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18

Bedke's search for perennial grass

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AG PROUD Idaho

Fights worth fighting

Lynn Jaynes

Managing Editor
editor@agproud.com
agproud.com

If a gate, a billy goat and a woman have an argument, who wins?

Let's just say, hypothetically, the gate wins – it holds up even when the billy butts it, although now it's bent and misshapen. However, it's only still standing because it smacked the woman who was standing on the other side of it, keeping it closed in spite of the billy's efforts. So, the gate didn't win as much as it just didn't lose.

Or we could say the woman won – but in so doing got a goose egg on her forehead, let a cuss word slip and had blood dripping into her eyes as she then fed hay to the knothead and finished up the chores. Even though she didn't end up in the emergency room for stitches, and the blood washed out of her coat, it's tough to call that a win; it wasn't pretty.

We could say the billy won. While he didn't get through the gate, he did get fed. First, even. However, he also was loaded up in a trailer the next day and was booted off the farm – so while he may have won the battle, he definitely lost the war.

Ultimately, there was no winner. There was just battle. The gate had a right to be there, the goat had a right to be there, and the woman had a right to be there.

It eerily reminds me of many situations we face – salmon recovery versus dam removal, Dr. Seuss's children's books versus racism, and citizens versus face masks. In each situation, someone is like the goat, someone else is like the gate, and another is like the woman. Trust me, this doesn't end well – one is likely to be kicked out, one will be left standing but will be dented and misshapen, and one will be bloodied by the battle and mad. Yet they all have a right to be there.

It's really not a question of whether someone will win, but rather how bruising will the losses be and what price must be paid for it? The only question to evaluate is: Is this a fight worth fighting, or am I just fighting to be fighting?

"You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks," is a quote commonly attributed to Winston Churchill (possibly erroneously) and succinctly states the problem: Not all battles are worth fighting. Don't confuse movement with progress. Just because you're doing a lot doesn't mean you're getting a lot done.

I think the billy might agree – wherever he is. AG

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Treated Untreated

Untreated 6"

Treated 20+"

SX Ranch - Canby, CA
Wheel Line, Hwy 395
4th cutting, 25 days after 3rd cutting
Microbial Activity before: 133.3
Microbial Activity after: 233.3
75.19% increase Microbial Activity w/ one appl. 1st year

Untreated 14"

Treated 24"

SX Ranch - Canby, CA
Pivot, Hwy 395
2nd cutting
Microbial Activity before: 133.3
Microbial Activity after: 250
87.9% increase Microbial Activity w/ one appl. 1st year

Untreated 14"

Treated 30"

Bobby Bushey - Alturas, CA
3rd cutting
Microbial Activity before: 134.2
Microbial Activity after: 238.4 after one application
77.65% increase Microbial Activity w/ one appl. 1st year

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APRIL 2021

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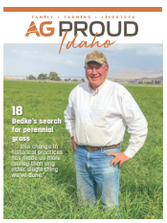

ON THE COVER

Oakley rancher Scott Bedke has improved his calves' after-weaning feed program to graze irrigated grass-mix pastures. See the story on page 18.

Photo courtesy of Bedke Ranches.

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Idaho commodities

Prices received

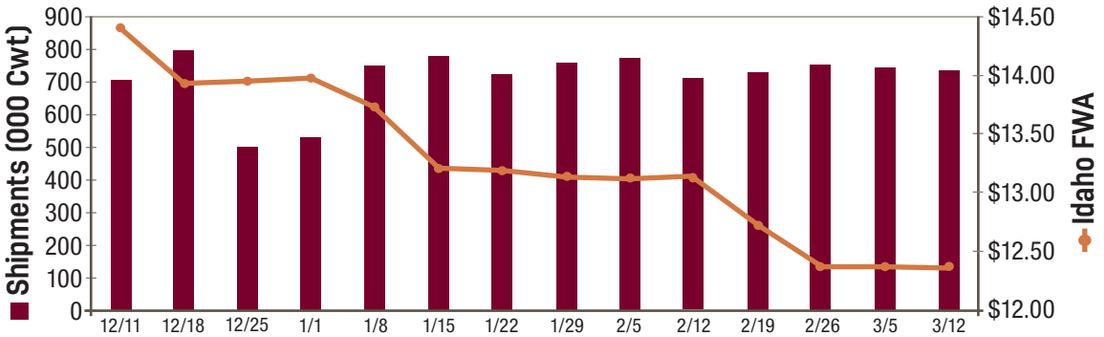
	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021
All wheat	4.61	4.85	5.08	5.19	5.22
Winter wheat	4.57	4.83	5.07	5.18	5.18
Spring wheat	4.68	4.90	5.10	5.18	5.26
All barley	4.87	4.90	4.94	4.85	4.71
Malting barley	5.05	5.08	5.05	4.86	4.75
Feed barley	(withheld)	3.42	3.46	2.93	2.79

Source: USDA NASS monthly updates

Fresh russet potato market

As of March 24, 2021

Shipping area	FWA	Chg	GRI	Chg	70 ct	Chg	10# Film	Chg
Idaho Burbank	$12.35	$0.00	$4.73	$0.00	$15.50	$0.00	$9.50	$0.00
Idaho Norkotah	$11.86	$0.06 ▼	$4.48	$0.04 ▼	$14.50	$0.50 ▼	$9.50	$0.00
San Luis Valley	$18.96	$0.00	$11.11	$0.00	$24.00	$0.00	$17.00	$0.00
Columbia Basin	$14.56	$0.60 ▼	$6.39	$0.37 ▼	$20.00	$0.00	$10.00	$1.50 ▼



Source: United Potato Growers of Idaho

Dairy cow auction

Producers Livestock – As of March 24, 2021

Class	Range
Top springer heifer	$1,325
Average springer heifer	$1,250
Medium springer heifer	$1,160
Short bred	N/T
Open heifer light	N/T
Open heifer heavy	N/T
Starter heifer calves	N/T
Starter bull calves	N/T

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Dairy: Pacific Northwest

Final class and component prices – March 24, 2021

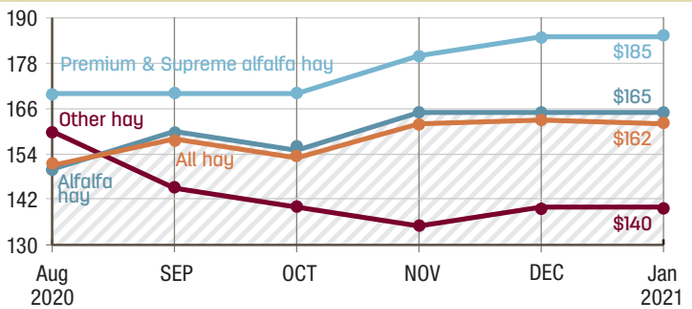
		Class I*	Class II	Class III	Class IV
Skim	Per cwt	$12.27	$9.27	$11.11	$8.45
Butterfat	Per lb	$1.60	$1.44	$1.44	$1.44
Protein	Per lb			$2.98	
Other solids	Per lb			$0.32	
Nonfat solids	Per lb		$1.03		$0.94
Class price**	Per cwt	$17.44	$14.00	$15.75	$13.19
Processor assessment***	Per cwt	$0.20			
Total	Per cwt	$17.64			

*Class I prices are subject to applicable location adjustments. The FO 124 Class I price includes a Class I differential of $1.90 per cwt.
**Class prices announced at 3.5% butterfat, using this formula: (0.965 x skim price) + (3.5 x butterfat price).
***The 20-cent-per-cwt processor assessment is an obligation under the Fluid Milk Promotion Order imposed on any person who processes and markets commercially more than 3 million pounds of packaged fluid milk products on a monthly basis. Deliveries to consumer residences are excluded.

Source: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Idaho hay

Prices received (dollars per ton)



Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

Sugar

Daily price change

Date	ISA daily price* cts/lb	15-day average cts/lb	White sugar price index **	
24-Mar-21	15.45 cts/lb	15.70 cts/lb	444.30 $/T	20.15 cts/lb
23-Mar-21	15.25 cts/lb	15.72 cts/lb	436.00 $/T	19.78 cts/lb
22-Mar-21	15.36 cts/lb	15.76 cts/lb	443.05 $/T	20.10 cts/lb
19-Mar-21	15.54 cts/lb	15.79 cts/lb	446.80 $/T	20.27 cts/lb
18-Mar-21	15.65 cts/lb	15.87 cts/lb	449.10 $/T	20.37 cts/lb
17-Mar-21	15.74 cts/lb	15.95 cts/lb	451.35 $/T	20.47 cts/lb
16-Mar-21	15.98 cts/lb	16.06 cts/lb	455.80 $/T	20.67 cts/lb
15-Mar-21	15.83 cts/lb	16.14 cts/lb	452.40 $/T	20.52 cts/lb
12-Mar-21	15.83 cts/lb	16.26 cts/lb	453.05 $/T	20.55 cts/lb
11-Mar-21	16.00 cts/lb	16.34 cts/lb	456.65 $/T	20.71 cts/lb
10-Mar-21	15.64 cts/lb	16.38 cts/lb	446.75 $/T	20.26 cts/lb
9-Mar-21	15.55 cts/lb	16.42 cts/lb	445.95 $/T	20.23 cts/lb
8-Mar-21	15.83 cts/lb	16.45 cts/lb	452.30 $/T	20.52 cts/lb
5-Mar-21	15.97 cts/lb	16.45 cts/lb	455.65 $/T	20.67 cts/lb
4-Mar-21	15.83 cts/lb	16.43 cts/lb	453.80 $/T	20.58 cts/lb

*ISA Daily Price is a simple average of the close quotes for the first three future positions of the New York ICE, Contract No. 11.
**White Sugar Price Index is a simple average of the close quotes for the first two future positions of the London ICE, White Sugar Contract
+Average calculated in accordance with Statistical Rule S-14 under the 1992 ISA for the day market was closed

Source: International Sugar Organization

Wheat and barley

As of March 24, 2021

Soft white wheat		Futures	Basis	Change
Blackfoot / Pocatello			#N/A	#N/A
Idaho Falls			#N/A	#N/A
Rexburg / Ririe / Roberts	$5.55	$6.52	($0.97)	$0.46
Grace / Soda Springs	$5.23	$6.52	($1.29)	($0.06)
Burley / Rupert	$5.63	$6.52	($0.89)	$0.23
Twin Falls / Eden / Buhl	$5.43	$6.52	($1.10)	($0.02)
Ogden	$5.38	$6.52	($1.14)	($0.06)
Nampa / Weiser / Meridian	$6.60	$6.52	$0.08	$0.33
Nez Perce / Craigmont	$6.75	$6.52	$0.23	$0.28
Lewiston	$7.01	$6.52	$0.49	$0.28
Moscow / Genesee	$6.82	$6.52	$0.30	$0.26
Portland	$7.35	$6.52	$0.83	$0.33
Hard red winter wheat		**Futures**	**Basis**	**Change**
Blackfoot / Pocatello			#N/A	#N/A
Idaho Falls			#N/A	#N/A
Rexburg / Ririe / Roberts			#N/A	#N/A
Grace / Soda Springs	$5.55	$6.18	($0.63)	$0.04
Burley / Rupert	$5.81	$6.18	($0.37)	$0.29
Twin Falls / Eden / Buhl			#N/A	#N/A
Ogden	$5.95	$6.18	($0.23)	$0.04
Nampa / Weiser / Meridian	$6.34	$6.18	$0.17	$0.26
Great Falls	$6.13	$6.18	($0.05)	$0.17
Nez Perce / Craigmont	$6.61	$6.18	$0.44	$0.09
Lewiston	$6.87	$6.18	$0.70	$0.09
Moscow / Genesee	$6.69	$6.18	$0.52	$0.07

Hard red spring wheat (DNS)		Futures	Basis	Change
Blackfoot / Pocatello			#N/A	#N/A
Idaho Falls			#N/A	#N/A
Rexburg / Ririe / Roberts			#N/A	#N/A
Grace / Soda Springs	$5.93	$6.36	($0.43)	($0.07)
Burley / Rupert	$6.05	$6.36	($0.31)	$0.21
Twin Falls / Eden / Buhl			#N/A	#N/A
Ogden	$6.38	$6.36	$0.02	($0.07)
Nampa / Weiser / Meridian	$6.20	$6.36	($0.16)	$0.03
Great Falls	$6.14	$6.36	($0.22)	$0.05
Nez Perce / Craigmont	$6.63	$6.36	$0.27	$0.11
Lewiston	$6.89	$6.36	$0.53	$0.11
Moscow / Genesee	$6.65	$6.36	$0.30	$0.04
Portland	$7.46	$6.36	$1.10	($0.14)
Hard white wheat		**Futures**	**Basis**	**Change**
Blackfoot / Pocatello			#N/A	#N/A
Idaho Falls			#N/A	#N/A
Rexburg / Ririe / Roberts	$5.90	$6.18	($0.27)	$0.34
Grace / Soda Springs			#N/A	#N/A
Burley / Rupert	$5.91	$6.18	($0.27)	$0.31
Twin Falls / Eden / Buhl			#N/A	#N/A
Ogden	$5.95	$6.18	($0.23)	$0.04
Moscow / Genesee			#N/A	#N/A
Malting barley		**Futures**	**Basis**	**Change**
Blackfoot / Pocatello	$3.66	$6.52	($2.86)	$0.28
Idaho Falls	$4.17	$6.52	($2.35)	$0.28

