

Ag does heavy lifting in coronavirus outbreak

Feeding America is a tough job, but U.S. farmers, ranchers, orchardists, dairy operators and food processors rise to the occasion every day. Together, they produce plenty of affordable food for the nation's 328 million people, plus plenty left over to help feed the rest of the world.

But when COVID-19 showed up last winter, our exceedingly complex food system got even more challenging. Deemed an essential industry, all sectors of agriculture had to make sure plenty of food was produced — while dealing with a pandemic that threatened the health of their employees.

The results of their efforts can be seen in the nation's 38,307 grocery stores, where any shortages have been few and temporary and customers can still find every type of fresh, frozen and shelf-stable food. A typical grocery store carries 40,000 to 50,000 items.

It's not been easy, and the learning curve has been steep for everyone trying to deal with COVID-19, the coronavirus that is easily spread where people are in close quarters.

In the orchards, cherry harvest has continued, and other tree fruits and berries are ripening while farmers take precautions to limit the possibility of spreading the virus. Masks, hand-washing and other facilities help stop the spread of the virus.

Harvest of other crops is continuing as well, with farmers and ranchers doing their best to keep workers healthy

and safe.

The Northwest's 150 food processors have developed best practices for coping with COVID-19, often with the help of state agencies such as the departments of agriculture. Working together, they have been able to minimize the spread of the virus.

They have spread out work stations and installed partitions, staggered break times, tested for the virus and checked temperatures to prevent possible contamination as workers sort and pack fruits, butcher cattle, hogs and chickens and pack vegetables.

A major challenge for everyone in ag has been educating employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when they are off work. Trying to prevent the spread of a disease that doesn't even show symptoms in many is impossible. Worse yet is the fact it is fatal for a few who contract it.

The bottom line is that agriculture has been doing the heavy lifting during this pandemic. No one involved in growing, harvesting or processing crops can work from home. No one in agriculture can have a "Zoom" meeting and call it a day.

The miracle of modern agriculture requires plain old hard work — and lots of people. Nationwide more than 22 million people work in agriculture-related jobs.

Three times a day, we are thankful that they all are on the job.

That's why agriculture is the most important industry in the world.



FARMER'S FATE

The catapulting mattress

How old would you be, if you didn't know how old you actually were? I'm guessing I would be 32. Old enough to start having second thoughts first, but young enough to still believe that age will bring wisdom. Although, the older I get, the less I trust that familiar doctrine — instead, I feel more in line with Mark Twain when he said of himself, "I was young and foolish then; now I am old and foolisher."

A recent family gathering proved this thought. The children had tired of food and conversation and had gone off in search of adventure. Before long a scream shattered the chattering, and one of the little kids came bursting into the room with tears streaming down his face. I jumped up and headed towards the kids. I have two boys — with a seven-year age gap — which often means that the youngest one plays (a lot) more rough than he should. I'd already had to intervene once earlier, when he had made a cousin cry. I had picked him up and sternly asked what happened.

"I hit him," he answered matter of factly, jutting his chin out.

"You can't hit!" I admonished. "But he hit me, so I hit him back — harder!" he said defiantly.

"It's never OK to hit anyone." I recognized my mom's tone of voice coming out of my mouth, and wondered how many times she had wanted to laugh while scolding my cousins and I at family functions. He apologized to his cousin, with about as much sincerity as I remember feeling when our parents had made us say sorry and hug.

With this scenario fresh in my mind, I hurried down the stairs, hoping my Little hadn't hurt someone else. The child was still screaming incoherently, leaving me no clue



Brianna Walker

"THERE WAS NO RESPECT FOR YOUTH WHEN I WAS YOUNG, AND NOW THAT I AM OLD, THERE IS NO RESPECT FOR AGE — I MISSED IT COMING AND GOING."

— J.B. Priestl

what had happened, or what I was going to find. Whatever I was expecting was not what I found — seven kids standing around a partially-deflated air mattress in my aunt's sewing room.

I didn't even know what to make of the situation, so I used my best "scolding adult" voice.

"What happened?" I demanded. "It was an accident!" the three older cousins chorused.

"What was an accident?" I tried to keep my eyebrows furrowed, attempting to mimic the expressions of my own aunts and uncles from my childhood years.

The kids started chattering at once.

"He fell on his side..."

"We may have gotten a bit rough..."

"The little ones bounce better..."

About this time, my cousin arrived at my side to check on her kids and see what had caused all the commotion.

We still weren't quite sure what had happened, so to explain, the kids demonstrated. One of the littlest cousins laid down on one end of the air mattress, while the rest of them lined up along the other side. "One-a, Two-a, Cow-a-bunga!" they shouted as they jumped on their end, shooting the 3-year-old into the air — to land (mostly) on a thin blanket they had put down to cushion the fall onto the

cement floor.

