
THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 25, Number 1

January/February 2000

1999 Pacific Northwest Honey Bee Pollination Survey

By Dr. Michael Burgett

Our entry into the new millennium marks the 14th year that the Honey Bee Laboratory at Oregon State University has reviewed the pollination economics of commercial beekeeping in the Pacific Northwest (PNW). This is the seventh year for which combined data are given for the states of Washington and Oregon. With each year's information, the strength and importance of our region's beekeeping industry is highlighted. All participants in a regional agricultural industry need to understand the vital role played by beekeeping in overall agricultural production. This is especially true today with the increased costs and problems caused by the presence of honey bee mite parasites and the slowly expanding geographical range of our European honey bee's tropical "cousin" the Africanized honey bee, now recorded in several counties in southern California, as well as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada.

The use of managed honey bee colonies for commercial crop pollination remains the most important function of the PNW beekeeping industry. The vast and diverse agriculture of the PNW relies on a healthy and strong beekeeping industry to maintain optimum production. An enhanced knowledge of pollination economics is critical to every beekeeper that enters into the world of commercial crop pollination. It is also important for those growers who rent colonies to understand

current economic conditions of the beekeeping industry.

This year's survey provides data that continue to show a number of trends, one of which is the dependence of PNW commercial beekeepers on the income generated from colony rentals. For 1999 the average commercial beekeeper received nearly 68% of his or her annual operating gross from pollination rental. This is down from the record high figure of 72% reported in 1995. I am aware of no region in the U.S., or the world for that matter, where honey bee pollination rental is of such importance to the economic survival of a regional beekeeping community and of such benefit to the agricultural base that requires insect pollination for optimizing product yield. Even in California, the state with the largest and most varied beekeeping industry in the U.S., pollination rental income is just slightly over 50% of operational revenues.

For the previous seven years the average size of an individual commercial operation has increased. This trend of upward growth in the number of colonies maintained by commercial beekeepers increased again in 1999 with the average commercial operation reporting 2,060 colonies.

As in past years, the 1999 survey was sent to all Washington and Oregon beekeepers that registered more than 25 colonies with their
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Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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To join the OSBA, complete the membership application in this issue and send with payment to: Phyllis Shoemake, 1702 Toucan Street NW, Salem, OR 97304

Editorial Offices: Send news, announcements, letters, comments and advertising to: Diane Varner, Editor

PO Box 123 Yamhill, OR 97148-0123

Tel. 503-662-4559 Fax 503-662-4594

e-mail Raybee@band1.bandwidth.net

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OSBA members \$ 2.00

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Updated Oregon Farmer's Handbook Available

The Oregon Dept. of Agriculture announced that the Oregon Farmer's Handbook has been updated and is available for purchase. The 160-page publication is designed as a reference document for Oregon's agricultural producers and workers. It provides basic information about various compliance issues and identifies related agencies and resources. This edition includes an index and a reference section.

Copies are available for \$5 from the Information Office of the ODA at 503-986-4550. Other titles of interest are the most recent *Oregon Agriculture: Facts and Figures* brochure, and the new comprehensive *1998-99 Oregon Agriculture and Fisheries Statistics* bulletin. These are available at no charge.

President's Notes

by Ray Varner

Since this newsletter covers the two months of January and February, it seems a good time to talk about preparing for the Spring medication program.

Results of Dr. Lynn Royce's informal survey on *Varroa* mite resistance to Fluvalinate in November suggests that resistance may be present in approximately 50% of the honey bee colonies in the Pacific Northwest.

On Dec. 14, 1999 application was made for a Section 18 Emergency Use of Coumaphos to control *Varroa* mites and the small hive beetles in honey bee colonies in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Researchers have recommended since we now have the legal use of Coumaphos that all beekeepers in the Pacific Northwest use it for the 2000 season.

Plan on using Coumaphos this season. Follow the package directions carefully, and wear rubber gloves. Break the resistance problem, and have a good season.

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respective state agriculture departments. A total of 15 commercial beekeepers returned completed surveys. These individual beekeepers collectively owned 30,881 colonies. A total of 85,586 colony rentals were reported for all respondents, which produced \$2,759,156 in rental income.

For 1999 the average pollination rental fee, computed from commercial beekeeper rentals on all crops reported, was \$32²⁵. This is a \$2⁶⁰ (9%) increase from the average pollination fee charged in 1998 (\$29⁶⁵) (see Table 1). This is the first increase in the average pollination fee in the past three years.

