

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

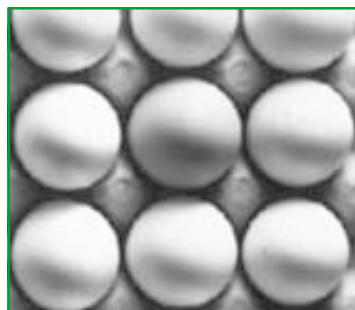
A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

Newcastle Disease affects poultry industry

Many people believe that the current situation with the spread of Exotic Newcastle Disease has no bearing on their lives; after all, they do not own any birds. In some ways they are correct, since this disease **poses no threat to human health, and poultry and egg products are safe for consumers.** But that fact does not take into account the importance of the egg and poultry industry in Riverside County, California, and the United States. **Eggs are the 5th top commodity in Riverside County,** and



Riverside County (along with San Diego County) produces about half of the eggs in California.



Regardless of the fact that this disease poses no threat to human health in any form, approximately 30 countries that California exports poultry and eggs to have banned trading any poultry or poultry related products. While most countries have banned only those products from the state of California, some have gone so far as to ban any related products from anywhere in the United States! Since poultry is the 12th top commodity produced in California, and eggs are the 11th top commodity in the United States, this does have a significant impact on this area of the economy. It also impacts the poultry industry statewide, as it provides over 25,000 jobs in California, and indirectly to tens of thousands of others in affiliated industries such as trucking and feed supply.

So far, the disease has wiped out over 1.7 million (15%) of the laying hens (besides backyard birds), either by death or euthanization, in Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties, and expected to claim the lives of many more birds before it is eradicated. Also, with the bird quarantine now extended to eight counties in Southern California, over 60% of California's egg-producing hens are under quarantine. While birds are not allowed out of the quarantined areas, eggs are, after they are washed, sanitized and repackaged.

To help protect this vital industry, please call (800) 491-1899 to report any suspicious cases or bird illnesses, or to receive more information on this disease.

Exotic Newcastle Disease is NOT a public health threat and does NOT affect the safety of the consumption of poultry or eggs.

- Eggs are ranked #11 in the US, with CA coming in 5th for top egg production.
- Eggs rank #5 in Riverside County, as a \$56M industry.
- CA has a \$3Billion poultry and egg industry, with CA hens laying over 6Billion eggs a year. Half of the egg production comes from Riverside County.



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Funds available to clean up illegal dumps

Just as the thought of cows and other livestock wading knee deep through piles of household garbage might paint a vulgar picture to consumers; so does the yearly costs of clean up efforts paid by landowners and taxpayers. Fortunately, the Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement Grant Program provides funding from the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) for the cleanup of illegal solid waste sites on farm or ranch property.

As of January 1st, the amount available to agencies increased to \$50,000 per project with a limit of \$250,000 for any city or county. Considering that it costs taxpayers about \$60 a cubic yard to clean up illegal dumps, the offsetting funds are a welcome assistance.

What sites are eligible for grants?

- * Unauthorized solid waste disposal that has occurred on a farm or ranch.
- * Cleanup is needed to abate a public nuisance, health, safety and/or environmental threat.
- * Property zoned or otherwise authorized for agricultural activities.

Farm and ranch cleanup grants can be used for:

- * Waste removal and disposal
- * Drainage control improvement
- * Grading
- * Slope and foundation stabilization
- * Excavation
- * Recycling
- * Site security
- * Public education

For more information, contact the CIWMB, at (916) 341-6316 or crepucci@ciwmb.ca.gov.

Dispose oil properly

Nearly 2.3 million people use disposal methods that could seriously harm the environment, according to a recent survey. Those surveyed said they pour the motor oil - several quarts at a time - down the drain or on the ground or place it in the garbage. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that just one gallon of used oil has the potential of contaminating up to one million gallons of drinking water, meaning improper disposal methods could have serious environmental impacts.

The EPA suggests taking used oil to a public used oil collection center, such as a service station or lube center. Also, the public is urged to look for the nearest "oil drop." It is the petroleum industry's symbol indicating location where used oil is collected for recycling or reuse.

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News in Brief...

New laws take effect

A number of new laws take effect today (Wednesday) that impact agriculture. In addition to a new law that requires mediation when farmers and unions cannot agree on terms of a labor contract, there are measures that farmers hope will provide more orderly urban development to protect farmland. A new law provides land-use planning policies that farm groups say should encourage filling vacant land within cities before developing farmland, and a standardization of personal property tax assessments.

Study aims to keep cows comfy

A comfortable cow is a productive cow, and researchers test different materials to determine what types of bedding dairy cows prefer. Specialists say California dairy cows appear to prefer bedding materials such as sawdust and compost. The researchers say adding rice hulls or sunflower hulls to the bedding makes it "fluffier". They say bedding should also insulate cows from cold in the winter and keep them cool in the summer.

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Methyl bromide alternatives stay elusive

Alternatives for an important agricultural fumigant remain elusive, and use of methyl bromide will be further reduced next week. The US and other developed countries are phasing down methyl bromide availability, although farmers in other nations may still use it. A coalition of US farm groups has asked for the phase-down to be frozen. They say the availability of locally grown produce will suffer unless alternatives to fight pests can be found.

