Cooper prepare meat for his customers, often when time was in short supply.

"I probably couldn't have existed or grown my business to the extent I had without the

assistance of Custom Meat or Vic Hastings," he said.

The problems encountered by the Custom Meat Co. provide an example of the pressures faced by Oregon's slaughter and meat processing facilities.

Replacements difficult

As the owners of such companies retire or die, finding replacements is difficult — both because their skills are rare and because fewer people are willing to do such work, said Lauren Gwin, an Oregon State University professor and director of the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network.

"It is a brutal job to go out and kill things all day long," Gwin said. "It's not the kind of thing younger people are interested in doing."

Since 2000, the number of mobile and stationary custom slaughter facilities in Oregon has dropped more than 30 percent, from 93 to 63, according to data from the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Such operations kill animals for their owners, rather than for meat resale.

In that 15 years, the number of U.S. Department of Agriculture-inspected slaughterhouses — which can process livestock for the wholesale meat market — has fallen 25 percent, from 16 to 12.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Apart from the physical hardship of killing, bleeding out and skinning livestock, the job is often financially challenging as well, said Gwin.

An owner of a mobile slaughter truck, for example, must pay for its fuel and upkeep as well as disposing of offal and maintaining the appropriate licenses, she said. "It's hard to make it pay," Gwin said.

Changes in the overall beef industry have also affected slaughter facilities, said Jerry Haun, owner of Haun's Meat and Sausage and executive secretary of the Northwest Meat Processors Association.

Cow-calf producers often prefer to sell cattle in large lots instead of selling individual animals at auction to local landowners, he said. With fewer locals raising beef, the demand for local slaughter facilities decreased as well.

As the price of cattle has weakened recently, though, more cow-calf producers are again willing to sell "oddball calves" to backyard farmers, Haun said.

Farm-to-table beef

Interest in organic, grass-fed and farm-to-table beef also indicates that the local slaughter industry will remain viable, he said.

"They're not just catch-words, it's reality. It's something we've been doing for decades but it's now the hip thing."

Not all types of meat facilities in Oregon are on the decline.

The number of custom meat processors who don't kill animals but cut up carcasses has stabilized at above 80 operations in recent years, though it's still down from roughly 100 operations in the early 2000s, according to state data.

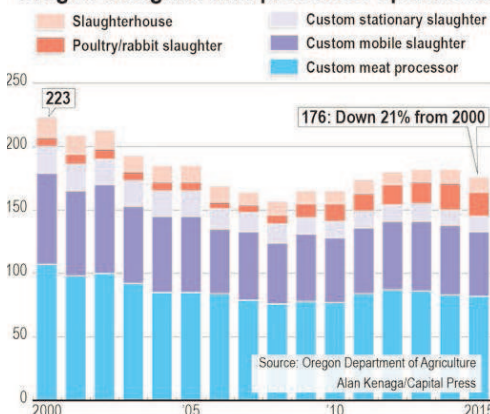
Poultry and rabbit slaughter facilities, meanwhile have more than doubled since 2000, from seven to 19 plants. Gwin of OSU attributes

this increase to growing enthusiasm among farmers and consumers for pasture-raised poultry. A state-licensed facility can process and sell up to 20,000 birds a year without USDA inspection.

This exemption was included federal poultry inspection law because lawmakers were aiming to regulate the slaughter industry rather than flocks raised by farmers, she said.

However, efforts to enact similar exemptions for other livestock haven't gained traction, Gwin said. "Congress doesn't want to be seen as rolling back food safety laws."

Oregon slaughter and processor operations



LEFT: Shannon Hughes, manager of the Custom Meat Co. in Eugene, speaks about the company's closure on June 17. Oregon slaughter facilities are under pressure as owners retire or die while replacements are hard to find.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TONIGHT	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
56	69 55	67 51	67 55	66 54
Partly cloudy	Partly sunny; breezy in the afternoon	Mostly cloudy	Some sun	Partly sunny with a shower in spots

ALMANAC

Astoria through Monday.

Temperatures
High/low 67°/54°
Normal high/low 65°/51°
Record high 87° in 1995
Record low 42° in 1965

Precipitation
Monday Trace
Month to date 2.00"
Normal month to date 2.38"
Year to date 39.22"
Normal year to date 35.99"

REGIONAL WEATHER

Shown is tomorrow's weather. Temperatures are tonight's lows and tomorrow's highs.

SUN AND MOON

Sunset tonight 9:11 p.m.
Sunrise Wednesday 5:27 a.m.
Moonrise today 1:32 a.m.
Moonset today 2:37 p.m.

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Emerging in from the east, Delphinus the Dolphin is the smallest constellation of the night sky.

TOMORROW'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks

Time	High	Time	Low
9:34 a.m.	6.5 ft.	3:37 a.m.	0.9 ft.
9:44 p.m.	8.8 ft.	3:20 p.m.	1.5 ft.