No amount of channeling grouchy great-aunts had any effect on the nearly instant burst of laughter from both my cousin and myself. And instead of scolding, we scurried off to grab cameras!

"The little ones bounce better!" one of the older cousins repeated, as they flipped child after child into the air and onto the floor. Sometimes coming down harder onto the concrete than others. After a particularly hard splat, the Little's expression was somewhere between pride and tears. My cousin reached down and scooped him up, "Good job for being so tough!" She patted his head and set him back down in line for the mattress.

Watching those little bodies twist in the air, while my cousin snapped pictures and I clapped, I discovered two things: As you get older and wiser, you're not actually much wiser (although we did move the air compressor farther away from the mattress), and behind the pretend scowl lines, you're not any older either — for which I am thankful.

Maybe by next year, we can come up with a partially-deflated air mattress big enough to catapult the adults — and we'll leave the scolding up to the truly old and wise.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'God bless our patriots, and God bless America'

To the Editor:

The 243rd Fourth of July would have went unnoticed in Prairie City, where a celebration has been held yearly since the bicentennial in 1976, save for the American Legion Post 106 members that staged a "protest." Seeing as how Gov. Kate Brown frowns on public gatherings, something called a parade would be forbidden. So veterans of our armed forces gathered together with flags, rifles and marched down the main drag to wheel about and return to the starting point by the Legion Hall. Amid cheers, applause and music that included the national anthem and "I'm Proud To Be An American," the group was followed by motorcyclists, ATVs and a vintage truck as they showed their patriotism to those standing along the route.

Was it a successful protest? By Portland, Seattle and other large cities "protests," I figure it was pretty much a flop. You see, folks were friendly to the two deputies that proceeded those walking. There were no jeers or curses from those present. Not a single rock, brick or bottle was thrown. Storefronts were not smashed in, absolutely no looting and the only arson noted was the lit fuse on the black powder howitzer that started the whole hewbang with a roar!

Like our Founding Fathers so long ago, patriotism still burns fiercely. There will always be Americans who will stand up for what is right and make an effort to show it. We know that we are privileged and

not "entitled" and appreciate the difference.

God bless our patriots, and God bless America!

Dave Traylor
John Day

Trump lies, contradicts himself

To the Editor:

I have heard that some folks are calling COVID-19 a "plandemic" to make President Trump look bad. He does a good job of that by himself. Don't these folks ever watch him on TV? He lies, he contradicts himself and doesn't make sure he has his facts straight. That is why I absolutely and indubitably will not vote for Trump in November.

Elberta Miller
Mt. Vernon

'Brad has always stood by his innocence'

To the Editor:

We want to thank our friends, family and a lot of the community for the overwhelming support and prayers concerning the release of Bradley Moles. With a special thanks to the appellate attorney who worked so diligently reviewing lengthy trial transcripts and the Innocence Project who stood by to fight for Brad and his innocence.

The district attorney has his opinion on the case, but here are the documented facts. Brad has always stood by his

innocence. He had the choice to wait on a very strong appeal, or to be reversed and remanded back to the courts with the recent Supreme Court ruling on Ramos v. Louisiana on how nonunanimous verdicts are unconstitutional and lead to wrongful convictions. Of course, Brad wanted to get him to his wife and his life.

Brad was found not guilty of the indicted charges but convicted with an inconsistent verdict. At least three jurors wrote letters stating they were confused, tired and made mistakes, stating they agreed that the child wasn't honest and that Brad was not guilty. We believe there is documented misconduct at every level in this case. The witness tried to recant her story including writing letters that she wasn't honest because she thought that making up a lie would fix the problems she was having, like not being able to see her mom very often due to homelessness and to date a boy. The witness even wrote that she wanted to apologize to the family and stated that DHS and her counselor at CCS wouldn't listen to her.

There is no compensation for the wrongly convicted in Oregon. Brad lost his home, his job and two and a half years of his life, but he is happy to be home and ready to start rebuilding his life.

We live in a time where our professionals abuse their power with little accountability. Our system is sadly flawed, and unfortunately, it's the children and their families that suffer.

Wendy Cates
Mt. Vernon



USPS 226-340

Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

Email: www.MyEagleNews.com
Phone: 541-575-0710

John Day, Oregon

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

EDITOR & GENERAL MANAGER Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
REPORTER Rudy Diaz, rudy@bmeagle.com
REPORTER Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
SPORTS sports@bmeagle.com
MARKETING REP Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
OFFICE ASSISTANT Alixandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY EO Media Group

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including online access)

Grant County\$45
Everywhere else in U.S.\$57

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

POSTMASTER — send address changes to Blue Mountain Eagle 195 N. Canyon Blvd. John Day, OR 97845-1187

Copyright © 2020 Blue Mountain Eagle

All rights reserved. No part of this publication covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping or information storage and retrieval systems — without written permission of the publisher.

[@MyEagleNews](http://www.facebook.com/MyEagleNews)