Source: https://idahowheatbasis.wordpress.com

AUCTION PRICES March 24, 2021	Twin Falls Livestock Commission	Producers Livestock	7 Rivers Livestock Commission	Blackfoot Livestock Auction	Treasure Valley Livestock Auction	Burley Livestock Auction	Cottonwood Livestock Auction
CLASS				**RANGE**			
Slaughter cows	$55-$69	$45-$68	$51-$67	$58-$68	$42-$93	$56-$74	$48-$70
Slaughter bulls	$62-$98	$75-$96	$64-$80	$83-$94	$68-$90	$80-$91	$78-$95
Heiferettes	$75-$91	N/T	$64-$71	N/T	N/T	$75-$85	$80-$95
Bred cows	$1,475	N/T	$875	N/T	$1,300	N/T	N/T
Cow-calf pairs	$1,210-$1,800	N/T	N/T	N/T	$1,400-$1,600	N/T	N/T
Choice steers 300-400#	$190	N/T	$176-$187	$165-$192	$130-$195	$175-$192	$150-$180
Choice steers 400-500#	$173-$199	N/T	$171-$179	$150-$187	$148-$184	$160-$189	$150-$175
Choice steers 500-600#	$155-$175	N/T	$163-$185	$145-$186	$131-$154	$151-$173	$145-$159
Choice steers 600-700#	$153-$164	N/T	$151-$161	$135-$165	$126-$159	$135-$159	$137-$149
Choice steers 700-800#	$128-$149	N/T	$131-$136	$125-$147	$115-$131	$128-$138	$128-$139
Choice steers 800-1,000+#	$111-$130	N/T	$87-$130	$116-$131	$94-$108	$115-$134	$110-$129
Choice heifers 300-400#	$163-$181	N/T	N/T	N/T	$138-$168	N/T	$140-$150
Choice heifers 400-500#	$157-$173	N/T	$136-$158	$140-$163	$123-$169	$148-$167	$135-$151
Choice heifers 500-600#	$153-$160	N/T	$143-$155	$130-$164	$119-$152	$135-$159	$130-$142
Choice heifers 600-700#	$138-$151	N/T	$134-$143	$127-$155	$108-$127	$128-$140	$125-$131
Choice heifers 700-800#	$126-$143	N/T	$120-$123	$122-$133	$114-$124	$125-$130	$120-$129
Choice heifers 800-1,000+#	$118-$125	N/T	$106-$121	$110-$125	$87-$102	$112-$127	$100-$123

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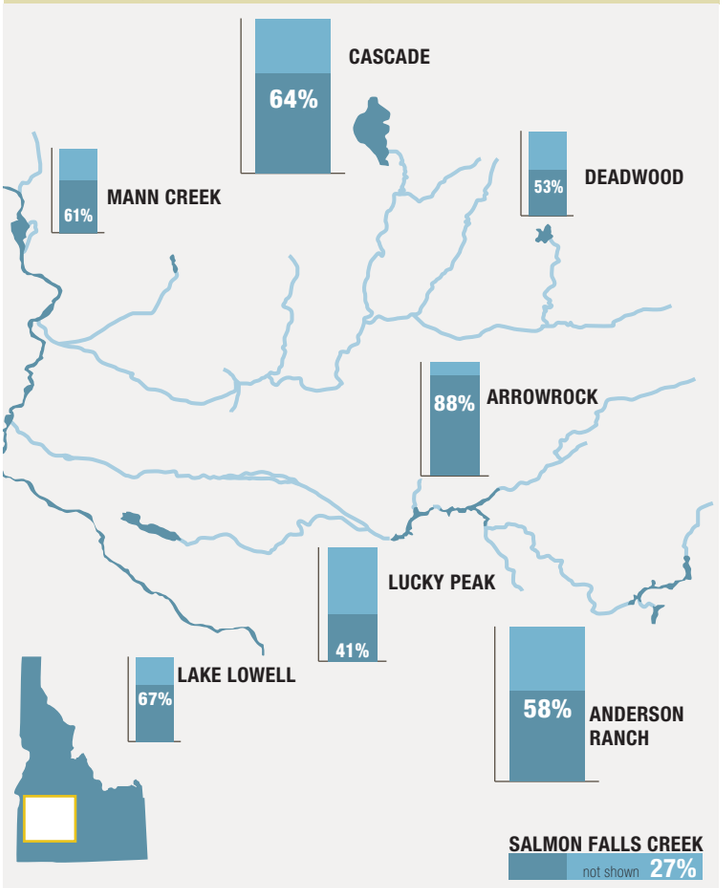
Reservoir fill

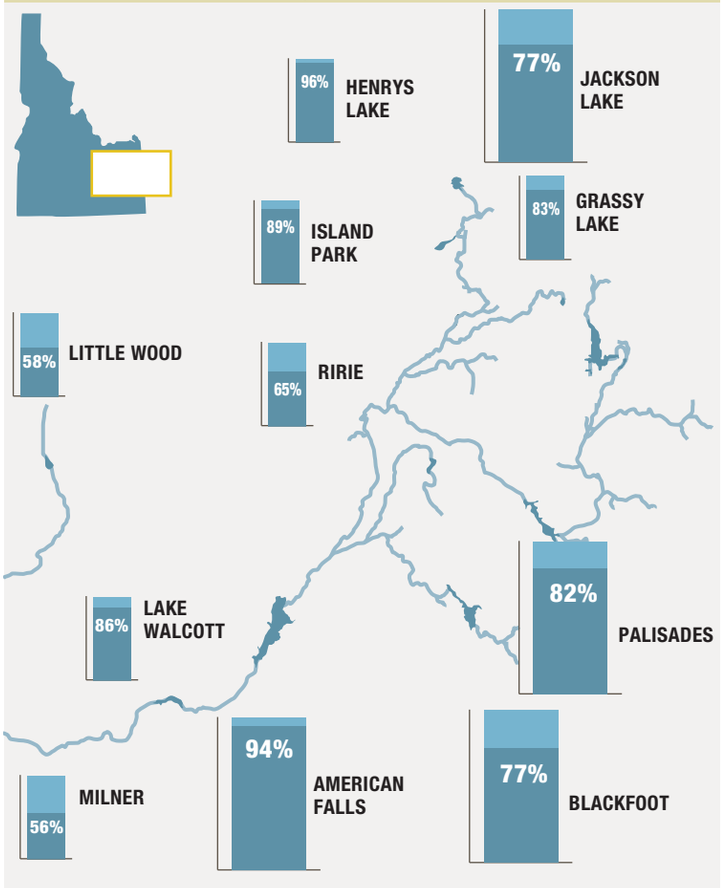
Boise and Payette River Basins, as of March 24, 2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Reservoir fill

Upper Snake River Basin, as of March 24, 2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

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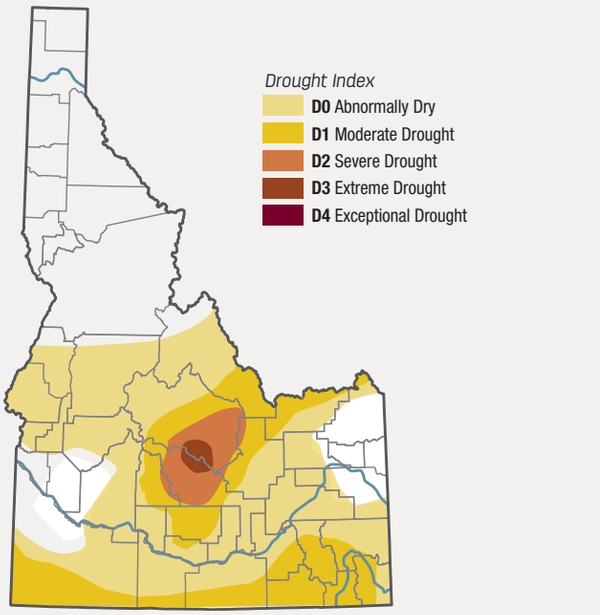
- Transfer tankers

Current U.S. drought monitor

As of March 24, 2021



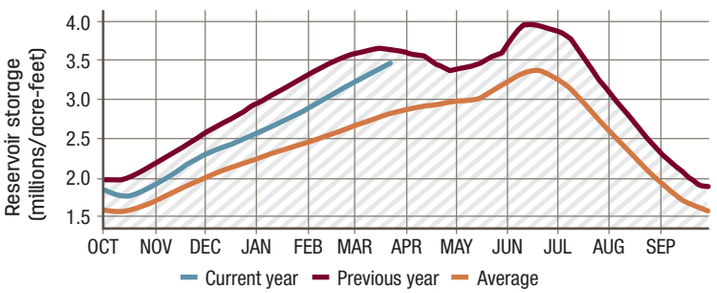
Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska

Water year graph for seven selected reservoirs

(millions/acre-feet)

Selected reservoirs:

- Jackson Lake at dam on Snake River near Moran, WY
- Palisades Dam
- Ririe Dam and Lake on Willow Creek
- Grassy Lake near Moran, WY
- Island Park Dam and Reservoir on Henry's Fork
- American Falls Dam and Reservoir
- Minidoka Dam and Lake Walcott on Snake River

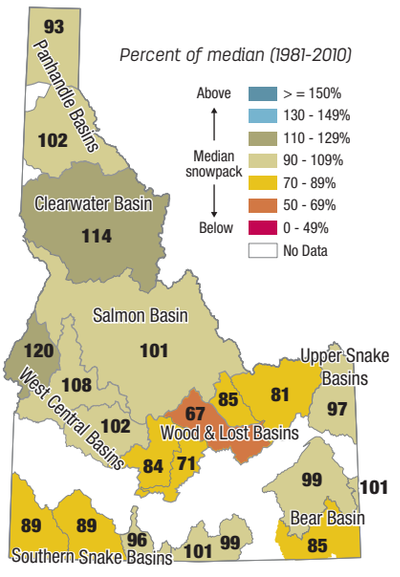


Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Snowpack map

Percent of median snowpack, as of March 24, 2021

Basinwide snow-water equivalent as a percentage of the 1981 to 2010 median.



USDA United States Department of Agriculture NRCS

Source: USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center

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IN THE NEWS

New crop option for wheat growers

A Midwest-based company recently licensed a new herbicide-resistant winter canola variety developed by retired University of Idaho plant breeder Jack Brown and colleagues as a new crop option for wheat growers.

The University of Idaho Office of Technology Transfer registered the new Chinook winter canola as a federal Plant Protected Variety in 2020 and trademarked G2Flex, the herbicide-resistance technology included in the new variety. Seed distributor WinField United obtained an exclusive license to market Chinook seed to farmers.

"This high-yielding, extremely winter-hardy variety from the University of Idaho's breeding program looks to gain a lot of market share in 2021," said Mick Miller, WinField CROPLAN winter canola product manager in Montana. "The growth potential for acres in the north allows great placement of CP1022WC in Montana, North Dakota, Washington, Idaho and Oregon."

Wheat growers increasingly use wheat varieties resistant to herbicides that can control grassy weeds which reduce crop yields. Those same Group 2 herbicides limited the use of canola in crop rotations because residual herbicides in the soil damaged its growth.

The new variety, which will be marketed by WinField United as CROPLAN CP1022WC, incorporates a genetic trait with resistance to multiple Group 2 herbicides most commonly used with the new wheat varieties.

Like the new wheats, Chinook winter canola uses an herbicide resistance trait developed through conventional plant breeding methods and does not rely on genetic engineering, and so is not considered a genetically modified organism, Brown said.

The new variety becomes the first winter canola available to farmers with the herbicide resistance trait, Brown said. He led the U of I College of Agricultural and Life Sciences oilseed breeding program for more than two decades before retiring in 2020.

Other winter canola varieties on the market with herbicide resistance are considered GMOs, Brown said. That means Chinook, which offers excellent oil qualities, appeals to an important market niche, Brown said.

—Excerpted from University of Idaho press release, Feb. 24, 2021

New website resource for Idaho farmers and ranchers

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) announced a new website resource to help Idaho producers manage, start, or transition farms and ranches – farm.idaho.gov.

The website is part of the Idaho Farm and Ranch Center, a new program of the ISDA. The website serves as a one-stop-shop for farmer and rancher resources created in Idaho and across the nation. The purpose of the Idaho Farm and Ranch Center is to help ensure farmers and ranchers have the skills, financial tools, transition plan and community they need to be successful.

The website features financial management trainings, guidebooks and videos on succession planning, tools and tips for managing family businesses, and a calendar of events. The website also contains additional resources focused on beginning farmers, disabled farmers and veteran farmers.

