

# Loan program makes local meat more accessible

### Farm to Table loans also can cover cost of a freezer for storage

By LISA BRITTON  
*Baker City Herald*

LA GRANDE — When meat prices rose in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ken Olson wanted to help local consumers purchase products from local producers.

Olson is the chief executive officer of Old West Federal Credit Union, which has branches across Eastern Oregon, including John Day, Baker City, La Grande, Prairie City, Union, Pendleton, Hermiston and Burns.

“He has a big heart for our communities and rural areas,” Bob Kavanaugh, vice president of business development and member experience at Old West, said of Olson.

The USDA reports that, in 2020, supply of meat products was affected by temporary closures of meatpacking plants due to COVID-19. The low supply in turn drove up prices in the grocery store.

Kavanaugh said Olson challenged an Old West team to brainstorm a solu-



Alex Wittwer/La Grande Observer

**Rancher Riley Martin feeds his cattle from the back of a tractor at the family's North Powder farm Monday, April 5, 2021. Old West Federal Credit Union is trying to make it easier for residents to buy locally raised beef.**

tion that would make local beef more accessible — especially when money is tight.

“Food insecurity is a real thing,” Kavanaugh said. “We came up with a strategy to help our local communities purchase meat in bulk.” The program is called the

Farm to Table Loan.

Loan amounts are available from \$500 to \$4,000.

When someone inquires about the loan, Kavanaugh said they meet with an Old West staff to discuss the loan amount and payback details.

Storing meat can be a challenge for some fami-

lies, too, so a freezer can be financed into the loan as well.

The 12-month loans are interest-free.

Kavanaugh said Old West introduced the program several months ago, and will relaunch it around June 1.

To initially promote the

program, Old West held a raffle for “Get a Freezer, Give a Freezer Full of Beef.”

When Union County rancher Charlie Rohlf found out about the loan program, he donated half a beef to fill the second freezer. Billy Bob's Butcher Shop in Elgin processed the meat at a reduced cost.

Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen drew the winning ticket for Brett Baxter, the principal of La Grande High School.

Baxter chose the Union Food Bank to receive the freezer full of beef, and Old West posted a video of the delivery on Facebook.

Kavanaugh said the loan program is also supported with a grant from the Northwest Credit Union Foundation.

### How it works

Once a loan is approved, the borrower specifies where he or she wants to buy meat (beef, lamb, chicken, pork, etc.).

Kavanaugh said Old West cuts a check to the butcher. The loan recipient hands over the check and receives a supply of fresh meat.

When the program was about to launch, Kavanaugh called meat processors around Northeast Oregon.

At Billy Bob's Butcher

Shop, co-owner Kaleen Smith was quick to praise the idea.

“He said, ‘Is there a need?’ I said, ‘You're already behind the ball,’” Smith said.

She said the shop has offered its own type of loan program to help people purchase meat. And, she said, meat prices are continuing to rise.

“Not everybody had the money up front,” she said.

She's telling customers about the Old West program, and helping connect consumers with producers, too.

“I'd advise people to look into it,” she said of the bank loan.

Rohlf said it costs about \$1,200 for half a beef, which includes cutting and wrapping.

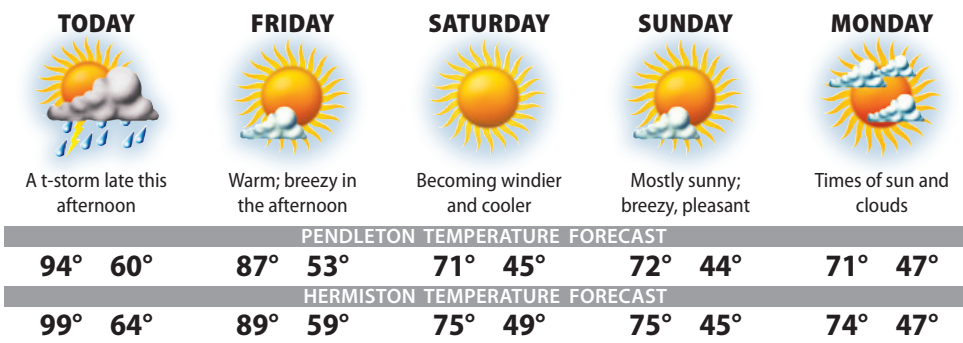
When meat supply dwindled in the grocery stores, he had more locals seeking out meat from his ranch.