Strong outlook for navel oranges

Consumers can expect to find sweet navel oranges well into springtime thanks to favorable weather. Navel orange growers say ideal growing conditions this summer have produce fruit that is remarkably sweet. Recent rainstorms have helped the fruit to increase in size. The navel orange supply could stretch into June. California farmers produce about three billion pounds of navels each year.

Windstorms damage avocados

Strong Santa Ana winds have caused some agricultural damage in Southern California. The California Avocado Commission estimates that up to 15 million pounds of fruit was blown off trees, during this week's Southern California windstorms. Damage occurred to avocados in Ventura, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties. The avocado commission says as much as half the windblown fruit can be salvaged and sold, and that avocados will remain readily available at grocery stores. But growers inside the Mexican fruit fly quarantine zone in San Diego County will suffer a total loss on windblown avocados.

UC farm programs face cuts

University of California officials say the governor's proposed state budget cuts 30 percent of the funds from the Cooperative Extension service and 20 percent from agricultural research. The programs provide farmers and ranchers with new crop-production techniques and innovative ways to operate their businesses. The university says the cuts could mean job losses among farm advisors and researchers.

Farm milk prices head down again

A trend of lower milk prices will resume for California dairy farmers. The state Department of Food and Agriculture says farm milk prices will drop a nickel a gallon on February 1st. Lower prices for butter and powdered milk led to the decline, which means farmers will earn an average of \$1.04 a gallon. Farm milk prices have risen only twice in the past seven months. Milk is California's number-one crop.

Disaster relief sought

Farm groups say widespread weather disasters the past two years have left farmers and ranchers in need of emergency relief. A coalition of groups visited Washington last week, asking Congress and the Bush administration to approve the aid. An American Farm Bureau spokeswoman says disasters have hit not just a few spots or a few crops, but almost everywhere. For example, more than half the counties in California were declared drought disaster areas last year.

-- News items credited to California Farm Bureau Federation.

Congratulations to Cindy Shoemaker

Cindy, a Riverside County Farm Bureau member, took third place in the "Food & Fiber" category in the annual CFBF Photo Contest for her photo of brussel sprouts in her backyard garden viewed through a macro lens.

Entries to the contest are judged in three different categories; Food & Fiber, Beautiful Country, and Farming is people. Cash prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$50 were awarded to the first-, second- and third-place winners respectively in each category.



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2003 RCFB Holiday Schedule

Please note that our office will be closed on the following dates, as we are following CFBF's calendar:

January

- 1 New Year's Day
- 20 Martin Luther King Day

February

- 17 President's Day

May

- 26 Memorial Day

July

- 4 Independence Day

September

- 1 Labor Day

November

- 27, 28 Thanksgiving

December

- 25, 26 Christmas
- 31 New Year's Eve

January 2004

- 1 New Year's Day

Prognosis for 2003 Agricultural Electric Rates

Perhaps as part of the reflection that prompts New Years' resolutions, I have been asked to provide a reasonable projection of how electricity rates might change for the coming year. The quick answer is that all things being equal, the agricultural electricity rates are likely to remain equal to what they have been, an average of 15 cents per kWh. Here's why.

California ratepayers are paying and will continue to pay for the debacle that hit the energy industry from 2000-2001. During 2003, divided proportionally among the three utilities, will be \$4.5 billion to pay for power contracts entered into by DWR. Payment for those contracts will be required for another 9 years, although the \$4.5 billion annual price tag should start to decline in the next couple of years. Added to that is the .7cents/kWh to repay the state for the \$11billion it fronted for electricity from January to September 2001. Bonds were issued this fall to pay the \$11 billion price tag and will be paid off by ratepayers over a 20 year period.

Electric customers are paying rates that exceed current costs. Those revenues collected, which exceed utilities' costs, are being bankrolled by

Pacific, Gas and Electric Company and Southern California Edison Company to pay for an undercollection of revenues they claim was created in 2000, when costs to buy energy exceeded the rates. SCE entered into a settlement with the CPUC that allowed collection of those costs; the validity of the settlement is currently under review by the California Supreme Court. If the CPUC/SCE deal is upheld, SCE rates may drop slightly in the latter part of 2003, once the undercollection is paid off.

A San Francisco Bankruptcy Court will determine how much of the current rates PG&E will keep and how long before PG&E rates will come down. In the case of San Diego Gas and Electric Company rates were not frozen until after a lot of the volatility had already occurred. SDG&E's agricultural customers' overpayment of costs over the past two years translated into an approved refund that will be paid out over a 24 month period beginning January 2003.

2003 will also bring review of the operations of both SCE and PG&E through the general rate case process. Significant proposals to revise rate design for agricultural customers will be up for discussion, although it is not yet

clear what those changes might be. Any changes would not go into effect until 2004.

Growers should continue to look for opportunities to improve the efficiency of their operations in the coming year. Embedded in electric rates is a fee collected to fund renewable and energy efficiency programs. There are funding opportunities through a variety of program administrators, including SCE, PG&E, SDG&E and Fresno State. If the agricultural sector does not take advantage of the funds that have been ear-marked for it this time, those funds will be turned over to another sector and likely not as much will be made available the next time.

