

Creswell-area brothers make a bet on buffalo

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

At a farm a few miles north of Creswell, the next generation is betting on a new strategy, and right now, they’re betting big on the number 13.

Thirteen, that is, as in the number of bison that have recently found a home at My Brothers Farm off Cloverdale Road, animals slated to form the cornerstone of a new way forward for brothers Taylor and Austin Larson, who, along with brother Ben, who helps out when he's home from college, are busy slowly assuming the management of parts of the 320-acre farm where they were raised. And their new herd figures heavily into their plans.

“We’re trying to grow into the farm, to perennialize and diversify,” said Taylor Larson, “and the bison are playing a big role in that.”

The new energy at the farm began to take shape in 2011, when Taylor Larson received a visit from his family while on a Peace Corps mission in the African country of Zambia.

“People were scraping and hacking out of two inches of topsoil and were happy there, and it made me think of the rich topsoil back in the Willamette Valley,” he said. Slowly, the family began taking small parts of the farm out of a lease agreement with a very understandable grass-seed farmer.

The Larson brothers are currently managing about 50 acres of the farm, land that is transitioning from hosting rye grass and wheat to a plethora of crops such as hazelnuts, hops and apples.



photo by Jon Stinnett

From left, Taylor and Austin Larson manage the herd of buffalo on their family farm north of Creswell.

“These are all crops that grow well in the Willamette Valley,” Larson said. “We figured we’d start with what wants to be here. We knew we wanted grazing, as it’s a big part of a sustainable farm. We have a lot of land, and we wanted an animal that fits. Plus, we’d rather eat bison.”

Once roaming in vast herds that totaled some 60 million beasts, bison were hunted to near-extinction and much of their habitat was destroyed, with only a handful left in Yellowstone National Park in the late 19th century. Private ranching, though, has been partly responsible for a dramatic recovery.

According to literature from Brown’s Buffalo Ranch, “the buffalo is no longer a rare and fragile national treasure. Rather, it is a flourishing breed that is becoming a regionally popular food source, the only wild animal in the U.S. being pastured as a food animal. Buffalo will eat all grasses and weeds,

and are practically disease-free.”

Bison are also naturally very aware of their own dietary needs, Austin Larson said, and aside from a steady supply of hay, require relatively little labor compared to cattle. As plains animals, they’re used to hanging out in wide-open spaces and don’t require shelter, calmly grazing through all types of weather. Aside from their proclivity for breaking through fences and their dislike of being separated, the Larsons say their small herd is doing just fine.

“We just try to keep them happy and keep the fence on,” Taylor Larson said. “That’s been our main concern, and they haven’t gotten out yet.”

The Larsons expect their young herd, anchored by a shaggy, inquisitive bull named Mongo, to produce stock for the next 20 years.

CITY BEAT:

Taylor Avenue pump station repaired

The houses along Taylor Avenue east of Interstate 5 are served water by the Taylor Avenue Pump Station. This pump station has two alternating pumps that are cycled to produce water pressure for the houses in this area, which the City says are too high in elevation to receive adequate static water pressure from the Knox Hill reservoirs. One of the two pumps failed this

week and needed to be replaced. Since this entire pump station is scheduled to be replaced and combined with the Cottage Heights Pump Station in the near future, Cottage Grove Public Works purchased a lower cost replacement pump. The internal pump station plumbing had also deteriorated and needed to be replaced. The Public Works Utilities crew replaced pipes and fittings to accommodate the new pump and completed the installation this week. Both pumps inside the pump station create 115 psi, which translates to 60 psi at the

house furthest up the hill.

Equipment sold

Last Saturday, Public Works sold several pieces of equipment, at Brasher’s Northwest Auto Auction that were worn-out and of no further use to the City. The items sold included a shipping container, a 1990 Ford Bronco, a Gorman-Rupp pump and a 1990 John Deere Tractor/Loader. The City netted \$9,800 from the sale of this surplus equipment.

Author event

The Cottage Grove Public Library is excited to host an author event with Bonnie J. Olin, who will share her new book, "The Owyhee River Journals." Olin will also show a video of an expedition into Deep Creek and the East Fork of the Owyhee during the event, scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 6 p.m. in the Reception Hall at the Cottage Grove Community Center and Library building.

