



# Fighting Mormon Crickets gets complicated

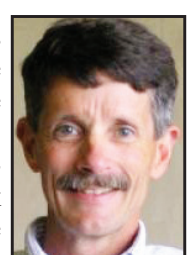
*'Crops for human consumption, organic crops, rangeland, waterways, BLM, Navy, Nature Conservancy,' all complicate containment efforts*

By David Sykes

Combating the infestation of Mormon Crickets advancing toward Morrow County is apparently not as simple as just laying down a bunch of spray and putting out bait to kill the crop-eating pests, the Morrow County Commissioners were told at a recent meeting to discuss the threatening insect.

Oregon State University Extension Agent Larry Lutchter had earlier sounded the alarm when he told the commissioners the crickets, which have for some years been a problem in Gilliam County are probably headed our way. Lutchter had asked the commissioners if they wanted to get involved fighting the crickets now, or wait until they actually crossed over the county line.

To gain a better understanding of the crickets and what can be done to fight them, Gilliam County Extension Agent Jordan Maley, who has experience with the insects, was invited to talk about the damage the insects do, and what can be done in fighting them.



Gilliam County Extension Agent Jordan Maley

Maley said Gilliam's first major experience with the crickets began in summer of 2016 when a large number of bugs were found around Blalock Road west of Arlington. "We were alarmed," Maley said. He related how the crickets "marched in mass" into downtown Arlington in the summer of 2017 "and basically destroyed the summer in downtown Arlington. It was horrendous. We had 100s climbing up screen doors and infesting yards and gardens," Maley said. "They created a mess," he told commissioners. At that time he had also been contacted by Charlie An-

derson of Heppner and was told the bugs were moving into his wheat field. Maley said they realized then what a problem they had and began working with landowners using Sevin poison to bait the crickets. "As they moved into the wheat fields that was a challenging summer. I don't know if our control efforts were all that successful, but we did tamp it down," Maley related.

Later Maley said the landowner group met again and came up with a plan on how they would attempt to manage future outbreaks of the crickets. He said through a partnership of agriculture and the Gilliam County commissioners, they allocated \$105,000 for control efforts. He said based on a treatment area of 12,000 acres they used an insect growth regulator spray called Dimilin. "This interrupts the growth cycle and that works well with this kind of treatment," Maley said. He also pointed out that the crickets will eat other dead Mormon Crickets so they will ingest the chemical "you get a secondary effect from this cannibalistic nature." In spraying the Dimilin on property Maley says they have been treating nine to 12 thousand acres a year since 2018 and have been using a full county approach since it is more efficient to fly across property ownership lines.

Maley says in their first survey of the insect infestation they have seen a larger outbreak this year than expected, seeing some places east of Highway 19 in North Gilliam County with 200 crickets per square yard. He pointed out that there are high value agricultural circles east of where the outbreak is happening this year.

"The question for most people is if you have been treating since 2018 why are you having a big outbreak this year?" Maley asked rhetorically. He said the answer is that there is a Mormon Cricket hatch over a seven-year period, so the insects are coming



Mormon Crickets on the highway 74 turnoff at Interstate 84. photo by Anne Morter

from a much earlier infestation. "What we are seeing is numbers 10 to 200 per square yard drop to zero after treatment. So we know the treatment is being effective," he says. "It is simply the eggs hatch out over a long period of time and we are going to continue dealing with this as long as these guys keep hatching out."

But treating these infestation as they come closer to north Morrow County can be tricky. "Some of those high value agricultural circles are organic crops," Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell said. Maley answered that Dimilin may or may not be able to be sprayed on those fields regardless of whether they are organic or not. He says it gets complicated in Gilliam County when spraying around irrigated fields and pilots have to avoid days where the wind might blow the chemical onto the organic crops. He also said they have been avoiding spraying directly onto wheat land in Gilliam County and "have been aggressively treating rangeland areas, because if we

can kill them where they are laying eggs, we can avoid spraying in the crop areas." Maley says the movement of the crickets that complicates the treatment. "We have no control over their movement, so we try and target the areas where they are hatching," he says. Lutchter added that any type of insect does better in undisturbed fields and the "best thing to happen is where there are eggs to till those fields."