Table 1. Average Pollination Fees 1990-1999

<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>
18.40	19.45	19.25	22.50	28.10
<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
29.60	31.55	31.05	29.65	32.25

Commercial beekeepers were responsible for 99% of all reported pollination rentals and a corresponding 99% of all pollination income. This is very similar to past years and shows how dominant commercial beekeepers are in the arena of large-scale agricultural pollination. The average pollination rental fee for semi-commercial beekeepers was \$36⁵⁵, somewhat higher than that charged by commercial beekeepers, but semi-commercial beekeepers account for only 1% of all reported pollination rentals.

The amount of income generated from pollination rental leveled off in 1997 and 1998, but dramatically increased in 1999. In 1999 the average commercial beekeeper in Washington and Oregon grossed \$183,780 from pollination rental, which is a large increase from the average gross of \$95,699 in 1998. During the past six years the average rental fee has increased from \$28¹⁰ (1994) to \$32²⁵ (1999), which is somewhat misleading because the average pollination fees actually decreased in 1997 and 1998. It needs also to be pointed out that honey bee colony rental has for many decades been an underpaid service. It is really only within the past seven or eight years that rental fees have begun to more

accurately reflect the enormous value-added service of managed pollination. This is shown by the 75% increase in the average pollination fee during the last decade; 1990 = \$18⁴⁰ to 1999 = \$32²⁵.

Within the PNW, tree fruits are the dominant crops for pollination income (see Table 2). In 1999 the combination of pears, sweet cherries and apples accounted for 44% of all reported rentals and 44% of all reported pollination income. Ironically, the single most important crop for PNW beekeepers is grown in California, *i.e.*, almonds. Almonds were responsible for 27% of all rentals and 33% of all rental income in this year's survey with almonds possessing the highest average pollination fee reported for 1999 (\$39⁹⁰). More than 95% of all commercial colonies in Oregon and Washington are taken to California for almond pollination. In 1999 the combination of almonds and tree fruit accounted for 71% of all rentals and 77% of pollination income for PNW beekeepers.

Table 2. 1999 Avg. Commercial Pollination Fees

<u>Crop</u>	<u>#Rentals</u>	<u>Avg. Fee</u>	<u>Inc.</u>
Pears	3,377	\$31 ⁶⁰	\$106,789
Cherries	5,526	\$31 ⁶⁰	174,760
Apples	28,336	\$32 ⁸⁰	929,842
Berries ¹	3,038	\$23 ⁶⁵	71,774
Blueberries	2,371	\$26 ¹⁵	61,968
Cranberries	1,866	\$30 ⁰⁰	72,780
Veg.seed	1,994	\$37 ⁶⁰	74,964
Clover seed ²	6,788	\$21 ⁶⁰	146,532
Crim.clover seed	2,232	\$7 ¹⁵	15,940
Vetch seed	557	-0-	-0-
Radish seed	714	\$28 ⁴⁵	20,300
Sq. & Pump. seed	314	\$23 ⁰⁰	7,222
Meadowfoam seed	3,830	\$34 ³⁰	131,455
Misc. ³	183	\$20 ⁹⁰	3,823
Almonds	23,083	\$39⁹⁰	897,603

SUM = 85,586 \$2,759,156
 Average Pollination Fee: \$32.25

- (1) Includes blackberries, raspberries, marionberries, and loganberries;
- (2) Includes red & white clover as grown for seed;
- (3) Includes arrow-leaf clover seed, bird's foot trefoil seed, turnip seed, kiwi and holly

For 1999 crops pollinated in the PNW, vegetable seed provided the highest average fee at \$37⁶⁰ per colony rental. In terms of acreage, apples are the largest crop grown in the region and this is reflected by the large number of reported rentals (33% of all reported rentals and 34% of reported rental income).

The crops with the lowest pollination fees are the legumes crimson clover (\$7¹⁵/colony) and hairy vetch (\$0/colony), both of which are grown as seed crops and are also traditional honey producers, hence historically low fees. However, the 1999 rental fee for crimson clover (\$7¹⁵) is up sharply from 1998 (\$4⁵⁰). Berry crops (blackberries, raspberries and blueberries), which as late spring to early summer bloomers and copious nectar producers (blackberries and raspberries), often produce honey crops as well as pollination fees. The 1999 average pollination fee for all combined berry crops was 28⁴⁰ per hive, which is a 15% increase over the average berry rental fee in 1998.