DUI cases keep courtroom full

Six cases help pack the docket

BY JON STINNETT
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Judge Martin Fisher and Cottage Grove’s Municipal Court spent a significant portion of Thursday morning’s proceedings addressing charges levied by local police against those suspected of driving under the influence of intoxicants.

A total of six of the 22 defendants who appeared before Fisher in court were there in response to charges of DUI and the charges that accompanied each incident, including those related to driving violations such as failure to drive within the proper lane and failure to appear in court in response to a violation.

The number of DUI cases was not particularly high for one Thursday morning, according to Court Clerk Shawna Bailey, who said many of the cases were holdovers from incidents occurring during the holidays.

Still, two potential DUIs were notable for the potential impact they could have for the accused. Thomas Kevin Scott appeared on DUI charges stemming from a Jan. 24 traffic accident, Bailey said. Fisher originally informed Scott that what was believed to be his second conviction could potentially lead to a 14-day jail sentence. Later, however, it was discovered that Scott seemed to have two previous DUI convictions in Texas — one in 1993 and a more recent conviction in 2008.

The scenario for Scott then changed significantly, as Fisher informed him that a third DUI conviction could lead to a mandatory lifetime suspension of his driving license, a \$2000 fine and a 45-60-day jail sentence. Fisher put forth the suggestion that Scott enlist the services of legal counsel due to the severity of a possible third conviction, and Scott later appeared before Fisher in the company of Cottage Grove’s public defender, Ryan Gifford. Scott is scheduled to appear in Municipal Court again on March 5.

A similar case came before Fisher minutes later, when Tresvelle Gray, 21, appeared on a DUI charge that appeared to be his second. Confusion between Fisher and interim prosecutor John Woodworth ensued, as it was discovered that Gray may also be facing his third conviction and similar penalties to those facing Scott.

Gray will appear in Municipal Court again on March 5, though Bailey said she believes his first DUI conviction was mistakenly listed twice — once on his criminal history and once on his driving record — which made it appear that he already had two convictions.

In Oregon, a conviction on a DUI charge carries a minimum penalty of two days in jail or 80 hours’ community service, a \$1000 fine, completion of a mandatory alcohol treatment program and a one-year driver’s license suspension. A diversion program that can potentially erase a DUI conviction from an offender’s record is available if the offender has no other DUI convictions in the past 15 years and the arrest didn’t involve a traffic accident.

Despite Oregon having some of the harshest DUI penalties in the nation, CGPD Commander Scott Shepherd said some offenders still refuse to change their ways.

“Some lose their driver’s license, and it still doesn’t stop them,” Shepherd said. “There was a time when there weren’t a lot of alternatives to driving, but there are so many taxis available now — why take the chance?”

February is National CHILDREN’S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

A CHILD’S SMILE IS ONE OF LIFE’S GREATEST BLESSINGS

Three common childhood dental health concerns

When your baby’s first teeth come in, everyone rejoices; it’s a sign that all is progressing as it should. But as your child ages, various dental concerns can come along as well. Some issues are genetic and will require orthodontic work a bit later on, but there are others you can prepare for right now.

1. BABY BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY

Prevent early childhood caries, or cavities, by nursing or putting only mother’s milk and formula in your baby’s bottles. Don’t let your baby fall asleep with the nipple in the mouth; gently wipe your infant’s teeth with a sterile gauze pad before sleep time.



2. THUMB SUCKING

Thumb sucking is generally accepted to be a harmless habit in young children; sucking is a natural reflex in babies, and for toddlers it is

an effective self-soothing strategy. However, the American Dental Association says that thumb sucking after the age of four can affect the alignment of your child’s teeth and jaw. Talk to your pediatrician for advice about thumb sucking.

3. ACCIDENTAL TRAUMA TO THE TEETH

A blow to the mouth, cheek, or jaw may cause damage to teeth above or below the gum line. Take your child to the dentist’s or to the hospital emergency room if a tooth is cracked or knocked out or if an object gets caught in the mouth or between the teeth. In the case of a knocked-out tooth, try to recover it and bring it to the dentist or hospital. Keep the tooth moist, ideally in the child’s mouth; if your child is old enough to not swallow it, place it between the teeth and gums or in the gap from where it fell out. You can also place the tooth in a cup of milk.

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