The CPUC, California Energy Commission and California Power Authority are continuing to work toward development of incentive-based load reduction programs for summer 2003. Details are not yet finalized, but the programs will likely only be available for demands over 200kW.

The bottom line is that rates are not expected to come down over the next growing season. Reduction in energy bills will come about next year only if less energy is consumed.

By: Karen Norene Mills,
California Farm Bureau Federation

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Over the past nine years, the Farm Bureau has funneled well over \$37,000 into the Junior Livestock Auction and a large portion of that comes from members like you.

Your money that is donated to the Auction Support Fun will go toward the purchasing of animals at the Riverside County Fair, National Date Festival and Colorado River Country Fair. The animals are entered into the festival and fair by the members of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H students.

With all of the choices children have today, FFA and 4-H are two activities worth supporting. Both organizations teach young people important life skills, including time management, financial responsibility, and the importance of caring for others.

FFA and 4-H students that profit from these auction sales use the funds to start their next animal project and to start saving for college.

*Donations are not tax deductible as charitable contributions but may be deductible as ordinary business expenses. Consult your tax preparer for information.

**Contribute \$25 or more Payable to: Farm Bureau
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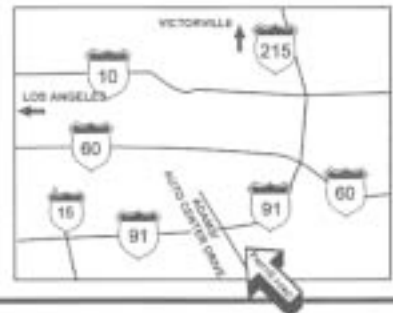
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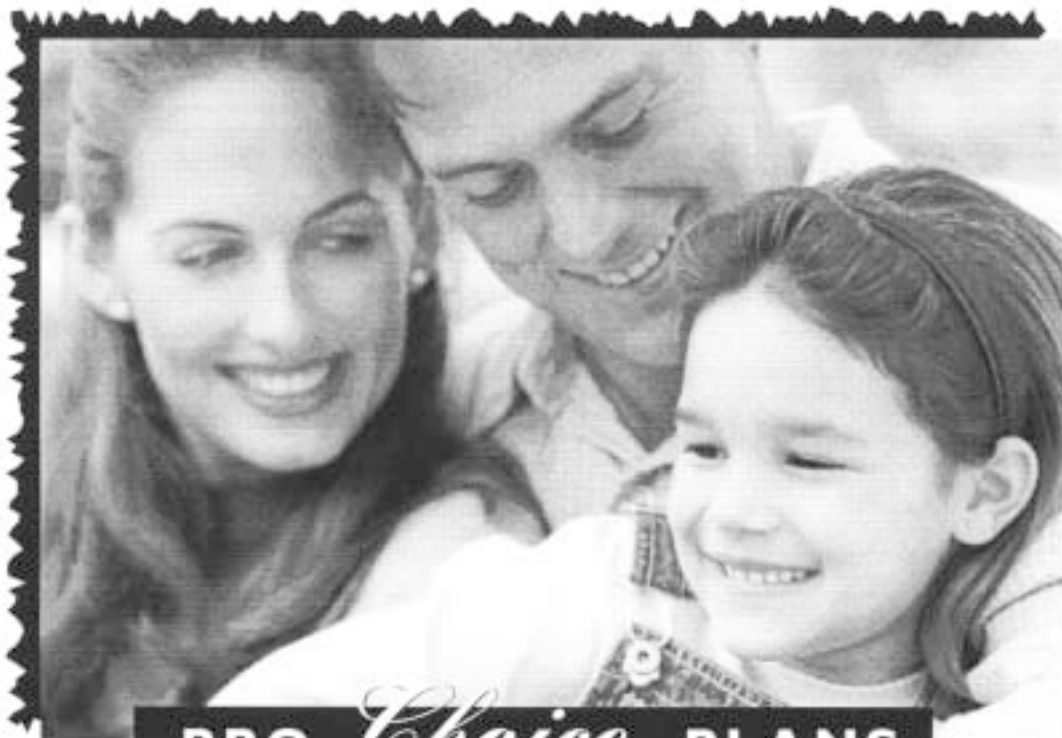
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| Andy Domenigoni | Beef | Representative |
| Brad Scott | Beef | Alt. Representative |
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| Dick Kelley | Citrus/Avocado | Alt. Representative |
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| Brad Scott | Dairy | Alt. Representative |
| Donald Bean, Sr. | Hay | Representative |
| Randy Record | Specialty Crops | Representative |
| Stephen Corona | Specialty Crops | Alt. Representative |
| Mike Bouris | Wheat & Feed Grains | Representative |

The CFBF Commodity Advisory Committees are made up of farmers and ranchers throughout the state of California. The role of each committee is to discuss and take actions on issues affecting its commodity. This is a grass roots program that enables farmers and ranchers to provide member input on commodity-specific issues and provide information and recommendations to the CFBF Board of Directors.

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