

# 6 charged in 'vast' pot trafficking operation

By Gillian Flaccus  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Federal prosecutors in Oregon on Wednesday announced charges against six people involving two "vast" interstate trafficking operations that delivered marijuana to Texas, Virginia and Florida.

Proceeds from the black market sales returned to Oregon as cash stuffed in airplane luggage or through the U.S. mail, said U.S. Attorney for Oregon Billy J. Williams.

In one case, the marijuana was grown in Portland and distributed in Houston, Texas and Virginia. In the second case, the marijuana was grown in Hood River and sent to Florida, according to court documents.

All six defendants are charged with conspiring to manufacture, possess and distribute marijuana — which remains illegal under federal law. Other charges include money laundering, kidnapping and using a firearm to commit a drug trafficking crime and interfere with commerce.

"These cases provide clear evidence of what I have repeatedly raised concerns over: Oregon's marijuana industry is attracting organized criminal networks looking to capitalize on the state's relaxed regulatory environment," Williams said in a statement.

Oregon law allows the manufacture and sale of marijuana within state boundaries for growers, processors and retailers who are permitted by the state.

None of those arrested were licensed by the state, said Mark Pettinger, a spokesman for the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which oversees the state's general use marijuana industry.

Williams has repeatedly called on Oregon regulators to tighten their monitoring of the marijuana industry to limit diversion out-of-state.

Oregon's adult-use market has struggled for months with too much marijuana, an outcome fueled by state regulations that didn't limit the number of growers and allowed each grower to have multiple licenses.

As of June, there were nearly 1 million pounds (450,000 kilograms) of "usable flower" in the system, and an additional 350,000 pounds (159,000 kilograms) of marijuana extracts, edibles and tinctures.

Usable flower refers to the dried marijuana flower — or bud — that is most commonly associated with marijuana consumption.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which regulates the state's general use marijuana program, froze applications for new growing licenses in June amid a huge backlog. And the agency recently dramatically reduced the amount of marijuana flower medical pot card holders can buy at a retail store.

Yet one of the concerns raised by Oregon officials is whether the out-of-state diversion is coming from growers who are part of the state's program or from growers who are completely off the grid, harvesting weed deep in the state's forests.

Federal agents also seized multiple guns and discovered \$1.7 million in property in Portland and one of its suburbs associated with the schemes, authorities said.

The U.S. government has filed a parallel civil case in an attempt to recover those properties through forfeiture because they were used to grow some of the marijuana.

Three of the defendants are from Houston, two from Portland, and one from Hood River.

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Market Lamb Grand Champion  
Raised by Maggie Mackenzie  
Purchased by: Haines Steak House



Market Lamb Reserve Grand Champion  
Raised by Augustena Cook  
Purchased by: Spence Industrial Supply & Rental



Market Poultry Grand Champion  
Raised by Logan Neff  
Purchased by: The Sycamore Tree



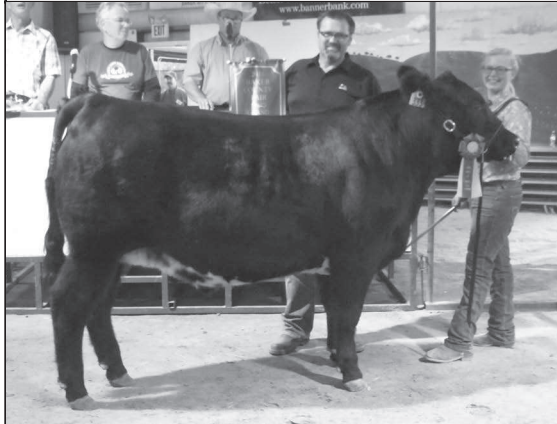
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Raised by Briana Neff  
Purchased by: St. Alphonsus - Baker City Clinic



Market Goat Grand Champion  
Raised by Jacquelyn Sanders  
Purchased by: Oregon Mutual



Market Goat Reserve Grand Champion  
Raised by Julianne Kersgaard  
Purchased by: St. Alphonsus-Baker City Clinic



Market Steer Grand Champion  
Raised by Zoey Justus  
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Market Steer Reserve Grand Champion  
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Purchased by: Bert & Terri Siddoway



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Raised by Logan Lahaug  
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Raised by Alicia Maldonado  
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Market Swine Reserve Grand Champion  
Raised by Kaci Anderson  
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