"Website content will be updated continually, and we invite resource providers to contact us with tools they wish to have listed on the website," said Anna Pratt Lickley, program manager, who can be reached at anna.pratt@isda.idaho.gov.

—Excerpted from Idaho State Department of Agriculture press release, March 2, 2021

Farm stress survey

Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP) is working to collect data from 13 Western states and four U.S. territories regarding the stressors agricultural producers and workers experience. Information gathered from this research will be used to develop educational materials, determine how best to assist farmers and ranchers and how they can obtain additional resources to better manage their stress.

WRASAP is currently distributing the survey across the Western regions, including Idaho, and are looking to increase response rates by promoting the survey to producers through as many communication channels as possible. The survey link is bit.ly/agri-stress-survey and takes 15 minutes to complete.

For more information on WRASAP, visit the website at farmstress.us and be part of the solution.

—WRASAP news release

Idaho discovers invasive mussels in aquarium products

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture's (ISDA) Invasive Species Program announced the detection of invasive zebra mussels in aquarium products sold in the state. The ISDA has found live, viable zebra mussels in Marimo moss balls which commonly are sold for use in aquariums. ISDA is working with local Petco store managers

USDA PROGRAM DEADLINES

USDA program	Crop year	Enrollment open date	Enrollment end date	More information
CRP Grasslands	2021	March 15, 2021	April 23, 2021	https://bit.ly/35mnfNI
Final date to report spring-planted crops	2021		July 15, 2021	County FSA Office

Source: www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases

to obtain any additional product currently in transit.

Zebra mussels are aquatic invasive species that establish themselves in lakes, rivers, canals and water systems, where they cause significant ecological damage as well as damage to irrigation and water distribution systems. They are not currently found in the Columbia River Basin or Idaho, where ISDA operates a significant prevention effort highlighted by watercraft inspection stations located statewide.

Quagga and zebra mussels can clog pipes and mechanical systems of industrial plants, utilities, locks, and dams. If zebra or zebra mussels were to infest Idaho's waters, as they have done in other states, it could cost the state nearly $100 million annually in damage and lost revenue.

What the public can do

Do not dump aquarium tank water or dispose of moss balls in natural water bodies. Aquarium owners can safely dispose of the moss balls by one of two methods:

• Remove the moss balls and place in a plastic bag. Put the bag in a freezer and leave for at least 24 hours. After that, the moss balls can be disposed of in the trash.

• Place moss balls in boiling water for at least one full minute. After that, the moss balls can be disposed of in the trash.

For moss balls that have already been in an aquarium, the ISDA recommends cleaning the entire aquarium. Find more on how to do this by contacting the ISDA Invasive Species Hotline at (877) 336-8676 or info@isda.idaho.gov.

—Excerpted from ISDA press release, March 4, 2021

Idaho ag affairs

—Excerpted from Clark Kauffman, Agricultural Affairs Chair, Legislative Update – Week 9

In the Ag Committee

I presented HB 126 on the floor, and it passed 44-26 and will now go to the Senate. HB 126 is to legalize the production, processing, research and transportation of industrial hemp in the state. This legislation, if it becomes law, will allow Idaho farmers the opportunity to produce industrial hemp if they so choose.

SCR 106 passed in committee. It is a concurrent resolution to authorize and approve the Idaho Wheat Commission to enter into an agreement with the Idaho State Building Authority to provide financing to construct a new office building to house commodity commissions and other related groups.

Idaho State Sheep and Goat Health Board report

The current assessment on wool produced by Idaho Wool Growers is 10 cents per pound. The assessment is collected at the time of sale by the wool buyer and is remitted to the Idaho Sheep and Goat Health Board office on a quarterly basis.

The breakdown of the assessment is:

• Idaho regulatory animal program for sheep: 3 cents per pound of wool

• Idaho Animal Damage Control program: 3 cents per pound of wool

• Sheep Research, Education and Promotion program: 2 cents per pound of wool

• Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board: 2 cents per pound of wool

Department of Environmental Quality report

In 2018, Idaho received approval from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assume primacy of Idaho's Pollution Discharge Elimination System (PDES). It is a phased-in process. In 2018, Idaho assumed municipal pretreatment, in 2019 Non-POTW (treatment works owned by a state or municipality), 2020 General Permits, 2021 Storm Water, biosolids and federal facilities.

Amalgamated Sugar Co. (now Snake River Sugar Co.) report

The company was founded in 1897 and now has three factories: Twin Falls, Rupert and Nampa. They have 1,700 employees and became grower-owned in 1997 with 700 grower members. Snake River Sugar Company (SRSC) is the second-largest producer in the U.S., producing 10% of the nation's sugar. The company's priorities are transportation, workforce skills and agriculture research. The company plans to invest over $200 million in their facilities over the next five years. Their goal is to have maximum return to the growers. AG

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Ag and the Columbia River Basin: Part 3 – by Idahoans, for Idaho

Stacey Satterlee and **Paul Arrington** for *Ag Proud*

This is the final article in a three-part series relating to ag and the Columbia River. In the first article (February issue), we explained why the region's salmon and steelhead issues are so important to Idaho's ag industries. In the second article (March issue), we discussed regional efforts to find common ground for the future of the region. In this article, we will discuss the Idaho governor's Salmon Workgroup and its efforts to find a common vision for Idaho's salmon and steelhead future.

In April 2019, Gov. Brad Little spoke at a meeting of the Andrus Center for Public Policy discussing the Columbia River Basin, including salmon and steelhead. As part of his comments, Little announced the formation of the Idaho Salmon Workgroup. Little stated: "Idaho has shown time after time that we are a leader in collaborative conservation efforts. I look forward to receiving the policy recommendations from my Salmon Workgroup. Together we will develop effective salmon and steelhead policy for Idaho to ensure that abundant and sustainable populations of salmon and steelhead exist for present and future generations to enjoy."

The workgroup was comprised of 20 stakeholders from throughout the state. Members included tribes, outdoorsmen, conservation groups, ag groups, hydropower entities and water users, in addition to two representatives from the Idaho Legislature. For 18 months, the workgroup met throughout Idaho, in locations such as Lewiston, Salmon, Twin Falls and Boise. As required by the emergence of COVID-19, the meetings went virtual.

Meetings provided an opportunity for workgroup members to gain a common understanding of many of the issues impacting salmon and steelhead recovery in Idaho and the region. Topics included habitat restoration, hatchery management, predation control, the hydropower system and harvest management. In addition, the workgroup learned from each other about the importance of these issues to their various communities and stakeholders. For example, sportsmen representatives were able to describe the impact of depleted fisheries on their industry and Idaho's rural fishing communities. Tribes were able to describe the impacts on their cultural, ceremonial and economic ways of life. The Port of Lewiston and wheat farmer representatives were able to describe how critical a river navigation system is to Idaho's ag economy. Finally, hydropower customers were able to describe the benefit of low-cost hydropower to their communities and economies. The conversations were frank and productive.

The task of the workgroup was to create a set of policy recommendations for Little to consider adopting for the state of Idaho. Policy recommendations were to be consensus-based Idaho solutions for salmon and steelhead.

Photo by Mike Dixon.

After 18 months of discussion, the workgroup adopted a report presenting numerous policy recommendations to the governor. Recommendations included:

• Increased habitat restoration projects on Idaho's natal rivers and streams

• Hatchery management that balanced the desire for wild fish while recognizing that hatcheries are necessary to ensure the harvest opportunities Idaho's tribes and fishing communities want and need

Stacey Satterlee
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• Aggressive predator management

• Support of flexible spill operations on the Lower Snake River dams

• Engagement in regional dialogue with states, tribes and stakeholders

• Recognition that the process of salmon recovery should recognize and protect the diverse communities and economies that rely on the river system for many purposes

(To review the final report, copies of written public comments and meeting materials, visit www.species.idaho.gov.)

Now that the work of the Columbia Basin Partnership and the governor's Salmon Workgroup has finished, stakeholder groups are looking forward to the Columbia Basin Collaborative (referred to as the "Four States Agreement" in the prior article) and putting some of the policy recommendations made by the Salmon Workgroup into place. We continue to engage with the region in responding to Congressman Simpson's concept for resolving salmon litigation in the region. Although we cannot agree to breaching the Lower Snake River dams, one thing broadly agreed on is that we want salmon and steelhead in Idaho for future generations – and that the power from the hydrosystem and the navigation on the river system through the locks and dams is essential to Idaho agriculture. Idaho ag will continue to have a seat at the table as these critical conversations happen. AG

Paul Arrington is executive director and general counsel for the Idaho Water Users Association. He can be reached at paul@iwua.org

The cost of water

Pat Hatzenbuehler for *Ag Proud*

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Photo by Mike Dixon.

The winter storms that passed through Idaho and the West in recent weeks were a welcome sight for many, including outdoor winter sports enthusiasts and farmers. This is especially the case since the winter from December 2020 through February 2021 has been dry in many regions in Idaho. The longer trend of dry conditions are reflected in the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor with data from Feb. 23, 2021, that indicated most of the state had abnormally dry climate relative to historical norms, with several locations in central Idaho in extreme drought.

This article focuses on the value of winter snow for farmers. A particular emphasis is placed on the value of precipitation outside of the mountainous regions for which snowpack, as it melts, supplies water to our rivers, streams and reservoirs. Specifically, why do Idaho farmers who are outside of the mountain regions care about winter precipitation?

I draw on several articles by extension and agriculturally focused faculty at universities in Kansas, Michigan and South Dakota to help explain several attributes and risks associated with winter snow conditions that extend beyond the water within the snow.

The first benefit of snow is: It can provide insulation for the soil ecosystem from cold winter air temperatures; 2 to 4 inches of snow can block the soil from fluctuating air temperatures and raise the soil's surface temperature by over 30°F. Such insulation is particularly important for farmers who plant winter wheat, for which the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates there were 740,000 acres planted in Idaho for the 2020-21 crop year, since it lowers the risk of winterkill of fall-planted wheat.

Temperatures that fluctuate greatly between warm and cold in combination with precipitation can also cause ice damage to plants if they are not insulated under snow. However, I have learned from my University of Idaho Extension colleagues that winterkill can play a role in weed management for spring-planted crops such as potatoes, so the insulating effect of snow may not be fully beneficial for all farmers. Additionally, planting seed varieties that are tolerant of cold temperatures can help mitigate some of the risk of losses due to winterkill in winter wheat.

The other benefits of snow for farmers broadly pertain to its effects on the soil ecosystem. The second specific benefit worthy of discussion is the contribution of snow to soil fertility. Research in 2012 describes how snowflakes hold atmospheric nitrogen, nitrate and ammonium that gets released into the soil when they reach the ground. Such atmosphere-to-soil nutrient transfer, via both snow and rain, can provide several pounds of nitrogen to the soil per year. Extended cold soil temperatures can also reduce the numbers and impede the growth of insect pests and other soil diseases, such as rusts, until later in the growing season. For moisture-related effects, the freezing of water in soil can increase soil filtration since the freezing water expands the soil. Lastly, melting snow directly increases soil moisture that is necessary for germination of spring-planted crops and growth of those planted in the fall.

Crops have been emphasized so far, but snow conditions also influence livestock in both beneficial and challenging ways. Regarding benefits, livestock may achieve hydration requirements from snow if they are made familiar with using snow as a water source. However, there are also challenges for livestock who are calving in cold temperatures and snowy environments.

Based on these described benefits and risks associated with snow during the winter, the relatively dry winter from December 2020 through February 2021 has several implications for Idaho farmers looking forward to planting and the growing season. First, soil nutrition and moisture may need supplementation in months ahead. The potential increase in need for fertilizer due to less nutrient transfer via precipitation is not ideal for this year, since fertilizer costs have increased greatly in recent months. Additionally, the lack of snow in some regions may allow some insect pests and weeds to emerge and grow earlier than expected under normal precipitation conditions, which may lead farmers to adjust plans for pest management through purchase of potentially costlier plant varieties and/or additional pesticides and herbicides.

In light of the patterns of a relatively dry winter in Idaho this year, it is likely wise to start accounting for the potential for increased input needs during the planting and growing seasons in farm management plans. AG

References omitted but are available upon request.

Owning farm machinery vs. hiring a custom operator

Ben Eborn for *Ag Proud*

Photo by Lynn Jaynes.

Now is a good time to reflect on the past year and plan for the next one. It's also a good time to sharpen a few pencils and crunch a few numbers. If you're like many producers, you are wrestling with ways to clamp down on production costs. Machinery and equipment may be one area to focus on. In this article, we'll go over calculating machinery costs and look at custom hire as an option to lower your cost of production and improve profitability.

Calculating machine costs

Calculating machinery costs can seem a little difficult at first. Breaking down costs into two categories can simplify things. First, ownership costs (sometimes called fixed costs or overhead) are costs we must pay even if we don't use the equipment. Second, operating costs (expenses like fuel and labor) are variable and increase as we cover more acres. Here's a simple example of the costs to own and operate a 165-hp tractor and a 4-bottom plow (see **Table 1**).

