

FLU: The last Pendleton flu flag came down in early January 1919

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flu flags flying. City council expanded the previous list of directives to require proper ventilation at "all stores, bakeries, restaurants, meat markets, rooming houses, hotels, offices, banks, picture galleries and studios and other places of business where people are in the habit of assembling for the purchase of supplies or transaction of business." Library patrons could check out books, but couldn't linger to read. Residents were ordered to remain at least five feet apart.

City officials, desperate to quell the epidemic, were open to novel approaches. They heard that the town of Brawley, California, had stamped out the flu in five days after disinfecting city streets with a sheep dip solution. The compound of insecticide and fungicide is normally used to protect sheep from external parasites such as ticks and lice. The measure, said the story, was an "effort to get the best of the influenza, which is threaten-

ing to put the entire town on the shelf." On Dec. 27, the town's street sweeper crew spread the solution at a rate of three gallons per block.

The strategy made the town smell like a sheep camp, but didn't reduce the steady stream of new flu cases. Oddly, the worst hit were seemingly healthy individuals in their twenties and thirties. James Ankeny, of Reith, died at age 22 at St. Anthony Hospital. Mrs. P.D. Ellis, 34, died at her Main Street home. Pendleton attorney Clarence White, 39, died on Dec. 21. By the end of the siege, a total of 38 mostly young people were dead.

As desperation grew, city and health officials tightened up flu regulations. Barbers and waiters and other people who served the public wore masks. "Flu officers" were stationed at store entrances to limit the numbers of people who could go inside at one time. Movie goers were required to sit in every other seat, with every other row vacant.

The last Pendleton flu flag



AP Photo/National Museum of Health

Influenza victims crowd into an emergency hospital near Fort Riley, Kansas in 1918. The Spanish flu pandemic killed 40-100 million people worldwide and officials say that if the next pandemic resembles the birdlike 1918 Spanish flu, up to 1.9 million Americans could die.

came down in early January 1919 at the home of Mrs. Grover Pead on West Alta Avenue. But with influenza still present in the county, flu

measures stayed in place for a while.

"Influenza conditions in Pendleton are probably better today than any other town

in the state," the article said. "Conditions are not so good, however, in other parts of the county, but with the ban extended over the county, it is thought there is a chance to stamp the malady out entirely."

The next pandemic is definitely on the radar of modern-day health officials. Sharon Waldern, clinic supervisor for Umatilla County Public Health, said pandemic planning doesn't center on the flu, but rather any widespread disease. They got a dry run in 2009 when H1N1 flu hit Mexico hard and killed in higher numbers than expected.

As the disease headed this way, health officials had time to urge people to get vaccinated. Even so, three Umatilla County residents who had underlying medical conditions died from the disease.

Umatilla County Public Health Administrator

Meghan DeBolt called the 1918 flu "eye-opening," but takes some comfort in knowing that "modern epidemiology had not yet taken hold in 1918. The understanding of hygiene in general is much better now" and information spreads much faster.

"If the CDC sends out anything, we have it within minutes," she said.

Both DeBolt and Waldern are baffled by today's low vaccination rate. They've heard the excuses — some say they believe the vaccine will make them sick or that the flu isn't a big deal. Both not true, they said.

Pendletonians of 1918 didn't have a choice, but one has to believe they would have protected themselves from the deadly virus if they did.

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FUNDING: ARS got an 8 percent budget cut across the board last year

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\$911,000 out of its annual operating budget, Long said, which is currently funded at \$1.91 million. The station would lose its soil chemist, hydrologist and soil physicist with the loss of programs.

"That important research is going to come to a dead halt, if this budget is passed," Long said.

Established in 1970, CPCRC offices and laboratories are located on Tubbs Ranch Road just north of Pendleton. The building is shared with Oregon State University's Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center, which also focuses on experiments to benefit farmers.

Funding woes actually started a year ago, Long said, in the wake of the federal government's budget sequestration. When a budget was finally passed, the ARS experienced an 8 percent cut across the board, which dropped \$152,000 out of CPCRC's discretionary funds.

The ARS gave \$90,000 back to the station and Long figured they were on their way to recovery when the proposed 2016 budget was released.

"I honestly thought we were pretty safe," Long said. "Looking at this now, it boiled down to the president's high priority items ... In order for the agency to fund those initiatives, they had to take money from other places."

Jerry Zahl, a crop consultant from College Place, Washington, serves as chairman of the liaison committee for the combined ARS and OSU agricultural stations, which met on Tuesday. He said the growers haven't

"I cannot think of a greater return on taxpayer dollars than what has been realized through decreased erosion and increased productivity through the efforts of the Pacific Northwest agricultural research system."

— **Jerry Zahl**, chairman of the liaison committee for the ARS and OSU agricultural stations

started campaigning yet, but plan to get in touch with their leaders in Washington, D.C. to stress the importance of the work being done in Pendleton.

"I cannot think of a greater return on taxpayer dollars than what has been realized through decreased erosion and increased productivity through the efforts of the Pacific Northwest agricultural research system," Zahl said.

The CPCRC also has the support of the Oregon Wheat Growers League, which values the in-field work done on behalf of the wheat industry.

"It's a very serious potential loss to the facility out there," said Blake Rowe, wheat league CEO. "We're definitely going to engage and try to fix it."

Other research at the station includes developing cropping systems and rotational crops for both food and fuel, as well as the use of unmanned drones as an agricultural tool.

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

WES PERINGER
Senior - Pendleton Basketball

The Buckaroos 6-foot-6 center helped get Pendleton back on track with a pair of standout performances. First Persinger scored 12 points and grabbed 16 rebounds as the Buckaroos knocked off CRC-leading Hermiston 55-51 on Tuesday. He followed that up with a 24-point, 11-rebound effort in PHS' 61-58 win over Hood River Valley Friday.

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