

Dairies moving toward ‘designer’ cows

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

SALEM — Technologies such as sexed semen and genetic testing were once an expensive niche for elite cattle, but they are quickly becoming a necessary tool for success, according to a new report by Rabobank.

Rapid advances in breeding technologies and genetics are changing the way dairy producers run their businesses and design their herds, Ben Laine, dairy analyst and author of the report, said.

Sexed semen has become commonplace in the dairy industry, but dairy producers are also using genetics to design their dairy herds, he said.

Genomic testing in dairy began in 2009 on elite animals, costing about \$200 per test. But the cost has fallen to a range of \$30 to \$50. Blood or hair follicle samples are taken shortly after birth, and lab results are available in a matter of days.

“Producers using genetic testing are able to determine a heifer’s genetic potential early in life, before it enters the milking herd,” he said.

Replacement costs are the third-highest cost on a dairy,

Building a better cow



Capital Press Photo, File

Genomic testing in dairy started in 2009 on elite animals. At the time, the cost was \$200 per test. That figure has since dropped to \$30-50 per test.

and genetic testing is shifting the mindset from a tendency to keep every heifer, he said.

“Instead, with the additional data, producers can focus more on maintaining the optimal size of their milking herd and maintaining only the best animals in that herd,” he said.

Dairy producers are also pairing genetic testing with sexed semen, which increases the likelihood of a cow’s offspring being female to over 90%.

“That allows the genetics of the most favorable cows to be maintained in the milking herd,” he said.

Heifers will generally receive sexed semen for their first pregnancy due to their naturally high conception rates. Beef semen is then bred into the portion of the herd with lower genetic potential.

Breeding all first-pregnancy animals with sexed semen could depend on the replacement/milk cow ratio on the farm and herd growth aspirations. But that could start to change among farms that have already made progress on their genetics and aren’t looking to expand, he said.

Embryo transplant is

also used to maintain favorable genetics in the milking herd. Newborn heifer calves have about 150,000 ova, but a dairy cow normally only has two to four calves over the course of its life.

By harvesting and fertilizing the ova and transplanting the embryos, the genetics from a single cow can be passed to many more offspring. In addition, embryos can be transferred to either dairy or beef cows to facilitate herd expansions with specific traits, he said.

As the cost of these technologies decreases and word spreads about their effectiveness, more producers will begin using them — and it will become critical to long-term success, he said.

“Producers who are not adopting these technologies will increasingly fall behind and see their efficiency lag compared to their peers,” he said.

While the early focus of genomics has been on traits to optimize milk and component production, the next frontier will likely focus on traits, such as feed conversion, heat tolerance, disease resistance or physical traits that would work better in the context of robotic milking, he said.

Bank of Eastern Oregon opens Hermiston branch

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Bank of Eastern Oregon now has a full-service branch in Hermiston.

The new branch is located at 1475 N. First St., Hermiston, in the former Eastern Oregon Telecom building. The building also houses the offices of commercial lending team Lucas Wagner and Jared Lathrop, and mortgage officer Kaitlin Orcutt.

Bank of Eastern Oregon began in Gilliam County in 1945 and has since grown to serve communities throughout northeastern Oregon and



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Bank of Eastern Oregon has opened a new branch in Hermiston, at 1475 N. First St.

southeastern Washington. It recently announced a new La Grande branch in addition to the new Hermiston location.

“Since our beginning in

1945, Bank of Eastern Oregon has focused on providing quality banking services to the rural communities of Eastern Oregon,” Melissa

Samms, the new branch’s local operations manager, said in a news release. “We look forward to meeting and making new friends with the residents, business owners, farmers and ranchers of Hermiston and the surrounding areas.”

According to the release, BEO is a “full-service commercial bank specializing in agricultural and small business lending, municipal and special district deposit services, and offers a wide variety of consumer and business accounts and services.”

The new branch is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and can be reached at 541-303-8274.

BEO banker joins Agricultural Banking Committee

East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Ed Rollins, the senior vice president/chief credit officer of Bank of Eastern Oregon in Heppner, has joined the American Bankers Association’s Agricultural and Rural Bankers Committee for the 2019-20 association year.

The committee, established in 1913, is made up of 14 agricultural and rural bankers from across the country. Committee members meet throughout the year to discuss the criti-

cal issues affecting the ag community and provide guidance and recommendations to ABA on a number of issues relating to the industry.

“It is an honor to be part of this committee and advocate for the success of ag communities all over the country,” Rollins said. “This appointment gives me the opportunity to meet frequently with my peers



Rollins

to discuss the current challenges affecting our banks and the ag banking industry as a whole.”

Rollins has nearly 23 years of agricultural banking experience focusing on cattle, wheat, and feed crops. He attended Montana State University where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural business. He is presently the chair of the Ione Community Agri-Business Organization, director for the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group, a member of the Oregon

Bankers Association Lending and Agriculture committees and member of the Washington Bankers Association Senior Credit Committee.

Committee members are appointed by ABA’s agricultural and rural banking division and serve up to three years.