Now that we've estimated our cost to plow ($42 per acre), the next step is to compare that to local custom rates and see if we can save some money. We can call some custom operators in our area and can check the University of Idaho's Custom Rates Guide. **Table 2** is a portion of the custom rates for tillage operations. It shows the average plowing rate for the state is about $37 per acre, with a range of $24 to $55 per acre. Our estimated cost falls withing the range, but it's $5 above the average custom rate.

Ben Eborn
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When we find that the custom rate is lower than our cost, we have some decisions to make. How can we lower our costs and be more efficient? Here are a few options to consider:

1. Sell underused machinery and equipment and hire a custom operator.
2. Hire out as a custom operator and spread out ownership costs over someone else's acres.
3. Downgrade to older machinery and equipment with less annual depreciation.

Owning vs. custom hire

The machinery and equipment needed for a modern farming operation is expensive and often very specialized. A smaller farm may find it impractical to own all the necessary equipment. Even large farms with a complete equipment inventory may find it more profitable to hire a custom operator. A few years ago, I was visiting with one of the largest farmers in the state. This farm owned their harvesting equipment, but when they took time to crunch the numbers, they found it was less expensive and more profitable to hire the local custom harvester. They only harvested their own crops when the custom operator couldn't keep up, and they were encouraging him to expand his business so he could take on more acres. It was a win-win situation for the producer and the custom operator – both were more efficient, and both were profitable.

Custom services can often be hired at a lower cost than owning and operating the farm equipment; however, there

Continued on page 16

TABLE 1
Example of the costs to own and operate a 165-HP tractor and a 4-bottom plow

Equipment parameters	165-HP tractor	4-bottom plow
Purchase price	$150,000	$15,000
Expected ownership period (years)	40	10
Salvage value	$30,000	$2,500
Estimated annual hours of use	500	150
Annual ownership cost		
Depreciation	$12,000	$1,250
Interest (6% X full investment)	$9,000	$900
Housing & insurance (1% tractor, 0.5% plow)	$1,500	$75
Annual ownership cost	$22,500	$2,225
Total ownership cost per hour	$45	$15
Annual operating cost		
Repairs & maintenance	$10	$5
Fuel & lube	$25	–
Labor	$25	–
Total operating cost per hour	$60	$5
Total cost per hour	$105	$20
Total cost for plowing per hour	$125	
Total cost for plowing per acre	$42	
($125 / 3 acres per hour)		

TABLE 2
Selected tillage operations

	Custom rates		
Tillage operation	Average	Min	Max
Disk/ripper/harrow combination	28.90	20.00	35.00
Field cultivator	20.20	12.00	32.00
Chisel plow	22.75	15.00	35.00
Moldboard plow	37.10	24.00	55.00
Roller harrow	15.40	12.00	20.00
Offset disk	23.50	18.00	39.00

TIPS FOR CALCULATING COSTS

Annual depreciation is a big expense when it comes to ownership costs. It can be calculated by using this equation:

Annual depreciation = (purchase price – salvage value) / useful life

Depreciation is a non-cash cost. We don't write a check out for it every year. So why is depreciation important to include in machinery costs? It measures the reduction in the value of something because of age and use. To efficiently use machinery or equipment, we must spread that depreciation cost over at least a minimum number of hours or a minimum number of acres. As a rule of thumb: Tractors need to be used at least 500 hours per year, and implements need to be used at least 200 hours per year to be efficient.

Interest on the value of the machinery or equipment is the "opportunity cost" of capital or the interest we could have made if we invested that capital in another option.

Insurance and housing costs are often estimated at 1% to 2% of the total value of the machinery.

OPERATING COSTS

Equipment costs vary by farm and by custom operator. Costs are influenced by operating conditions, amount and type of equipment use, original cost of the machinery, replacement costs, interest rates and quality of maintenance, etc. The method for estimating machinery costs is the same for both new and used machinery. However, the cost per hour of operation may differ significantly. The best source of cost information is a producer's own machinery records. If those records are lacking, the University of Idaho has an old but good Machinery Cost Calculator to help estimate fuel, lube, repair and labor costs.

Owning farm machinery vs. hiring a custom operator, cont'd from page 15

are other things to consider. Timing and dependability are extremely important when deciding whether to own equipment or custom hire. If a custom operator can get the fall work, planting or harvesting done more quickly than we can, that can be worth a lot of money. On the other hand, if our custom operator is late planting or harvesting our crop, that can cost a lot of money and cause a lot of stress. There are pros and cons to both options, and the most profitable option for one business might not work for another.

A few other important things to consider when hiring a custom operator is that this could free up labor and capital tied up in machinery and equipment for other uses. But we must sell our unused equipment. We can't just park it and let it rust away. Convert it to cash and reinvest it in the business.

Conclusion

Machinery and equipment will continue to be more specialized and more expensive. These costs must be spread out over more acres. Custom hiring or doing some custom work for the neighbors may be the key to using machinery and equipment efficiently and lowering production costs. It takes time to calculate machinery costs and evaluate custom hire options, but these are the decisions that increase profitability. AG

The Custom Rates Guide and Machinery Cost Calculator can be found on the Idaho AgBiz website: www.uidaho.edu/cals/idaho-agbiz

Custom services can often be hired at a lower cost than owning and operating the farm equipment; however, there are other things to consider. Timing and dependability are extremely important when deciding whether to own equipment or custom hire.

FARM STRATEGIES

• Producers share growth strategies, decision processes and turning points •

Kimberly McClellan for *Ag Proud*

Q As you look back, what's something that just went well for you (within the past 10 years)?

A Probably the most significant things that have gone well for us over the past 10 years are that we have had adequate commodity prices and good yields. We have also made some land purchases that have worked out well for us.

Q What's something that's really made a difference in your operation – a turning point?

A I took over the farm in the early '90s and, at that point, our farm was struggling. We were pretty close to foreclosure. We were banking with First Security Bank, and they assigned us a new loan officer by the name of Rob Atkins. Rob helped us develop a budget and worked closely with us on a farm plan. It was with his help that we were able to turn things around financially. I had a neighbor tell me once that you don't know how good your banker is until you can't pay him back. We put that theory to the test and, with Rob's help, we survived. It was his and our accountant's plan that played a big part in saving our operation.

Q What purchases are next – where would you like to go with the farm next?

A Most likely, our next capital purchases will be to add a couple of harvest trucks equipped with automatic transmissions. We've had difficulty in the last few years finding drivers that can operate manual transmissions, so making this change should help. We also like to upgrade our tractors after they get about 5,000 to 7,000 hours on them. Unfortunately, what sometimes happens is that I buy some new implement, only to realize we don't have a tractor with enough horsepower to pull it. That's usually when I have to go to town to buy a bigger tractor.

Q What's the decision process for the farm?

A Most of our production decisions are dictated by our crop rotation. We rotate sugarbeets, corn, barley and alfalfa. In our area, there is a high demand for farmground, which makes it more difficult to find ground to rent in order to stretch out our rotation. Beet acres are set by the number of shares we purchased from the Snake River Sugar Co-op. Our barley acres are contracted through both Coors and Busch Ag, and the corn is usually contracted to a local dairy. The strategy we use is to try and limit most of our risk.

Q What was one of the toughest things you dealt with last season, and what adjustments will you make this year to compensate?

A When COVID-19 hit, we had problems with several of the H-2A workers getting across the border. We worked with Senator Crapo and his staff, and they were instrumental in getting them across. You never know what will happen year to year, but for now, there is no indication there will be any problems with the H-2A workers' program this spring. As I mentioned before, it has been difficult to get harvest truck drivers, so hopefully transitioning to trucks with automatic transmissions will help increase our labor pool, which may include my wife. We are also using more center-pivot irrigation and mechanical rock pickers to lessen our dependence on labor. Every year seems to have its challenges, including weather, labor issues, breakdowns, crop diseases – and now a pandemic. I'm not sure what's going to be next, but it seems we have been blessed by the good Lord with the ability to survive. AG

Kimberly McClellan is a freelancer.

Tim and Kathy Pierson

Photo provided by Tim Pierson.

FARM:
Pierson Farms Inc.

NAME:
Tim Pierson, owner/manager

LOCATION:
Gooding, Idaho

CROPS:
sugarbeets, silage corn, barley, hay

Are you a farmer in the Idaho ag business? Let us know by contacting editor@agproud.com

Improved forage production for weaned calves on Bedke Ranch

Heather Smith Thomas for *Ag Proud*

Photos courtesy of Bedke Ranches.

Scott Bedke, Speaker of the House in the Idaho state Legislature, is fourth-generation on the family ranch in southern Idaho. He and his brother Eric work together and run cattle in Idaho and Nevada.

"Our great-grandfather started ranching in the Oakley area in the 1870s. We have a farm and cow-calf operation, and our range allotment is in the Goose Creek drainage. Goose Creek starts in Idaho, flows south into Nevada, turns to the east through the corner of Utah, then back to the north and into the Oakley reservoir, which provides irrigation water for the area," he says.

"We ranch with 1,400 mother cows. Historically, one of the challenges was marketing weaned calves," he says. It's best to have them grouped according to size and weight. The cows calve from late February through April, so there is some size difference between the earliest-born and late-born calves.

"For marketing, we've done everything from selling through local commission yards to video auctions. For the past 20 years, we sold through Superior in truckload lots. You want those lots as uniform as possible," Bedke says.

The calves are weaned in October but not shipped until late November or early December. "We usually ship steers the Monday before Thanksgiving and heifers the Monday after Thanksgiving. We needed a place to background those calves – to wean and process them and keep them gaining weight for 45 days." Buyers prefer calves that are already weaned and well started.

"We don't have our own feedlot, and sending calves to a custom feedlot for pre-conditioning is expensive. We have farmground near Oakley where we were raising alfalfa hay, and we can put calves on that regrowth in the fall after hay harvest, but there is risk of bloat, especially in October. So we took one pivot out of alfalfa and planted triticale in early August."

Triticale is a nutrient-dense hybrid (wheat and rye) that provides good nutrition for cattle and is not as likely to cause bloat. "Planted in early August, it would be nearly ready to head out – peak quality for nutrition – when we put weaned calves on it in October. We let them graze that off, and

Cattle graze a four-grass mix of two cool-season grasses and two warm-season grasses on the Bedke Ranch near Oakley.

Scott Bedke stands in the irrigated grass-mix pasture that is ready for calves to graze. He says changing the ranch's historic practices has made them more money than any other single thing they've done.

Heather Smith Thomas
Freelance Writer
Central Idaho

it worked fairly well. The following spring, we'd fertilize that field, turn the water back on it, green-chop the new growth and replant again in August. This was cheaper than taking calves to a custom feedlot but still more expensive than we wanted," Bedke says.

"So we looked for a perennial grass we wouldn't have to tear up and replant every year like triticale. In different parts of the field, we tried different varieties of grasses. One was a Helena product called Bovine Builder. This is a mix of four grasses, two cool-season grasses and two warm-season grasses [30 early maturing orchardgrass, 30 percent tall fescue, 25 percent late-maturing orchardgrass and 15 percent perennial ryegrass]. We planted 40 acres and continued with triticale on most of the field," he says.

The grass performed well, and the calves liked it. "Instead of our cash crop off that field being greenchop triticale, it became hay. That hay tested well – right at 100 on TDN [total digestible nutrients] and about 11 percent protein, which is pretty good for grass hay. So we took the rest of that pivot out of triticale and put it all into this grass mix," Bedke says. After hay harvest, the regrowth serves as pasture for weaned calves.

"We have corrals adjacent to these fields, so we'd bring the cattle in from summer pasture, process and wean the calves, and turn them into the grass. This worked so well that we put the adjacent field [a half-pivot] into grass also," he says.

At weaning, the steers are put in one field and the heifers in the other so they don't have to be handled again. "The oldest calves graze for about 45 days, and the last ones to come in graze it for about 35 days. When we put the first calves into that grass in early October, the regrowth is up to your knees," he says.

The hay crop provides 5 tons to the acre, and the regrowth feeds the calves through fall. "This takes fertilizer – about 125 units of nitrogen – and we also aerate and harrow the ground. But when you compare this effort and expense against putting all the calves in a custom feedlot for 45 days, this change in our historic practices has made us more money than any other single thing we've done," Bedke says.

"There is still enough grass that we can leave 150 replacement heifers in those fields after we take out the weaned calves to sell, and we can leave those heifers there until April. We supplement with a little alfalfa hay during winter, but this grass is their main diet, and it stands up to heavy use. Our hay yields have not dropped, and we're coming into our fifth year with this seeding of grass," he says.

"This system really works, and the cattle perform well. From the time the calves go in there in early October (after being weaned and processed and all the trauma associated with that), they gain about a pound per day in this situation, and we are very pleased," Bedke says. AG

The grass-mix hay crop provides 5 tons to the acre and is grazed later when calves are weaned for a month, then provides grazing for replacement heifers.

Mustard madness: A spicy crop with potential

Becky Cook for *Ag Proud*

Four years ago, Mark Tucker branched out in a new direction with his rotational crop, and it is definitely an interesting product.