The Old West program, he said, will help people buy good-quality meat and support the local economy.

“They're helping producers, the local butcher shops, and the local community,” Rohlf said.

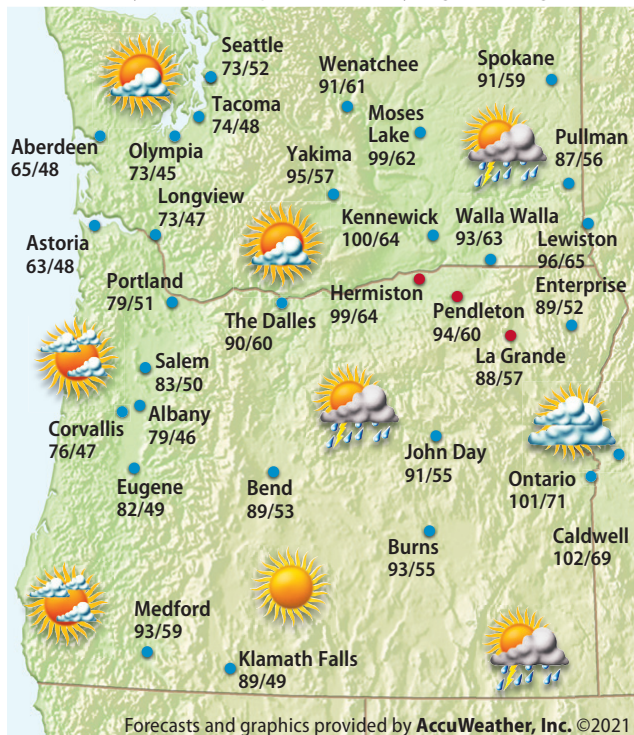
“I told (Kavanaugh) I'll raise as much beef as I can to help out the cause.”

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

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



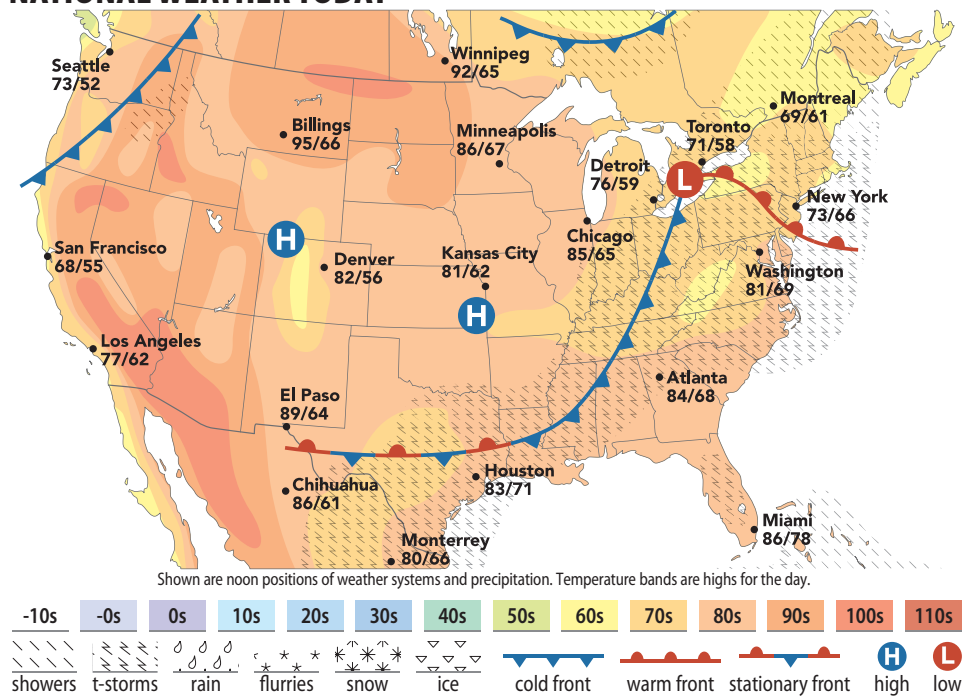
## ALMANAC

Table with weather statistics for Pendleton and Hermiston, including temperature, precipitation, and wind speeds.