Many of the crop circles in North Morrow County are either organic or crops for consumption by dairy cows and Maley recommends farmers check the Dimilin label and see if it is safe to use on their particular crops. Lutchter says it is important to protect dryland wheat and irrigated acres but treating just the range land. He said that will help control the insects until the cycle goes down at they are not a problem anymore. Another problem in the treatment program is who owns large tracts of land in Morrow County. "Most of the range land east of those areas is the bombing range and the nature conservancy. Those folks are not going to allow any kind of arial application or baiting program, they just

# Dr. Hambleton resigns from Morrow County Health District

Victor VanderDoes, interim CEO of Morrow County Health District (MCHD), announced Tuesday that Dr. Dan Hambleton, who joined the MCHD's medical staff in 2014, has resigned from the district. In his resignation, Dr. Hambleton noted that he appreciated being a part of the district's team of providers and that it's been an honor to serve the healthcare needs of Morrow County residents. Dr. Hambleton decided to leave the district to move closer to his grandchildren and family in Idaho, where his daughter, Krissy Sorenson, currently a nurse at Pioneer Memorial Hospital, will soon move to pursue a new career opportunity as a nurse educator in early July.



Dr. Dan Hambleton

"With the departure of Dr. Hambleton, as well as Dr. Nichols last month, I want to assure the patients and communities we serve that we are committed to ensuring our emergency department at Pioneer Memorial Hospital and all clinics are staffed with quality providers during the interim and as our search for new providers continues."

Currently, the medical staff at Pioneer Memorial Hospital are Dr. Betsy Anderson, Dr. Michael Metzler, Dr. Kenneth Lindsey, Dr. Nancy Hutnak, Dr. Jeffrey Westin, and Dr. William Everts. In addition to these physicians, VanderDoes shared that Dr. Samuel Milstein will begin seeing clinic patients in Heppner beginning Wednesday, June

9, 2021. The team at Pioneer Memorial Clinic also includes Dr. Betsy Anderson, Danielle Mateleska PA-C, Taylor Muenchow PA-C, and LCSW Antoinette Teixeira. In the Irigoin Medical Clinic, Jon Watson PA-C, Amanda Fabian PA-C, Katie Menzies PA-C, and Jamie Reed CSW-A are heading up the primary care team. Eileen McElligott, FNP, provides care at the Lone Community Clinic. In addition to the providers mentioned above, MCHD is actively recruiting new medical staff members, with more news expected about additions to the team in the coming days and weeks.

"Our sincere message to those who entrust MCHD with their care is simply this, you can feel confident knowing that your well-being, good health, safety, and comfort are our priority," said VanderDoes. Information about new medical staff members will be shared on the HealthyMC.org website in the coming days, and MCHD will continue to share updates as they become available.

aren't, so that complicates things," Lutchter pointed out.

The Nature Conservancy is an environmental group owning a 376-acre preserve in Morrow County on which it allows no farming, ranching or other human activity. Also in Morrow County is the 47,627-acre Navy Bombing Ranch. County officials fear if the insect infestation gets into the range the Navy will not allow spraying treatment there. The Navy has in the past been exceedingly difficult to deal with on other management problems such as predator and fire control. There is also the 7,400-acre Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property that could possibly become infested. County officials originally believed that agency would be more cooperative than the Nature Conservancy or Navy, however, the BLM now says the Long-billed Curlew bird, while not endangered, is "of concern", and is located on the property, so has backed off indications it might cooperate on

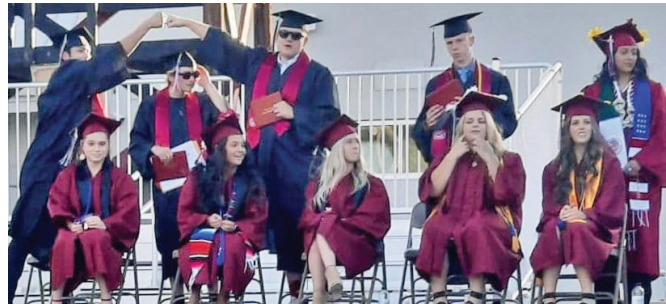
treatment.

Recently Commissioner Jim Doherty, who was appointed to head up the county's efforts against the Mormon Cricket, took a monitoring trip and found the crickets very near the county line at Cecil. "Last week the commission had a healthy discussion around how to prevent the encroaching Mormon Cricket infestation. Dr. Lutchter and his colleague Jordan Maley of Gilliam County sounded the alarm. I was tasked with the unenviable task of all things cricket," he posted on his Facebook page. He took pictures and video of the crickets he found and indicated they may be closer than originally thought. He asked anyone to "Please let me or the county know of localized advancement."

Doherty says there were about 1,000 of the crickets in the area he checked and found them near Cecil and that "they are quick," saying when he approached, they scattered

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