"I used to grow potatoes as a rotational crop, but I quit that bad habit," Tucker says. "I was looking for a new rotational crop when I found mustard seed."

Tucker uses mustard seed as a rotation with his wheat crop and has found it is an excellent way to put nutrients back in the soil. Not only that, it does a terrific job of creating an inhospitable growing area for bugs.

"Mustard is good for your ground," Tucker says. "It is a natural fumigant that kills certain bugs, and you can use it as both a cover crop or green manure crop as well as a production crop."

The first thing a grower needs to know is: If he doesn't have a contract, he doesn't have anywhere to sell the mustard. "Basically, if you don't have a contract, don't grow it because you won't sell it," he says.

Tucker says there are quite a few growers in the Idaho Falls area in spite of mustard's tough learning curve. After four years, he has learned a lot, but he keeps reapplying the lessons he learns each year. "I've learned a lot through trial and error," he says. "There isn't really a lot of R and D going into mustard at this point."

Mustard is planted using a roller system similar to hay or grass seed at a rate of 10 to 15 pounds per acre. The seed is only available through one place – Mountain States Oilseed, and the going rate this year is $1.90 according to Mountain States Oilseed co-owner Chris Ravsteen. Tucker says mustard uses about the same amount of water as a wheat crop, but the water is applied at different times and rates. When the seed goes into the ground, it is very important to keep it moist, so his pivots went around continuously for the first bit. After that, the seed works on building its root system.

Photo by Becky Cook.

A wave of water crosses Mark Tucker's field of mustard during mid-season. Mustard looks really beautiful while growing the first couple of months, and then it turns into an ugly plant that produces great mustard seeds.

"You actually apply the seed fairly sparse. If you overplant, the mustard won't ripen correctly and will lodge [fall over]. It's better to underplant," he says. "At one point, I looked out on that field and thought 'What the heck am I doing?' You want it sparse, though, because it grows in so thick. You literally cannot walk through a mature field of mustard, although if you needed to you could crawl through, underneath the seed pods."

Tucker says when growing cereal grains, there is an unlimited potential for the size of a head and shaft. With mustard, there is a finite number in the stem-to-pod ratio, and the size is based on how the mustard is grown – whether it is fertilized, grown on dryland or irrigated, and how often it's fertilized or watered.

Another issue that needs to be addressed when growing mustard is the combine used. Tucker says he not only had to have a special sieve on his combine, but just cutting the crop took additional time.

"It is not a fast-cutting plant. The goal is to not have to back up, but that is easier said than done. It will flow along just great

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and then go right over the roller on your combine in a big wave," he says. "It really tests my patience, and I am not a real patient guy. If you have any holes in your combine, you will lose some of your crop – it's a small seed."

There are three types of production mustard crops – yellow, brown and oriental. Yellow is the type that most are familiar with as table mustard. Brown is spicier and can be made into Dijon mustard. Oriental is somewhere in the middle of the other two.

Ravsteen says that Idaho growers produce world-class mustard, mostly due to the volcanic soil.

"The irrigation is ideal also," he says. "With irrigation, a good average production for mustard is 2,000 pounds per acre."

Using mustard as a cover crop or green manure crop has good value also.

"We have growers who plant in mustard after their wheat crop and then, after the first frost, they disc it back in," Ravsteen says. "The soil is then great for potatoes afterward." He says the crop doesn't add nitrogen, but its greatest value is as a fungicide for bugs and adding in other nutrients when plowed under as a green manure crop.

Becky Cook
Freelance Writer
Eastern Idaho

One of the tough things about mustard production is the effort it takes to plow it under after harvesting. "It's an ugly plant when you harvest it; a field of tumbleweeds look better," Tucker says. "Plus, you are cutting it and leaving a tough 3-foot-tall plant that you need to disc under. It takes some doing."

The payback for growing mustard can best be described as the nutritional value and fungicidal value it adds to soil. Tucker says that economically, it is just about the same return as a crop of soft white wheat. "One year I might make a little more, another a little less," he says. "I'm applying about the same amount of water and fertilizer as the soft white wheat. It takes just slightly longer to harvest." AG

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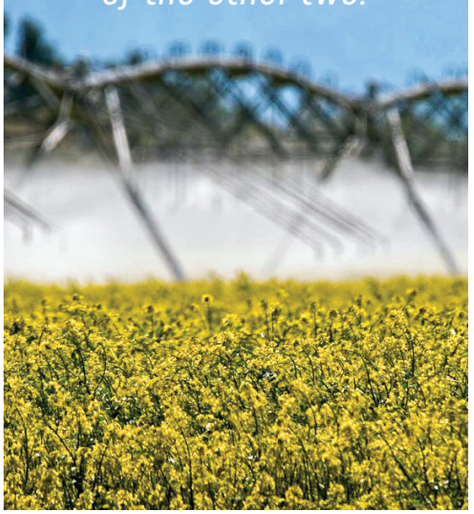

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Idaho company aims to automate rock picking

Ag Proud Editor Walt Cooley

A northern Idaho startup will place a dozen automated rock-picking implements with farmers this growing season. The most unique feature of the company's new implement is a hydraulically powered arm with a rubber belt-driven pincer that can quickly aid farmers picking rocks anywhere from 6 inches in diameter up to 28 inches.

Designed to mount to a skid steer, the new implement requires manual operation by the equipment's driver – at least at this point in development. The company developing the new rock picker – TerraClear – envisions even further automation of rock picking in the future. Director of marketing Heidi Lindsley said the company is driving toward a "Roomba for rocks" – an automated robot that can solve farming's rock-picking problem with less human interaction.

Grangeville, Idaho-based TerraClear (www.terraclear.com) presently has two offerings for farmers.

They have the new implement already described. And they can also help identify where and how many rocks a farmer may need to pick in a certain field.

To identify where rocks are, the company uses drones to fly over a field, take high-resolution photos of the surface and then, with the help of computer vision and A.I., identify where uncovered rocks are in a field. The more fields the company's drones fly over, the better and more accurate its computer – otherwise known as a neural network – gets at identifying different types of rocks, in different soils and how many need picked.

Photos by Walt Cooley.

"We've flown a lot of fields in north Idaho, and the models are quite effective on bare, cultivated fields up there. This year, we're expanding into other areas and continue to improve the model's use in new conditions," Lindsley says.

The company can provide a farmer a GPS map of where to-be-picked rocks are laying in a field that's recently been cultivated.

"Timing is really critical. We can now create a rock map in fewer than 24 hours after flying the field, and that timeline will only get faster," Lindsley says.

Pairing the company's rock map and a GPS-enabled skid steer with the company's rock picker can really save a farmer picking

Ag students at CSI observe a live demonstration of TerraClear's Rock Picker, a new automation for rock-picking, March 10 in Twin Falls. A few students even got to try out the new implement for themselves. Student Mike Miller of Milk River, Alberta, Canada, was one of those who test-drove the new picker. "I was really impressed. It did the job very well. I didn't think it would pick up the bigger rocks," he said.

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time and labor, Lindsley says. Operators who have rocks mapped on a tablet screen can use GPS tracking on their skid steer to help navigate throughout the field. For example, as an operator drives up to a rock to be picked and comes within visual sight of the rock, the dot on the screen representing a rock to be picked disappears. The company can even chart the most efficient rock-picking path for an operator to follow through a field.

"Our technology really mimics hand picking where they've got a person driving a Ranger or a front-end loader with a bucket and then they've got another couple people picking up rocks. It's just much faster and much more fun," Lindsley says.

The company has already placed a few units with farmers in Idaho and California, and will be delivering units in Minnesota and Pennsylvania this spring as well. Last year and again this year, they will offer a custom rock-mapping and picking service to farmers in northern Idaho.

However, that's not all that TerraClear is working on. The company's next level of automation incorporates computer vision with the rock-picking arm, so a driver would only have to get close enough to a rock for the picker to see it and then it would automatically engage the picking arm. They're calling that feature – "Auto Pick." Even further in the future, the company will pair its technology with autonomous tractor technology to create a completely hands-off rock-picking robot. AG

"At that point, the picker will be like a rock Roomba that you give coordinates of the rocks in your field, and you send it out there to have it go pick your rocks for you."
—TerraClear spokeswoman Heidi Lindsley

Idaho farmers go green

Diana Hooley for *Ag Proud*

Spring is here, and as the ground warms many Idaho farmers are thinking about preparing their fields, discing and ripping, ready to lay down seed. Others, though, are skipping the ground work. They're drilling seed directly into a mat of broken cornstalks, old weeds and cow manure. It's an organic mix made in fertility heaven and only requires that the cows have pastured in last year's cornfield. This kind of farming, regenerative agriculture, is becoming increasingly popular in Idaho and across the country.

There are several benefits as well as emerging opportunities with regenerative ag, the name coined by health science guru Robert Rodale to describe a holistic approach to farming that takes into account both economic and environmental sustainability. Common regenerative agriculture practices include minimum or no-till farming, ground cover, strip-till farming, the use of organic fertilizers like manure composts and pollinator promotion programs.

As intriguing as it sounds, regenerative agriculture is not new. No-till or minimum-till farming has been around at least since the 1940s, when overplowing created a Dust Bowl in the south-central parts of our country. Today, more than a third of American cropland is no-till and another third is minimum-till, according to USDA statistics. What is different, perhaps, is how farmers are responding to current environmentally conscious markets with methods like regenerative ag.

For the past six years, Bruneau farmer Bruce Lampman has limited tillage on his farm. Bruce says a neighbor farmer suggested he listen to a local presentation on soil biology sponsored by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Lampman says, "Before I went to minimum-till, I'd take a shovel out to the field and dig. I'd find a worm or two per shovelful. A couple of years into no-till, my soil seemed more rich and clumpy. There were decaying bits of matter in it and my shovel held 18 worms or more."

Lampman says the writings of Gabe Brown, farmer and pioneer of the soil health movement, was a big influence on him. According to Lampman, Brown made a distinction between dirt and soil. He said one of the worst things a farmer can do in modern ag is to grow a crop and haul it all away, leaving his ground bare. Then, Lampman says, the farmer has to purchase 200 units of fertilizer in the spring just to get his field up and running.

"It took a couple of years to see how low-till would shake out. We did manage 160 bushels on the wheat. So I think my yields are still pretty good."

Scott Patrick of Kimberly uses low-till to farm his hay, beets, beans and corn crops. He agrees his yields are holding up, and he's also saving time, labor and "a lot of fuel" with minimum-till.

"I usually do one pass [with the tractor] where before I was taking several passes to get the crop into the ground," he says.

Patrick says regenerative ag has also meant using less fertilizer. "I'm doing more with less. I have less inputs [chemically] and yet get the same outputs [yield-wise]."

Some farmers extoll the water savings with regenerative ag. Lance Griff farms 4,000 acres on the Salmon Tract in south-central Idaho. Griff says, "In 2013, we went to minimum-till and started doing more cover cropping. The soil health improved, but we saw water savings too. The organic matter left in our fields holds moisture better, and there's also not as much evaporation."

Regenerative agriculture has also opened up a unique marketing opportunity: carbon sequestration. Cover crops, no-till production and manure composting may help reduce greenhouse gases by holding carbon in the soil. Markets are beginning to emerge interested in helping the environment and are willing to pay farmers for sequestering carbon. According to Green Biz (online, April 2020), a Seattle-based company, Nori, recently paid a farmer $115,000 for storing 8,000 tons of carbon in his soil. Money is pouring into soil-climate initiatives from corporations such as Microsoft and General Mills.

Diana Hooley
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Despite the optimism surrounding carbon markets, there are still roadblocks to overcome. Measuring soil carbon is a difficult and inexact process so far, and according to eco-marketing journal *IPM Practitioner* (February 2018), farmground is not a proven carbon sink at depth. Measurable carbon has only been detected in the topsoil and is vulnerable if stirred. Additionally, interested farmers have to be willing to allow oversight by carbon marketing companies. Some Idaho organic farmers are already familiar with this kind of "perusal of practice," submitting themselves to accountability checks like "green" audits.

Hammett farmer Ryan Johnson says, "We sell our peppermint leaf to a German company, and Europeans seem much more careful about the way their food is produced. They ask me not only how I treat my land, but also how I treat my labor and whether or not I recycle waste. I mean, I think it's good. My wife and I buy organic sometimes. But it can also feel invasive."

Burley potato farmer Duane Grant says he is aware that society is asking farmers to help with the reduction in greenhouse gases. Grant notes that McCain's Corporation, which has a local potato processing plant in Burley, has committed to environmentally sustainable farming with its recent announcement establishing a "Farms of the Future" program. Grant expresses an outlook similar to that of many Idaho farmers when he says he thinks farming practices are evolving, but as for these new markets, "… we'll just have to wait and see." AG

Photo by Lynn Jaynes.

Diana Hooley lives on their third-generation Idaho farm with her husband, Dale, near Hammett, Idaho.

