

More than 1,600 dairy cows die in Washington blizzard

By DAN WHEAT
EO Media Group

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — A daylong blizzard killed 1,677 cows at about 10 dairies in the Sunnyside area of Washington state last Saturday.

A snowstorm was accompanied by sustained winds of 30 to 50 mph all day and gusts up to 80 mph, farmers said.

Because of desert climate conditions, many farms in the area are open lot dairies with cows outside or under open-sided shelters. Most of the dairies with losses were on an exposed ridge north of town.

"Cows were huddled in, pressed up against each other in corners of pens and refused to move. Farmers couldn't get them to move into milking barns. Herd instinct," said Gerald Baron, executive director of Save Family Farming, a farm advocacy group. "Most cows died from injuries from each other and some from cold exposure. They went down and couldn't get up."

About 28 cows that were injured are likely to be euthanized, farmers said.

"Each cow could be worth \$2,000, so we're looking at \$3.2 million

plus future production loss, but right now the bigger impact is a huge emotional loss to farmers," said Dan Wood, executive director of Washington State Dairy Federation.

Dairy farmers already are struggling to survive in extremely difficult market conditions, so the storm losses are like a double-whammy, he said.

"Farmers put up hay bales for wind barriers and tried to do what they could. Farmers were out there in zero degrees or less with wind chill, risking their lives to save cattle," Wood said.

No farmers or workers were reported injured, he said.

"Like all dairy farmers we and our courageous crews worked all night trying to get these cows into better protection, but for so many their instincts took over and we could not budge them. It's a terrible, tragic loss," said Jason Sheehan, 44, a Sunnyside dairyman and head of Eastern Washington Family Farmers.

He said his family has never shut down the milking parlor in 40 years but that he had to from 1 to 11 p.m. Saturday because he couldn't get cows to move and milk trucks could not get in. He



Photo contributed by Jason Sheehan/Capital Press

Cows rest comfortably at Jason Sheehan's dairy near Sunnyside, Wash., on Feb. 11. Blizzard conditions Feb. 9 caused the deaths of more than 1,600 dairy cows in the area.

had to dump milk. He lost cows but did not want to say how many.

By 11 p.m., the wind died down to 20 to 25 mph, he said, and he was able to get cows moving.

"I grew up in Minnesota and I never saw anything like this back there," Sheehan said. "My employees were awesome, coming in on days off. It was all hands on deck."

"My wife, four kids, employees are all safe. But

we feel horrible about the cows. Everyone put their heart and soul into this and Mother Nature just beat us on this one. For us and other dairies, we're just physically, mentally and emotionally drained."

About 5 miles away, Markus Rollinger, 31, did not lose any cows, mostly because his dairy is at lower elevation and protected by hills.

"It was 30 to 50 mph wind constant all day Sat-

urday. It was relentless. A once-in-a-lifetime event," Rollinger said.

"I and my brother worked 36 hours nonstop pushing snow and clearing roads so milk trucks could get to our dairy and so my employees could go home and the next shift come in and feeders could get animals fed the first thing Sunday morning. The rest of the day we were bedding cows and helping neighbors dig out."

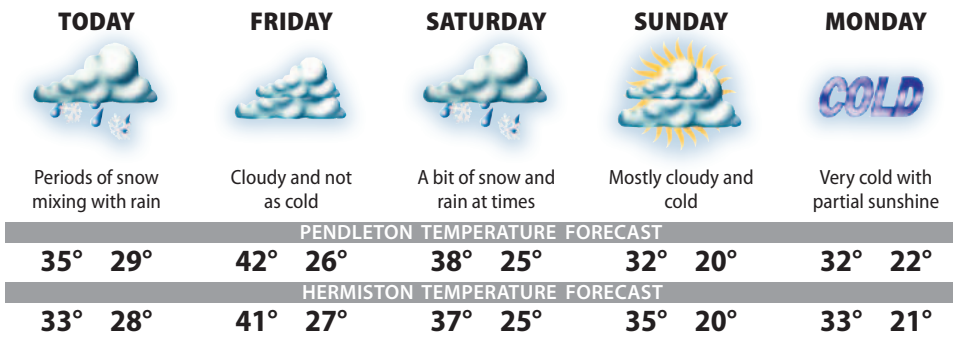
He said he was worried about losing cows but was able to keep them moving.