The average PNW commercial honey bee colony was rented 2.77 times in 1999 and this includes California almonds. With an average rental fee of \$32²⁵, this results in an average per colony pollination income of \$89³⁰, which is an 8% increase from 1998.

Year	Avg. # Colonies	Average Rental Fee	Average annual Rental income/colony
1992	765	\$ 19.25	\$ 49.70
1993	990	\$ 22.50	\$ 62.25
1994	1,225	\$ 28.10	\$ 78.70
1995	1,348	\$ 29.60	\$ 78.15
1996	1,350	\$ 31.55	\$ 97.50
1997	1,504	\$ 31.05	\$ 92.20
1998	1,153	\$ 29.65	\$ 83.00
1999	2,058	\$ 32.25	\$ 89.30

Table 3. Average colony numbers, average rental fee per hive, and average annual rental income per hive for a commercial beekeeping operation in the Pacific Northwest, 1992-1999

The combined colony numbers from those commercial beekeepers who responded to the survey, (30,881 hives), represent a conservative one-fourth of the commercial hives in Oregon and Washington. Therefore, if we multiply the

pollination income (\$2,759,156) by a factor of 4, we have a ball park estimate of the pollination income generated by commercial beekeeping in the PNW, *i.e.*, slightly greater than \$11,000,000. This is less than 1.5% of the estimated farm-gate value of PNW crops that require or benefit from managed pollination.

Pollination income in the PNW far exceeds the value of honey and wax sales for our regional beekeeping industry. Pollination rental income is frequently four to five times greater than honey and wax sales in any given year, a situation that is largely ignored by federal and state agricultural economists, who continue to rely almost solely on the sale of honey and wax as the yardstick for beekeeping economic activity.

It needs to be remembered that much of the data presented here represent the pollination rental situation of the "average" commercial beekeeper. For individual beekeepers the survey results are most useful as benchmarks against which they should compare their individual operations.

While colony income from pollination rental is a critical statistic, so therefore is the annual cost to maintain a colony of honey bees. Responses to this question on the survey have varied widely, often from a misunderstanding of what was being asked. However, numerous commercial beekeepers who have over the years maintained excellent cost accounting records, did respond with numbers that are very reasonable relative to today's economic pressures. The average annual per colony maintenance cost was \$104 for 1999. It is very important to note that the average colony maintenance cost is higher than the average per colony pollination income by \$14⁷⁰. This illustrates that the operation profits are generated by other sources of income, most importantly, honey production.

During the past 15 years many thousands of colonies of honey bees have been lost due to the presence of parasitic mites, and those losses continue, but fortunately at a lessened rate. The colony losses have been most severe for the wild honey bee population and from within the hobbyist ranks. Commercial beekeepers, while experiencing heavy colony losses, have, by and large, responded (cont. on page 5)

(cont. from page 4)

by increasing their colony numbers in order to meet future pollination contractual agreements. Due to increased colony losses, an economic situation has been created whereby every living colony of honey bees now possesses a greater potential economic value. Commercial beekeepers have taken advantage of this opportunity.

I wish to again thank all those beekeepers in Oregon and Washington who took the time to participate in the survey, which has over the past fourteen years, generated the most accurate assessment of commercial pollination known in the U.S.

Summary Information - 1999

A total of **15** commercial beekeepers, owning **30,881** colonies returned survey forms.

A total of **85,586** colony rentals generated **\$2,759,156** in rental income.

The average per colony pollination rental fee (for all beekeepers, for all crops including California almonds) was: **\$32²⁵**

The average commercial colony was placed in **2.77** pollination sets in 1999, for an average per hive rental income of **\$89³⁰**.

The average commercial bee operation maintained **2,058** colonies and grossed **\$183,780** in pollination rental income for 1999.

A total of 6 semi-commercial beekeepers returned survey forms:

The average per colony pollination rental fee was: **\$36⁵⁵**

The average semi-commercial colony was placed in **1.2** pollination sets in 1999, for an average per hive rental income of **\$43⁸⁵**.

The average semi-commercial operation maintained **120** colonies and grossed **\$5,262** in pollination rental income for 1999.