New forage varieties for beef and dairy

Heather Smith Thomas for *Ag Proud*

New forage varieties are filling gaps in the grazing calendar with perennial pastures or cover crops, enabling cattle to graze more of the year or providing higher-quality forage for beef production or dairy. Bryan Weech, market development manager with Barenbrug USA, says research and technology have brought new genetics to market.

Beef cattle options

The 6666 Ranch in Texas has 13 pivots on a mixture for weaning calves on good-quality grass. "They wean about 9,000 calves in October or early November, grazing them until January or February," says Weech.

Jed Bateman of AgriSource (Burley, Idaho) is a seed distributer for Barenbrug and works with farmers and ranchers in Idaho and Utah to determine which seed mixes might work best for them. One farmer in northern Utah had challenges with high salt levels in soil and high pH. "We used several seed mixes with poor success, then last year changed his cropping system to no-till with less soil disturbance. For seed, he used 30 pounds of triticale and a perennial mix containing soft-leaf tall fescue, orchardgrass and perennial ryegrass with new genetics," Bateman says.

"With soil cover and minimum disturbance, he got good pasture established. The best thing for pasture establishment is diversity. The more species you add, especially for a tough situation, the better all of them react, and seem to have a symbiotic relationship and help each other," he says.

In another creative scenario, an Idaho rancher was trying to produce more forage while establishing perennial pasture. "Three years ago, he planted oats for hay, and again the next year with a perennial pasture seeded underneath, using oats as a cover crop," says Bateman. After harvesting the oat hay, the new pasture was about 3 inches tall and well established.

"By then, it was July 20, and we thought we could do a lot more while waiting for this pasture to grow. We put in another cover crop – a diverse mix of radishes, a two-way forage turnip and forage brassica, Italian ryegrass, red clover and sorghum-sudangrass [a warm-season grass that could handle hot weather]. We no-tilled those seeds into the young grass, and the rancher started grazing in late October. He pastured cattle that fall for almost 100 days, and it didn't hurt the perennial pasture. That was our big concern, but he needed more pasture going into fall, and this diverse mix provided it. The next spring the permanent pasture was thick and full. We triple-cropped that ground while growing permanent pasture," Bateman says.

A similar thing can be accomplished with grazing corn. "The permanent pasture mix grows beautifully underneath it. The grass takes a beating during winter, grazing the corn, but in the field we tried last year there's a 95 percent stand of pasture," says Bateman.

There are also seed mixes for dry ground. "If ranchers need something that will work if they run out of irrigation water in late July, we use a mix called Barricade; it has five species of dryland grasses, some of which were developed in our dry region. This mix was developed in conjunction with research from USDA-ARS; we used some of their plant material in the mix," Bateman says.

It includes Artillery smooth brome, which was developed in northern Utah, plus Arsenal meadow brome, Hakari Alaska brome, intermediate wheat grass and Drover tall fescue. It thrives on dry years, but when it gets more rain it produces even more.

Weech says this mix does well in climates with 12 to 18 inches of annual precipitation but also works well in areas with limited irrigation. Many Western ranches have water early in the season but not in late summer. "If they only have spring runoff for irrigation, this gets the plants going, and they perform well through drier months of late summer, even when other pastures dry out and lose quality," he says. Some ranches have early water for irrigation and take a cutting of hay and then grow it back for pasture even if the season is hot and dry.

Heather Smith Thomas
Freelance Writer
Central Idaho

Dairy options

Several new seed mixes are working for dairies. One of these is a new variety of Italian ryegrass. Bateman says it gives dairymen another option beyond corn, alfalfa and cereal grain. Fiber digestibility is as high as 70%.

"Here in the Magic Valley [Idaho], we've had problems with overwintering, but in many places it overwinters very well. We're trying to figure out ways to get two years out of it. As a biennial, the first year it stays vegetative and doesn't produce a seedhead. It grows continually, and farmers get three to four cuttings. We plant in April and usually take first cutting at the end of May or early June. It establishes quickly," he says.

"One large dairy fresh cuts several hundred tons per day, working across five pivots. That farmer gets another two days of feed in the Italian ryegrass fields beyond what he gets with alfalfa," says Bateman.

Some people plant this in the fall and get a cutting in late fall, plus early spring production. They may utilize it in spring and early summer and take it out in time to put in a summer annual or corn. In Idaho, some farmers are mixing it with brassicas like turnips or a forage rapeseed. Some farmers seed it by air into corn when the corn is knee-high or by using a three-point spreader on the back of a tractor. It germinates and sits under the corn canopy, then after the corn is harvested, the young plants grow quickly, with a big flush of forage. Some people put stockers on it, or developing heifers, because it is high-quality pasture. AG

On Wybenga Dairy in Cassia County, Idaho, second cutting begins of a newer variety of Italian ryegrass developed for dairies.

Photo provided by Jed Bateman.

Virtual fence keeps cattle where you want them

Heather Smith Thomas for *Ag Proud*

Leo Barthelmess has managed cattle on 30,000 acres in Montana for more than 50 years, going from four fenced pastures to more than 30 in a rotational grazing system. Last spring, he tried something different. He created 30-plus miles of additional fencing from the comfort of his home. This is the new world of virtual fencing.

These invisible boundaries can be moved with computer or smartphone, utilizing GPS coordinates. Cattle are fitted with GPS collars and trained to respect the boundaries. Towers on the property provide satellite communication to and from the collars. As an animal approaches the virtual boundary, the collar emits a warning beep. If the animal continues to approach, it receives an electric shock. Cattle soon learn to back away from the "fence" and respect the boundary to avoid the shock.

Virtual fencing is the result of 30 years' research in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. This technology has now progressed enough to do virtual fencing in a cost-effective manner, and several companies offer this service.

Frank Wooten, CEO of Vence, says his company has many farms using virtual fence. "In 2021, we'll have about 40 new farms in the U.S. and Australia, including several projects in southern Idaho. These new deployments represent about 50,000 head of cattle," he says.

Paul Meiman, extension specialist, rangeland livestock/wildlife interactions, University of Nevada – Reno, is currently leading a research project on two ranches in Nevada, and the first trial took place this past summer.

Jason and McKenzie Molsbee were part of this experiment on their Cottonwood Ranch in Elko County. "Paul Meiman asked if we wanted to give it a try. In June, we put GPS collars on some heifers and some older cows with calves that we kept at home on the meadows," Jason says.

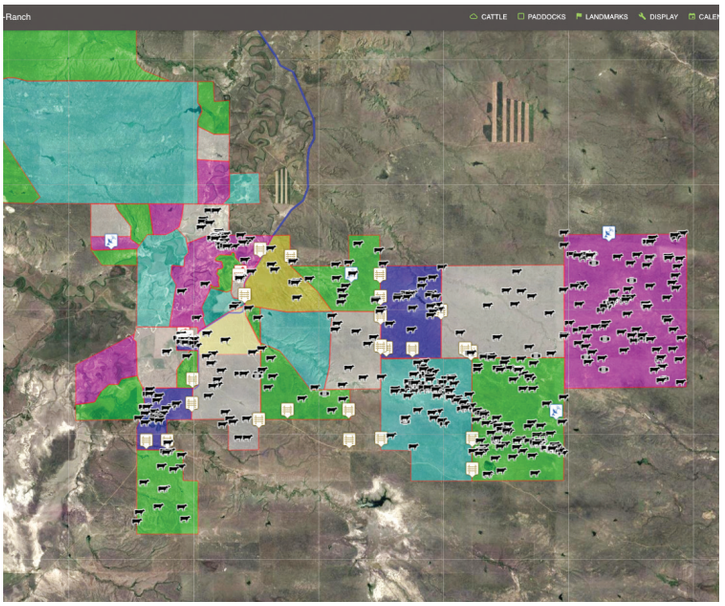
Heather Smith Thomas
Freelance Writer
Central Idaho

They also used virtual fence in one area of their BLM allotment to test it in a riparian area. "Our BLM and Forest Service allotments are large, with no permanent internal fences. Some of it is rough country, but we plan to try more virtual fencing out there next year," McKenzie says.

"We had problems with a few collars coming off, so the company redesigned them. Next year, we'll use the new design and get an idea how they work on large range pastures," she says.

The cattle learned quickly to respond to the beep from their collars. At first, the virtual fence was established next to an actual fence. The cattle learned to associate the beep with the boundary.

A GPS collar first provides a beep as the cow approaches the virtual fence, then delivers an electrical shock if the cow advances closer.



This screenshot shows cattle distribution throughout the virtually fenced area.

Photos provided by Frank Wooten.

"We gradually moved the virtual fence farther from the real fence," Jason says.

To use communication towers on BLM and Forest Service requires special permits, however, and it may take numerous towers in extensive rugged country. "Here on our private ground, it only took one tower and covered about 4,000 acres. Our home pastures and one part of the BLM were all easy to see from that tower," Jason says.

When a virtual fence is changed (to let cattle move into the next pasture), this can be done from a computer or smartphone. "You set it up and dial it in, regarding where you want them. When we put cattle into the BLM riparian pasture in the past, we were always fighting them to try to minimize use of the stream banks. With virtual fence, we created five areas where they could go into the creek for water and changed it weekly. It was easy to bump the cows across the old virtual fenceline or put a salt block out, and they'd go into the new area," Jason says.

If cattle are used to rotational grazing, they look forward to going to a new area and can adjust to virtual fence moves just as readily. Next year, the Molsbees plan to put collars on their entire cow herd (about 300 head).

A person can set up virtual fences to keep cows in a certain area or keep them out. "We fight larkspur all the time; this will be a way to keep them out of those areas," Jason says. "If we can keep from losing cows to larkspur poisoning, this technology becomes cost-effective." It's also cheaper than building permanent fences.

The other Nevada ranch that's part of this two-year test, Maggie Creek Ranch, has a stocker operation near Lamoille, just south of Elko. Travis Whitely, foreman on the Lamoille division, decided to collar about 200 yearlings.

The yearlings were in 100-acre pastures on the home ranch. "We wanted to see if we could do rotational grazing using virtual fence rather than periodically moving electric fence, and whether we could cut the pastures in half or quarters and keep the cattle in those portions – or graze certain areas harder than others. A stream runs through each pasture, and we wanted to set up water gaps and have cattle only go into the stream where we wanted them to," he says.

It took some training for the yearlings to keep them in the smaller areas. Some figured it out quickly, but others were more independent and liked to wander. Another problem was that the collars were made for adult cows and didn't fit the smaller yearlings as well. "Some would slip the collars off. Then we'd have a few heifers not staying where we wanted them to be."

The ranch crew always doctors some for pinkeye or foot rot on those meadows – catching them out there rather than bringing them to a corral. "I wondered how the collars would hold up when we roped the yearlings, and whether they'd run through the virtual fence when we were trying to catch them. That wasn't a problem, however, and when we roped them, we never did pull a collar off," Travis says.

"On our ranch, they set up two towers to cover the whole valley. In mountainous area, a person might need more towers – maybe on several ridges – but for us it worked with two, set at each end of the valley to give us the desired coverage," he says. The towers are protected with hog panels around them so animals couldn't rub on them.

"This technology could be helpful in riparian areas. If a rancher is getting kicked off his allotment because of cattle getting in there, this could be a solution," he says. It's better than a permanent fence because those areas do need grazed at some point, and wildlife can still go through.

"One rancher in Montana is collaring all the cows he turns out on the range and collecting data from the GPS collars. He hopes to increase his numbers by giving this information to BLM or Forest Service to show actual use in certain areas, and the fact the feed is fine and the cattle are not damaging it in any way." GPS data provides real numbers; it's not just someone's word about how the cattle (or how many cattle) are using that land. There are many possibilities for using this technology beneficially. AG

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Q: What has four wheels and flies?
A: A garbage truck

When I was a boy, I had a disease that required me to eat dirt three times a day in order to survive … It's a good thing my older brother told me about it.

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Time for a tuneup! Schedule maintenance on all equipment, and check that all systems are working properly to avoid accidents. Return all guards and protective coverings after work is completed.

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April 18 – National High Five Day
April 21 – Administrative Professionals Day
April 27 – National Tell a Story Day
May 1 – Worker's Day
May 4 – National *Star Wars* Day
May 5 – Cinco de Mayo
May 6 – National Nurses Day
May 7 – National Space Day
May 8 – National Archery Day
May 10 – National Shrimp Day

Have suggestions for this page?
Email your jokes, family fun activities or anything else you would like to share with fellow Idahoans to editor@agproud.com

You better be afraid of your mama

By Michele Coleman

I can't think of a rule of effective parenting I haven't broken.

When I stand before the Lord to be judged for my time as a parent, I'm hoping He smiles benevolently down on me and says, "Michele, the rules that apply to most people don't apply to you. You are bossy, loud and scary, but you lived on a farm, so come on in." I really think I deserve those words. Not just for me, any mother or father who has raised kids on a farm needs to get an automatic bye – a free pass – from all the volumes of parental advice.