Wood said the Dairy Federation is contacting local and state agencies for help with disposal of the dead animals to make sure it is done properly.

"It's a huge task," he said. Gov. Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency prior to the loss of cattle being known, Wood said.

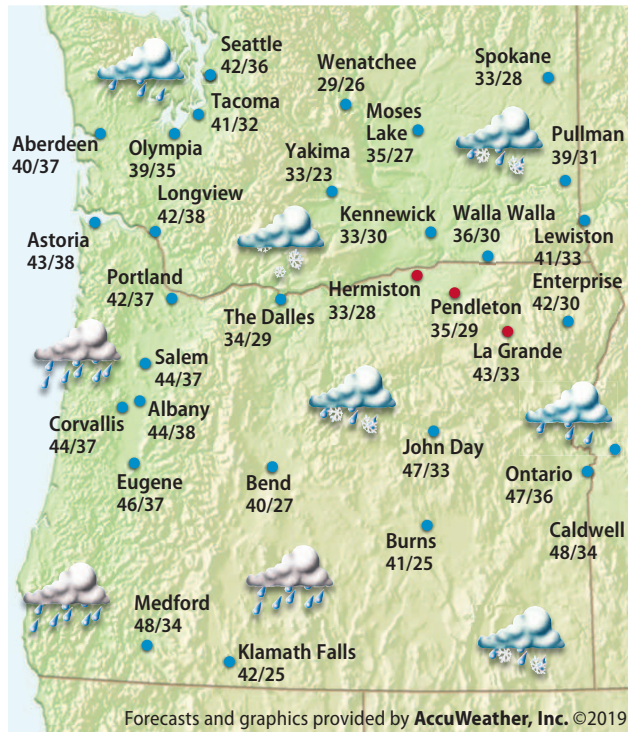
Farmers hope that can help with assistance, he said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

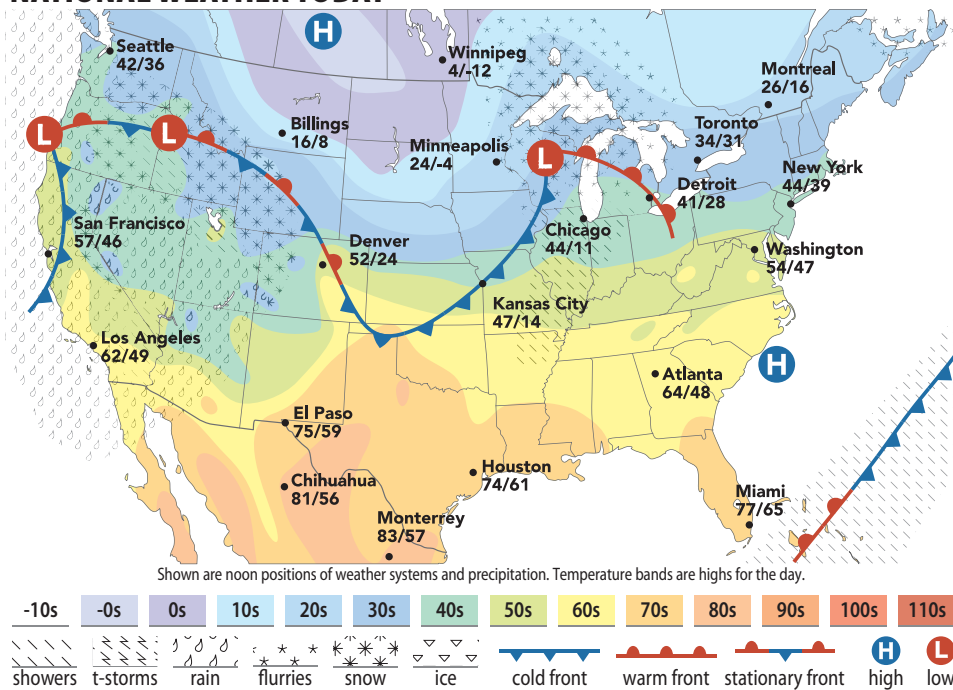
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	40°	29°		
Normals	46°	29°		
Records	69° (1921)	-21° (1933)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.21"			
Month to date	1.46"			
Normal month to date	0.56"			
Year to date	3.53"			
Last year to date	1.85"			
Normal year to date	1.94"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	33°	28°		
Normals	47°	29°		
Records	69° (1977)	-22° (1933)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.22"			
Month to date	1.16"			
Normal month to date	0.46"			
Year to date	2.69"			
Last year to date	1.24"			
Normal year to date	1.74"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Fri.		
Boardman	NNE 6-12	SW 4-8		
Pendleton	N 6-12	SW 7-14		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	6:59 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	5:20 p.m.			
Moonrise today	12:07 p.m.			
Moonset today	2:33 a.m.			
	Full	Last	New	First
	Feb 19	Feb 26	Mar 6	Mar 14