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states) High 109° in Needles, Calif. Low 27° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Oregon bans guns from Capitol, demands safe storage in homes

By ANDREW SELSKY  
*The Associated Press*

SALEM — Legislators have brought guns into the Oregon State Capitol for personal protection. Protesters have carried semi-automatic rifles onto the grounds and into the building.

Later this year, doing so will be outlawed under a bill signed Tuesday, May 1, by Gov. Kate Brown that was earlier passed by the Legislature, with Democrats in favor and minority Republicans opposed. The new law also mandates the safe storage of guns.

“Today, I am signing SB 554 with the hope that we can take another step forward to help spare more Oregon families from the grief of losing a loved one to gun violence,” Brown said on Twitter.

The bill was named for Cindy Yuille and Steve Forsyth, who were slain in a shooting at a Portland-area shopping mall in 2012 by a man who stole a friend's AR-15 rifle. A third person was seriously wounded.

Among those who testified in favor of the measure was Paul Kemp, Forsyth's brother-in-law.

“I will never forget the

screams I heard when we had to tell my teenage nephew that his father had been killed at the mall,” Kemp said.

Backers of the new law, which takes effect three months after the Legislature adjourns this summer, said it will prevent accidental shootings by children, suicides and mass shootings.

It requires that firearms be secured with a trigger or cable lock, in a locked container or gun room.

Opponents said a delay in accessing a firearm for self-defense could cost lives.

Jim Mischel, of Sheridan, provided written testimony to lawmakers describing how his wife woke up when he was away one night in 1981. She heard a noise, went to investigate and saw a stranger in their home.

She tried to get a pistol that was in a locked gun box in the nightstand out but was unable to before the man got into the bedroom and threatened her with his gun, Mischel said.

“She has never recovered,” he said.

The bill also bans guns from the Oregon Capitol, changing a law that allowed concealed handgun licenses to bring firearms into

the building. In a related development, an interfaith movement plans to present signatures May 2 to the staff of Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, a step in an attempt to get two initiative petitions onto the ballot.

IP 18 would ban the sale of assault-style weapons in Oregon. IP 17 would ban the sale of large-capacity magazines and require a permit to purchase any gun and a completed background check before a firearm is purchased.

The movement has gathered the signatures of 2,000 voters for each initiative petition and will hand deliver them to Fagan's staff, said Pastor Mark Knutson of the Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland.

“We hope to get the go ahead by early fall, which will give us almost 10 months to get 140,000 signatures to ... place them both on the November 2022 general election ballot,” Knutson said.

The debate over guns is being resurrected as the number of mass shootings climbs again in America, with increased efforts to ban assault rifles and large-capacity magazines.

## IN BRIEF

### Oregon Legislature makes cocktails to-go permanent

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers passed a bill allowing the sale of cocktails to-go to continue after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that Senate Bill 317, which allows licensed establishments to sell “mixed drinks and single servings of wine in sealed containers for off-premises consumption,” previously passed the Oregon Senate in March. It cleared the House on Tuesday, June 1, by a vote of

51-7. The bill now moves to Gov. Kate Brown.

As new coronavirus restrictions brought drinking and dining to a standstill across America in March 2020, many states rushed to overturn laws banning takeout cocktail sales, many of which had been on the books since Prohibition.

Sponsored by Sen. Lee Beyer, D-Springfield, and Rep. Rob Nosse, D-Portland, the new bill means Oregon will join around 15 states and the District of Columbia in making cocktails to-go permanent.

— The Associated Press

**CORRECTIONS:** In the Page A11 story “Pitching sensations share IMC honor,” published Tuesday, June 1, softball player Chloe Taber's last name was misspelled. 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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