I can't think of a rule of effective parenting I haven't broken. Here's one I've smashed to smithereens: Give your child choices. Let them pick what they are going to wear, pack for their lunch or play during their free time. Mercy, I don't have time for my children to decide what they are going to wear. Especially when I already know they are going to wear the only pair of boots, whatever size they may be, that didn't get left out in the rain all night – and if they can find a pair of gloves to complete their morning chore outfit, they are going to be a whole lot more successful than I have been.

Free time is another concept where perhaps I have come up short. Not that my kids don't recreate, but when they ask me if we have any plans on Saturday, forgive me if I say, "When do we *not* have plans on Saturday?" I just don't understand the concept of having a Saturday sitting on the calendar that doesn't know what to do with itself. Perhaps I need to change my sales technique. Instead of saying, "You better believe you're building fence this weekend," I should say, "We are having a team building activity." Why couldn't strawing corrals be called a tractor mud-pit extravaganza? Manure, mud, it's all the same, right? "Don't go to the gym, go dig out the ditch." "Who needs an escape room when we have a barn to clean?" I have found, though, that my children fail to appreciate my attempts at creative parenting.

The tone of voice I use when I talk to my children is another area that may stand improvement. In moments of extreme emotion, I would like to say I speak calmly, keep my voice level and never yell. "If you want to grab the electric wire, let's discuss what the consequences might be. Maybe you can tell me why you want to touch it with your tongue?" Unfortunately, I just can't seem to get the gentle guidance technique mastered. I tend to be more in the "Blank it to blank, that's a hot wire!" camp. To be sure, I have not always been successful at stopping my children from grabbing the hot wires of life, but it's my experience that I usually have half a second or less to let them know my opinion on their personal choices.

Distance and location on the farm are likewise limiting factors when it comes to cultivating quality interactions. If I could not raise my voice and still communicate to my son my need for him to stop jumping off the barn roof or free-falling his bike off the haystack, I would do it. But every day, I'm projecting my voice across fields, down lanes and over the sound of equipment. Some people might call it shrieking. "When I tell you that you better turn off that four-wheeler and get in the house, I'm not in the mood for hearing myself say it twice!"

This leads me to the subject of warnings. Give your children warnings. For example, tell them when they have five minutes before they need to start their chores or leave an activity. Make your expectations clear and easy to understand. I have given ultimatums, I have given predictions, I have even given justice, but I am woefully short on giving warnings. My motto is: By the time you are getting the warning, it is too late for you. "How long exactly has this rabbit been out of water, and you officially don't own a rabbit any longer!" That's more my style. In my defense, I don't have time for peat and repeat. Farming parents just don't have the luxury of telling their kids to get out from in between a cow and her calf five times over. Now that I think about it, I guess I do deal in five-minute warnings per se, but they are always five-minutes-have-been-lost warnings, not future ones. "You needed to be out the door and over feeding those steers five minutes ago!" The difference in my approach is subtle – it certainly is not the best method, but I believe I see a lot more speed on the ground with it.

Are my expectations clear? Not to brag, but this is the one area Dave and I excel in. If it needs to be fed, feed it. If it needs to be watered (be it plant, mammal or bird), water it. Is it a gate? Close it. Is it yours? Put it away. Is it someone else's? Return it. Simple and easy to understand. Dave and I are getting pretty good at mastering these expectations, and as soon as we have them down pat, we plan on trying them out on the kids. AG

Michele and her husband, Dave, live in southern Idaho where they boast an extensive collection of irrigation boots by the back door. If you can navigate the boots, the door is always open (mostly because her children don't know how to close it, and the screen was sprung several windstorms back). But never mind that – come on in because she'd love to chat.

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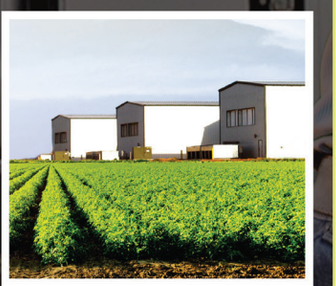

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Blame it on the cold

By Paul Marchant

Pondering on affixing blame does nothing to ease the burden or lessen the pain. It only serves to make it worse. But I do it anyway, probably in a mostly vain search to ease my conscience. See, if I can make myself believe I'm not to blame for whatever misfortune has befallen, the twisted logic spinning in my head temporarily tells me it's not quite so bad.

As I stepped up into the cab of the pickup after swinging the not-so-tight-anymore wire gate just wide enough to drive through, I grabbed my spotlight, stuck my arm out the window into frigid 15-degree early morning air and made a quick sweep of the heifer pasture, the light grabbing any object that was above ground level. Most of the 50 or so heifers were congregated and bedded down in the southwest corner, with a few of the less sociable girls scattered randomly across the 10-acre field.

As I pulled through the gate and made my way to the biggest group of heifers, my heart dropped when I skimmed the light across a heifer lying there by the fence. She looked to be in decent-enough shape, but the motionless form of a newborn calf directly behind her prompted an unholy oath to escape my lips. With the high-beams directly on the newly minted mother, I walked over to her, hoping against hope that what I feared would not be what I found.

As I approached, the heifer casually stood up, turned around and nudged the baby calf with her nose. The calf didn't move or raise its head, confirming what I pretty much already knew. Again, I cussed out loud. Despite the general stupidity and ignorance of first-calf heifers, this one had the makings of a pretty good mama. She was neither rank nor wild, yet she clearly had some sensible maternal instincts.

By all appearances, she had done what she was supposed to do. She'd had the calf with no assistance and cleaned him off and dried him as best she could, but the icy grip of the bitter cold night air was too much for the newborn to overcome. He never managed to stand up and get some nice warm colostrum down his belly.

I don't take loss of any sort well. I especially don't take death loss among the critters well, for many reasons – some obvious, some not quite so conspicuous. First of all, it's death, so that little reality needs no explanation. There's always some mental and emotional processing involved. Next, my mind automatically calculates (as much as my less-than-stellar math skills will allow, anyway) the financial hit I'm taking with every calf that doesn't make it or every cow that doesn't come home off the mountain. And then there's the cause-and-effect element that always tends to sneak in and eventually dominate the stage in my mind. That's just kind of a fancy way to say, "Whose fault was this?"

For you algebra students, that last little part of the equation is never a positive. Pondering on affixing blame does nothing to ease the burden or lessen the pain. It only serves to make it worse. But I do it anyway, probably in a mostly vain search to ease my conscience. See, if I can make myself believe I'm not to blame for whatever misfortune has befallen, the twisted logic spinning in my head temporarily tells me it's not quite so bad. Ultimately, though, playing the blame game only serves to waste precious energy and deplete the good karma reserves. The truth will always come out, no matter the route or time it takes.

So, really, it's better to forgo the effort and energy it takes trying to avoid accountability. It's best to man up and face the truth right from the start. And the truth in the matter before me was: This particular loss could have been avoided were it not for my decision to "take a play off in practice." Here's the deal. The first two weeks of calving had been brutal. Because of the cold, snowy weather, I'd been working on hardly any sleep. I'd rarely allow more than just a couple of hours to pass between heifer checks. It was rough, but I knew what I'd signed up for. As you may have guessed, my diligence paid off on several occasions. I'd help out a heifer that was having trouble or rescue a half-frozen baby from a snowbank. Never, after any such rescue, did I regret the exhaustion or lost sleep. It was always worth it.

On this particular night, however, I'd decided I could skip the 4 a.m. check. The snow had cleared from the fields, and the days had been bright and sunny. There were only a few heifers left to calve and, for the most part, the calves were coming with no human intervention. Surely everything would be OK until 6 a.m. But the weather shows no mercy and plays no favorites. Even though I've seen plenty of calves survive a below-freezing parturition, the cold can't be trusted. Where one calf will jump up and suck in a matter of minutes, another will struggle in the harshness of a sudden freezing existence outside the womb. Such was the case with the lifeless calf at my feet. Now I was reaping the harvest of a slacker's sowing.

I ended up grafting the calf of an old, poor-doing cow onto the heifer, so all was not lost. And in the end, I hope I learned a thing or two (again). Now, who will I blame the next time I get burned (frozen) by taking the easy way out? AG

Paul Marchant is a cowboy and part-time freelance writer based in southern Idaho. Follow him on Twitter at @pm_inthefire, or email him at paul@progressivepublish.com

Ultimately, though, playing the blame game only serves to waste precious energy and deplete the good karma reserves. The truth will always come out, no matter the route or time it takes.

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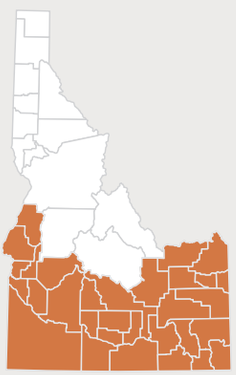

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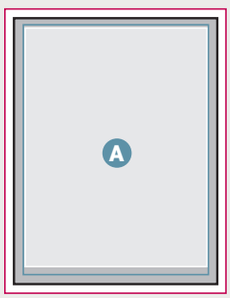

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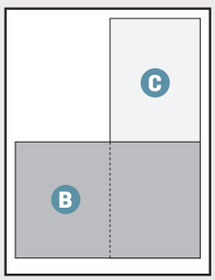

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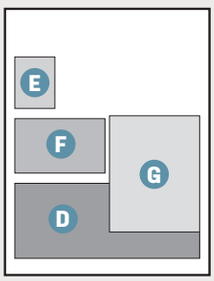

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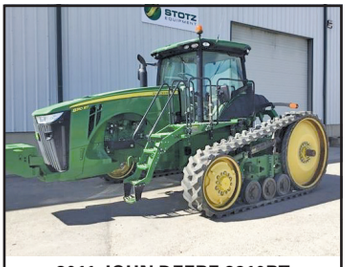

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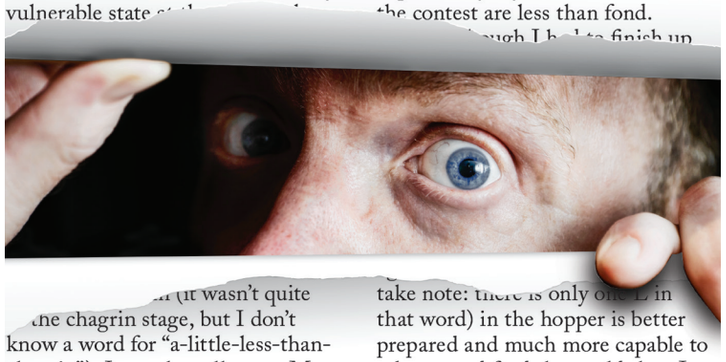
I was right in the middle of a fairly precarious situation when I felt my phone buzzing in my shirt pocket. It startled me because the cell service is terrible up in the east field where the main cow herd is, and old number 507 was shaking her head, blowing snot and slobbering down my neck as I valiantly held my ground and tried to tag her new calf, presently held in a firm, old-school Powder River headlock between my knees.

Due to the delicate nature of my vulnerable state [illegible]



[illegible] (it wasn't quite the chagrin stage, but I don't know a word for "a-little-less-than-chagrin"), I saw the caller was Mr. Sharp, the local ag instructor and FFA advisor. No doubt he figured I was intentionally ignoring him. I owed him a favor or three, and he was probably wanting to cash in his chips. As it turned out, I was mostly correct in my pessimistic assumption. The request he had of me, though, was one I was happy to entertain. He needed someone to help judge the FFA creed speaking contest at the district contests, being held a few days hence in far-off [illegible] Falls. Well, I don't

panel of judges and recites the FFA creed and then answers a couple of questions relevant to the creed and American agriculture. Of course, the contest favors those with astute memorization skills, a certain stage presence and a touch of animation. Back in my high school days, I barely had my middle name memorized, and my deficiencies in the performing arts are many and glaring. That would partially explain why my own memories of the contest are less than fond.

[illegible] though I had to finish up

take note: there is only one "L" in that word) in the hopper is better prepared and much more capable to take on and feed the world than I had earlier imagined.

Beyond that realization, I was reminded of how inspiring that little piece of prose, penned by E.M. Tiffany in 1928 but just as relevant today as it was then, truly is. At the risk of overstatement, I dare say, outside of some scriptural passages and the Gettysburg Address, few words strike my heart with more gentle power than the FFA creed does. It's a blessed anthem of comfort and encouragement to not only those who work the land and

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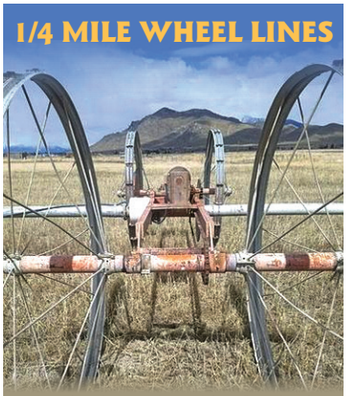

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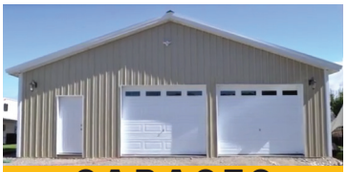

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- **22% reduction in indigestible fiber** at 240 hours (uNDF240)**
- **3-5% more crude protein****

2 More Tonnage

Alforex varieties with Hi-Gest alfalfa technology provide farms flexibility to adjust to aggressive harvest systems to **maximize yield and quality** or to a more relaxed schedule focused on tonnage. Either way, growers put the odds of improved returns per acre and animal performance in their favor.