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 80° in Marathon, Fla. Low -20° in Harvey, N.D.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



New storm brings more rain, snow to California, Oregon and Washington

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More rain, snow and wind hit the West on Wednesday, flooding roads, toppling trees and cutting power while raising threats of debris flows from wildfire scars.

The tempest, aimed at California and southern Oregon and barreling toward Nevada, was feeding on a deep plume of moisture stretching across the Pacific Ocean to near Hawaii, the National Weather Service said.

The storm followed more than a week of severe weather in the Pacific Northwest and was the latest in a series that has all but eliminated drought-level dryness in California this winter.

Winter storm warnings were posted in the snow-laden Sierra Nevada, where the forecast says up to 7 feet of new snow could be dumped at elevations above 9,000 feet.

The National Weather Service recorded winds gusting to 132 mph late Tuesday and early Wednesday atop the Mount Rose ski resort southwest of Reno, Nevada.

Snow heavily impacted stretches of vital Interstate 5 in far northern California, causing closures and forcing tire chain requirements.

A local state of emergency was declared in



AP Photo/Jeff Chiu

A woman carries an umbrella Wednesday as she crosses the street in San Francisco. Rain, snow and wind swept into California on Wednesday, flooding roadways, toppling trees and disrupting travel while bringing renewed threats of mud and debris flows from the state's huge wildfire burn scars.

Shasta County due to "significant" storm damage, a Sheriff's Office statement said. Redding, the county seat, turned its library into a warming center.

Power outages also hit thousands of utility customers in the region.

In Washington, about 12,000 Puget Sound Energy customers remained without power Wednesday and Interstate 90 was closed for a second day across Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascade Mountains. The town of North Bend declared a state of emergency due to several feet of snow.

In Oregon transportation officials closed about

20 miles of the westbound lanes of Interstate 84 in the Columbia River Gorge east of Portland due to icy conditions that caused numerous wrecks and stranded some drivers for hours. By early Wednesday afternoon some vehicles were moving but authorities were still restricting new traffic.

"This is a very, very serious situation out there right now," Don Hamilton, an Oregon Department of Transportation spokesman, told *The Oregonian/OregonLive*.

Authorities brought stranded travelers water and food and tried to get gas to vehicles that needed it.

U.S. sues Lockheed Martin over fraud at Hanford

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department is accusing Lockheed Martin Corp. of using false records and making false statements to bill the Energy Department for tens of millions of dollars in unauthorized profits and fees at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

The federal civil lawsuit was filed last week in U.S. District Court in Eastern Washington.

The *Seattle Times* says the lawsuit also accuses Lockheed Martin of using federal money to pay millions of dollars in kickbacks.

Hanford is located near Richland, Washington, and

for decades made plutonium for nuclear weapons. The site is now involved in a massive cleanup effort that costs more than \$2 billion per year.

The lawsuit covers the period from 2010 to 2015.

Lockheed Martin denied the allegations and said it will defend itself vigorously.

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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