BEO Bancorp, holding company for Bank of Eastern Oregon, operates a rural portfolio of 20 branches and five loan production offices in 12 Eastern Oregon and four Eastern Washington counties.

Home sales rose 1.9% last month

WASHINGTON — Americans took advantage of lower mortgage rates and purchased more homes in October, though sales were held back by a shortage of available properties.

The National Association of Realtors said Thursday that sales of existing homes rose 1.9% last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.46 million. That’s 4.6% higher than a year ago, suggesting that lower borrowing costs are bolstering the housing market.

Still, the data shows a mixed picture. Housing, including home construction, has picked up this year and fueled economic growth in the July-September quarter for the first time in nearly two years. Economists expect it will boost growth in the current quarter as well.

At the same time, sales have been constrained by a decline in the number of houses for sale.

With the unemployment rate near a 50-year low and wages rising modestly, plenty of Americans are looking to buy. That is pushing up prices. Sales remain below

the level reached in 2017 of 5.5 million.

Employees sue McDonald’s

CHICAGO — A group of employees from 13 McDonald’s restaurants in Chicago filed a lawsuit Thursday alleging that the company’s drive for profits puts workers at “daily risk” of physical attack by dangerous customers.

In the lawsuit filed in Cook County court, the 17 workers say McDonald’s has failed to protect them from what they say is a “citywide and nationwide” pattern of violence and that police respond to more than 20 911 calls every day regarding Chicago McDonald’s restaurants. They cite several examples of the violence, including an incident in which a customer beat an employee with a sign and another in which a customer urinated on a worker.

“McDonald’s has failed, at a systemic level, to protect its workers from violence in the workplace,” said Danny Rosenthal, an attorney for the workers. “Throughout the country, McDonald’s workers are regularly threatened,

assaulted, and injured by customers.”

McDonald’s did not respond to the lawsuit’s specific allegations, but it said in a statement that “McDonald’s takes seriously its responsibility to provide and foster a safe working environment for our employees, and along with our franchisees, continue to make investments in training programs that uphold safe environments for customers and crew members.”

Tesla unveils electric pickup

HAWTHORNE, Calif. — Elon Musk is taking on the workhorse heavy pickup truck market with his latest electric vehicle.

The CEO of Tesla unveiled a new electric pickup truck Thursday night at the Los Angeles Auto Show.

With the launch, Tesla is edging into the most profitable corner of the U.S. auto market, where buyers tend to have fierce brand loyalty. Tesla’s pickup is more likely to appeal to weekend warriors who want an electric vehicle that can handle some outdoor adventure. But it could end up cutting into Tesla’s electric vehicle sedan sales instead of winning over traditional pickup truck drivers.

Tesla has struggled to meet delivery targets for its sedans, and some fear the new vehicle will shift the company’s attention away from the goal of more consistently meeting its targets.

— Associated Press

Scrubs Life closing its doors in December

Hermiston store opened in 2014

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Laurie Hartung gets a little emotional when she talks about needing to close Scrubs Life, but she doesn’t regret owning her own business for five years.

“I get a little tearful talking about it,” she said. “When I opened that business, I started it from nothing. It was just an idea.”

She used to be a homemaker, but when her husband died, leaving her to provide for their children, she graduated from nursing school at age 45. Nursing provided steady work and benefits, but she worried about all those years she had missed contributing to a retirement account.

In 2014, she started Scrubs Life, selling scrubs to Hermiston-area medical staff and offering customized embroidery on them.

“I thought it was a great idea, I just never made any money,” she said. “I never made a dime off of it ... everyone kept telling me, ‘When you hit five years you’ll start making money. Give it that long.’”

Five years has come

and gone, however, and while the business has grown, she said she still hasn’t been making a profit. She chalked it up to a few reasons, including the size of the market in Hermiston, the cost of hiring employees to cover the store while she was at her other job and changes in the past few years to the materials used to make scrubs.

“Scrubs are lasting longer,” she said. “They’re not fading.”

She plans to close her doors on Dec. 20, taking an additional 10% off prices each week between now and then.

Hartung said the customers have been the best part of the experience, and she will miss them greatly when Scrubs Life closes. It was a hard decision to make, she said, but now that she has come to terms with it she is seeing the positives of having more time to focus on nursing job and on her children.

While owning a business is harder than it looks, she said, she doesn’t regret it for a second and she hopes other people won’t be scared away from being an entrepreneur.

“Follow your dreams,” she said.

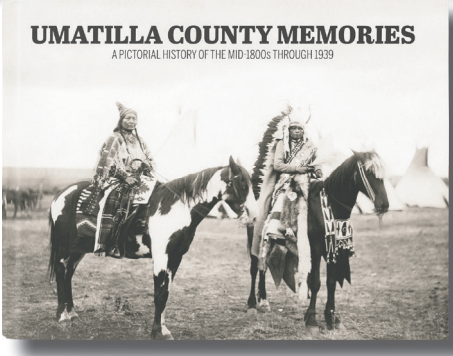


Hartung

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