3 More Milk

While management and feeding practices vary widely, it's common for dairies feeding Alforex varieties with Hi-Gest alfalfa technology to report a positive production response from their cows when alfalfa makes up a higher percentage of the ration. Based on the increased rate of digestion, you could expect **2.5 lbs. more milk per cow, per day**.[1] And while not every producer experiences this level of improvement, some producers report even better results.

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**Crude protein=60-day running averages and uNDF240=four-year running average

[1]Combs, D. 2015. Relationship of NDF digestibility to animal performance. Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference, 101-112. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5350/f0a2cb916e74edf5f69cdb73f091e1c8280b.pdf.

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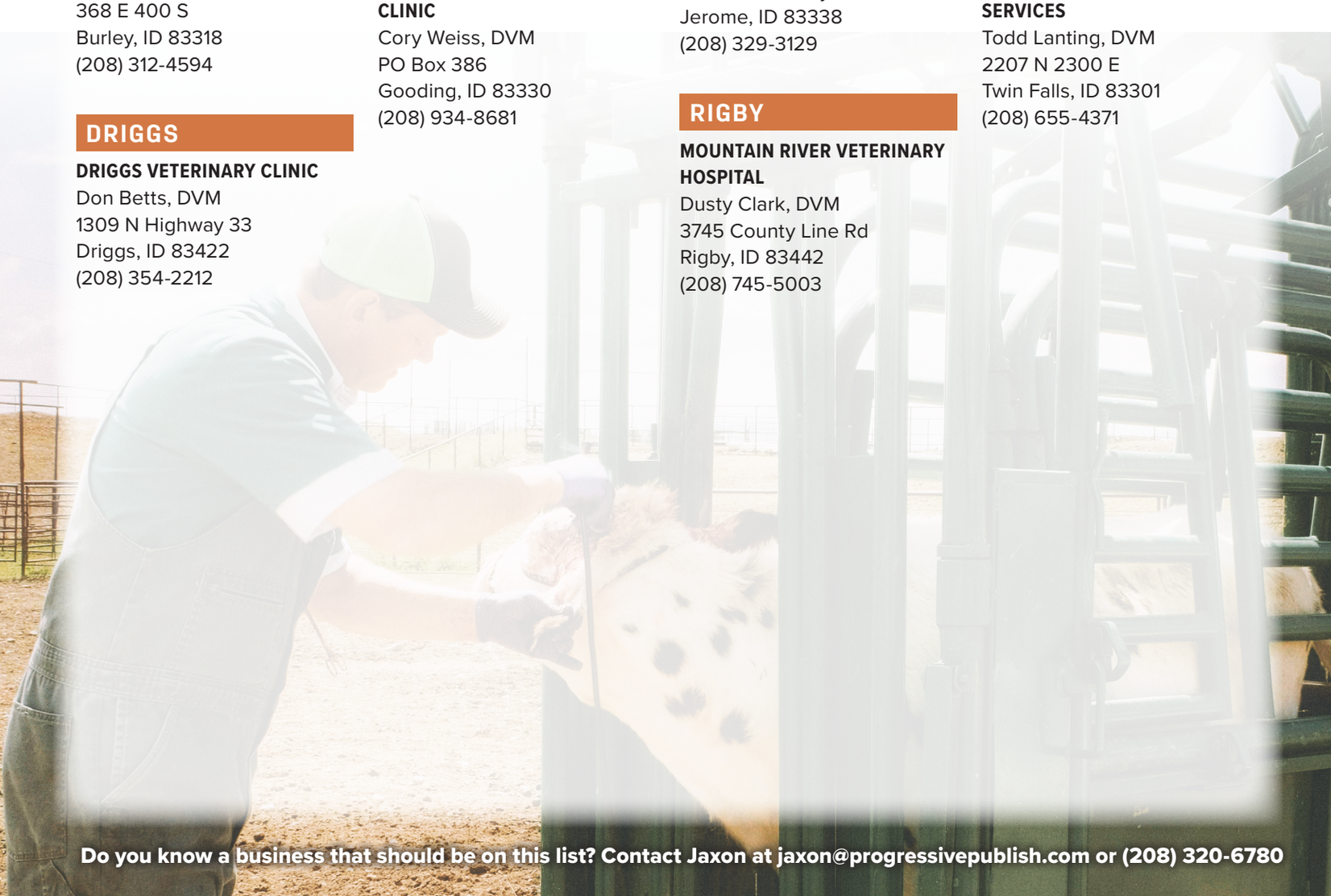

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

WHEN MASKS ARE NO LONGER ADVISED, I WILL HAPPILY _____.

Heather Smith Thomas

"... be able to recognize people again when I have to go to town."

Heather Smith Thomas grew up on a cattle ranch near Salmon, Idaho, and has written 24 books and more than 12,000 stories and articles for livestock and equine publications. She and her husband, Lynn Thomas, have been raising beef cattle and horses in eastern Idaho since 1967 and now enjoy having their daughter and a granddaughter helping with the daily ranching operation.

Paul Marchant

"... continue to chase pigeons from the chicken coop."

Paul Marchant hails from a select little corner of God's country known as the Basin, 5 miles east of Oakley, Idaho. Faith, family, ranching and the people and critters that bind them all together are the passions that fuel him. He's seen a lot of ranch country in his travels, but Idaho, with all her beautiful imperfections, always calls him home.

Michele Coleman

"... keep wearing mine so I don't have to worry about what half my face looks like."

Michele roosts in southern Idaho, where she is busily trying to replace the children (who are flying her coop) with chickens. She lives happily with her henpecked husband, Dave, and together they spend countless hours trying to eat all the food she keeps cooking for the children who are no longer there. The offspring who remain wonder how much time they have left before their mother is completely cracked.

Joy Hendrix

"... go watch a movie in theaters. The masks prevent eating popcorn, and I don't see the point without the popcorn."

Joy and her husband, Cody, live near the Jerome area. When she isn't working on *Progressive Forage* or exploring Idaho, she's looking for random animals she could fill the empty pastures outside her kitchen window with. Reach out to her if you have any southern Idaho "must-do's" or are willing to give her a good deal on some four-legged yard decor.

Ben Eborn

Ben Eborn is an extension agricultural economist and professor in the department of agricultural economics and rural sociology at University of Idaho.

Lynn Jaynes

"... wear makeup on the lower half of my face again."

Born and raised on a farm and ranch on the Salmon Tract, Lynn grew up thinking Sundays were about praying and fasting for more water. Two days a week they hoped for more water and the other four days were spent figuring out how to cope without it.

Becky Cook

It isn't everyone who can say they were raised out in the middle of nowhere. Where exactly is that? A few places in Idaho qualify. It makes for learning interesting skills: You invent new games involving long periods of talking to yourself; you learn how to track animals and watch for the unusual sightings of eagles, vulture, timber wolf and the odd herd of deer. I lived it, loved it and would go back to it!

Ellie Dalton

"... I will happily walk in and out of establishments without walking around in stealth mode."

Ellie Dalton lives with her family in Richfield, Idaho. She loves their company and the work they get to do together raising cattle, training horses and chasing sheep. She is a serial entrepreneur and spends her time doing a mix of all the things she loves. She's got a little collection of short stories that will be finding their way to her new blog very soon.

Kimberly Williams Brackett

"Wait ... masks are required?!"

Kimberly Williams Brackett lives and works the family ranch on the Idaho-Nevada border with her husband, Gus, four children and a barn full of horses, steers, cats, dogs, chickens and ducks. Between feeding the whole crew (sometimes the ranch hands too!) and barely keeping up the cleaning, in her spare time she's doing one of two Rs: riding or writing.

Questions or comments?
We want to hear from you.
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May 4, 2021
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*The increased rate of fiber digestion, extent of digestion and crude protein data was developed from replicated research and on-farm testing. During the 2015 growing season at West Salem, WI and Woodland, CA, the following commercial dormant, semi-dormant and non-dormant alfalfa varieties were compared head-to-head with Alforex varieties with Hi-Gest alfalfa technology for rate of digestion, extent of digestion and percent crude protein: America's Alfalfa Brand AmeriStand 427TQ; Croplan Brands LegenDairy XHD and Artesia Sunrise; Fertizona Brand Fertilac; S&W Seed Brands SW6330, SW7410 and SW10; and W-L Brands WL 319HQ and WL 354HQ. Also, during the 2015 growing season, 32 on-farm Alforex varieties with Hi-Gest alfalfa technology hay and silage samples were submitted to Rock River Laboratory, Inc., for forage analysis. The results for rate of digestion, extent of digestion and percent crude protein were averaged and compared to the 60-day and four-year running averages for alfalfa in the Rock River database which included approximately 1,700 alfalfa hay and 3,800 silage 60-day test results and 23,000 hay and 62,000 silage tests results in the four-year average.

**Crude protein=60-day running averages and uNDF240=four-year running average

[1]Combs, D. 2015. Relationship of NDF digestibility to animal performance. Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference, 101-112. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5350/f0a2cb916e74edf5f69cdb73f091e1c8280b.pdf.

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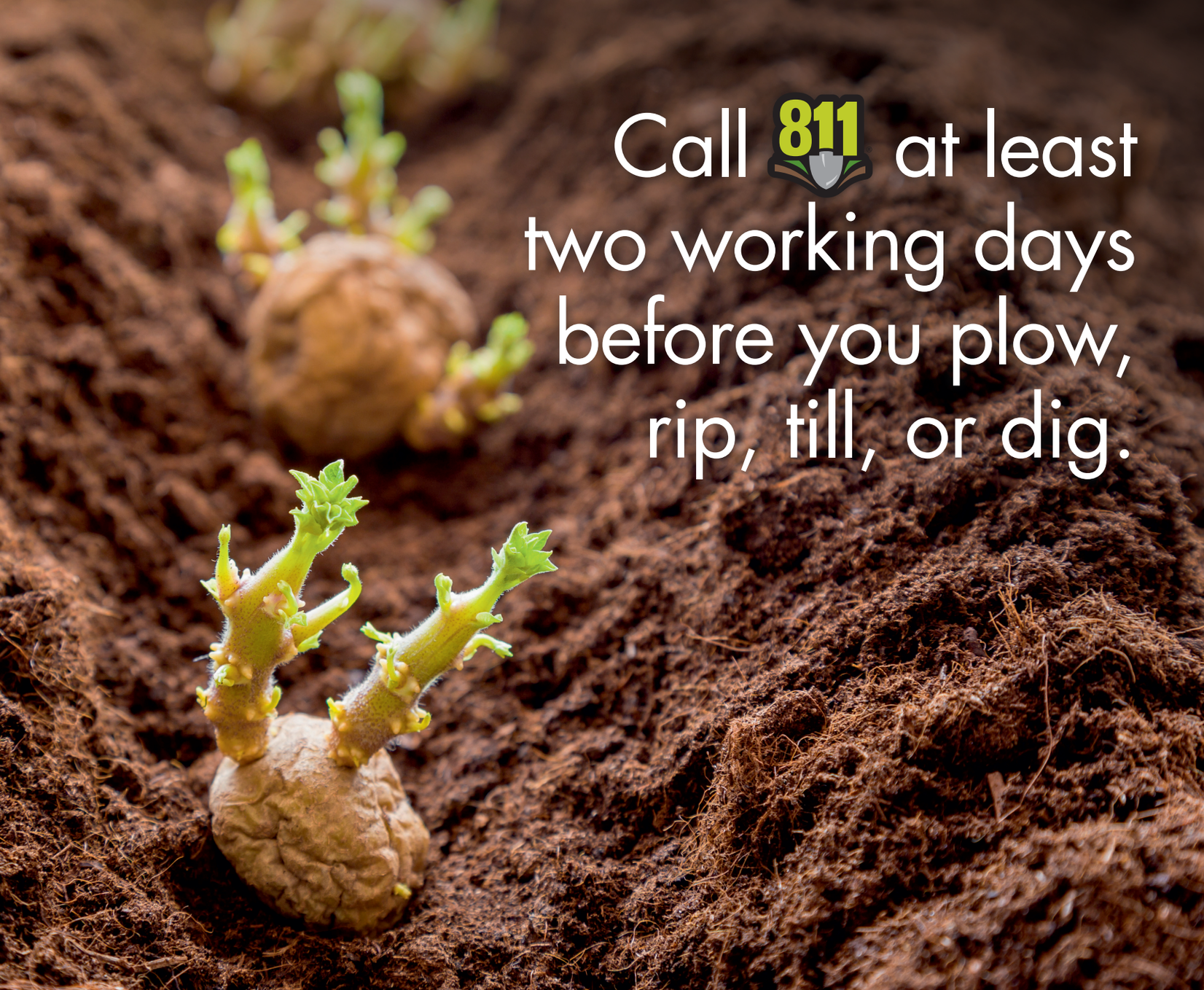

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