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Atlanta	86	71	t	92	71	pc
Boston	80	65	c	79	66	pc
Chicago	70	54	pc	79	59	s
Denver	90	61	t	87	61	t
Des Moines	81	61	pc	80	64	c
Detroit	73	53	c	81	56	s
El Paso	87	72	t	92	72	t
Fairbanks	72	54	c	77	57	pc
Honolulu	86	74	pc	87	76	pc
Indianapolis	80	56	pc	78	56	pc
Kansas City	84	63	pc	83	64	t
Las Vegas	110	84	pc	107	86	pc
Los Angeles	92	65	s	89	63	pc
Memphis	96	74	pc	89	68	s
Miami	89	76	t	90	77	t
Nashville	91	67	pc	85	61	s
New Orleans	92	77	t	88	76	t
New York	80	69	t	83	68	pc
Oklahoma City	92	68	t	93	69	s
Philadelphia	82	68	t	85	68	pc
St. Louis	88	64	s	83	65	pc
Salt Lake City	100	75	pc	98	69	pc
San Francisco	73	55	s	72	55	s
Seattle	81	58	s	80	58	s
Washington, DC	88	70	t	86	69	pc

REGIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Baker City	89	52	s	90	53	s
Bend	87	53	s	87	51	s
Brookings	69	54	s	69	55	s
Eugene	86	50	s	86	50	s
Ilwaco	64	56	pc	64	56	pc
Klamath Falls	90	52	s	90	53	s
Medford	93	59	s	92	59	s
Newberg	84	53	pc	83	51	pc
Newport	64	51	pc	64	51	pc
North Bend	67	54	pc	66	53	pc
Olympia	81	51	s	80	50	pc
Pendleton	95	62	s	96	62	s
Portland	84	58	s	83	58	s
Roseburg	85	56	s	85	56	s
Salem	86	54	pc	85	53	s
Seaside	65	56	pc	66	56	pc
Spokane	91	63	s	91	64	s
Springfield	85	52	s	85	49	s
Vancouver	82	56	s	81	56	s
Yakima	98	63	s	100	62	s

TOMORROW'S NATIONAL WEATHER

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

West Coast maritime weigh-in rule dispute appears to be resolved

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

The possibility of slow-downs again plaguing West Coast seaports was averted when ocean carriers agreed this month to accept combined cargo-container weights from marine terminals instead of requiring them from exporters.

The Ocean Carrier Equipment Management Association, a U.S.-based association of 19 major ocean carriers, announced its decision at the Agriculture Transportation Coalition's annual meeting in Long Beach.

"OCEMA applauds the efforts of ports and marine terminal operators that have announced they will provide VGM (Verified Gross Mass or combined cargo-container weight) weighing services on behalf of U.S. exporters and encourages ports and terminals across the country to

adopt similar approaches," the carrier association stated in a press release.

The carrier association said earlier this month it received confirmation from the U.S. Coast Guard that the approach complies with the International Maritime Association's Safety of Life at Sea July 1 requirement that all exporters certify and submit combined cargo-container weight to steamship lines and terminal operators before containers are loaded onto vessels.

Exporters have been responsible for accurately reporting cargo weight but no one had been reporting combined container weight, Peter Friedmann, AgTC executive director in Washington, D.C., has said.

Friedmann warned in February that an amendment to international standard from the London-based International Maritime Association

could create "major turmoil at marine terminals" and "significantly impede" U.S. exports.

In May, he said requiring exporters to report the combined container weight would cause congestion, backups and delays of exports through ports.

A 2014-2015 slowdown at West Coast ports, caused by a labor dispute, cost farmers, manufacturers and retailers across the country hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

Friedmann could not be reached for comment but in a news release said there's still work to be done, particularly for containers arriving at terminals by on-dock rail without going through gates.

He thanked an AgTC committee and others for working on the issue and said it demonstrates the "role AgTC can and must continue to perform for the U.S. export community."

Mitch's Witches need new bristles

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association is teaming up with Fort George Brewery and Public House during Benefit Night, from 4:30 to 9 tonight, to raise

money to rebuild Mitch's Witches, a Halloween tradition for over a decade. The public is welcome. Food and beverage purchases, as well as raffle items from many downtown businesses, will help raise funds for the project.

Community members and businesses can also sponsor a witch for \$150, which includes the witch frame, hat, and cape to decorate. For information, go to www.facebook.com/astoriadowntown

DEATH

June 22, 2016

HAYNES, Hanna, 90, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary & Crematory in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements. Go to www.hughes-ransom.com to share memories and sign the guest book.

June 23, 2016

DIEHM, Daniel, 58, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary & Crematory in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements. Go to www.hughes-ransom.com to share memories and sign the guest book.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY
Clatsop Care Health District Board, noon, Clatsop Retirement Village, 947 Olney Ave.
Astoria Library Board, 5:30 p.m., Astoria Public Library Flag Room, 450 10th St.
Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.
Astoria Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

WEDNESDAY
Knappa School Board, 4:30 p.m.,

41535 Old U.S. Highway 30.

THURSDAY
Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., supplemental budget hearing, budget hearing and executive session, Astoria Transit Center Conference Room, 900 Marine Drive.
Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning and Advisory Committee, 1 to 3 p.m., fourth floor, 800 Exchange St.

LOTTERIES

OREGON
Monday's Pick 4:
1 p.m.: 0-7-4-8
4 p.m.: 9-5-2-6
7 p.m.: 5-6-6-5
10 p.m.: 5-6-5-0
Monday's Megabucks: 4-6-19-20-37-47
Estimated jackpot: \$6.7 million

WASHINGTON
Monday's Daily Game: 1-0-2
Monday's Hit 5: 06-20-21-31-37
Monday's Keno: 02-03-04-12-24-25-26-28-29-32-34-36-38-47-48-50-66-69-75-77
Monday's Lotto: 17-29-34-40-42-49
Monday's Match 4: 08-12-15-22

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