Northwest Beekeeping

January/February:

- Lift the hives to find any light ones. Give these emergency feed of dry sugar or sugar candy on top of the brood frames.
- By the end of January or *early* February, treat hives for varroa mites. Use one strip of Coumaphos (Bayer Bee Strip) for every five combs of bees or less in each brood chamber (Langstroth deep frames or equivalent in other sizes). Hang the strips within two combs of the edge of the bee cluster. If two deep supers are used for the brood nest, hang Coumaphos (Bayer Bee Strip) strips in alternate corners of the cluster, in the top and bottom super. Mark 45 days on your calendar, so you can remove the strips *before* the honey flow arrives. Be sure to read all directions on the Bayer Bee Strip box label.
- Move stores closer to brood area.
- Continue the repair and/or assembly of next year's equipment.
- Dust all colonies three times at seven day intervals with a 2 Tablespoon portion of Terramycin (TM25) mixed with eight parts powdered sugar. Sprinkle on top of brood frames.
- The following flower bloom and pollen vary from year to year, from weeks 5-12, which stimulates brood rearing and winter break-up: pussy willow, crocus, skunk cabbage, flowering plum, tulip bush, filberts, daffodil, dandelion and Oregon grape.
- When daytime highs are above 55 degrees F., start feeding brood pollen supplement and cane sugar syrup in Doolittle or hivetop feeders.
- Make up or buy at least six 5-ounce pollen supplement patties per colony, storing in the freezer until needed.
- Check stored frames for wax moth infestation.
- Attend beekeeping meetings in your area, to learn, have fun and share.

Thank you to Portland Beekeeper Association members Stephanie Barnes, David Gage, Rosemary Marshall, Ernie McCormack and Bill Ruhl, for Almanac review and suggestions, 1996.

Bee Musings

By Diane Varner

Happy New Year! We survived the Millennium Bug and are ready to go. This edition is running later for two reasons: I gave myself the Christmas holiday off, and the new printer has a 7-10 day turnaround. My apologies, but how nice it was to have Christmas!

Vice President Dave Graber has been busy planning the Fall Conference. The date is set for November 2,3 and 4 (so you folks that attend Farmer's Markets won't miss the last October weekend!) in Hood River. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Keith Delaplane from Georgia, so mark your calendars! Dave is still lining up more speakers, so there will be more news to share in coming months.

Queen breeders in Northern California had a big scare last fall when wildfires raged within sight of their facilities. Fortunately, no one reported damage but several had some close calls. No reports of delays in queen deliveries this spring due to the fires.

Member News

- ◆ Ernie McCormick suffered a stroke and lost his speech. Ernie is the fellow who brings all the wonderful old equipment to display at the Field Day each April.
- ◆ Hope your back is feeling better, Charlie Mock!

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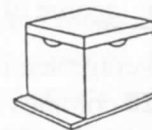
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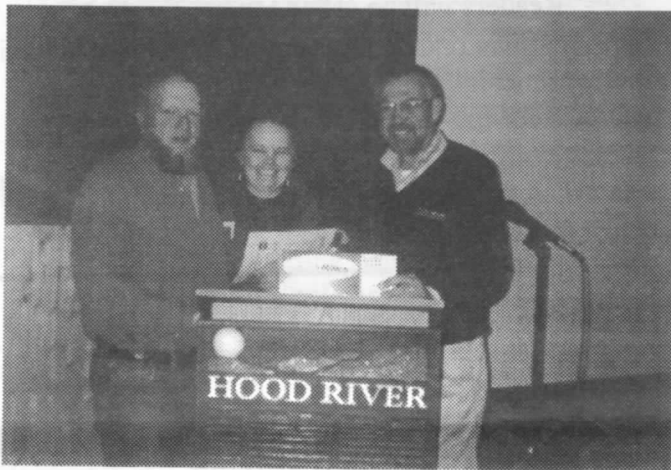


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Lane County Couple Wins Trip

Chuck and Kathie Hunt of Eugene won a drawing sponsored by Mann Lake Ltd. at the OSBA Pacific Northwest Fall Conference in Hood River last fall. The prize is for an all expenses paid trip to a bee related conference of their choice. Jack Thomas made the presentation on behalf of Mann Lake Ltd. Congratulations, Chuck and Kathie!

Chuck is the President of the Lane County Club, and Kathie is the Newsletter Editor. We'd like to hear all about your trip when you take it!



Deputies Arrest Errant Beekeeper

(reprinted from the Missoula MT Missoulian, submitted by Joann Olstrom)

A trip to his sister's home in Potomac, Montana, must have seemed a considerably more pleasant destination to William Laidlaw than his other option.

Unfortunately, his other option wasn't really optional. Laidlaw, an Idaho beekeeper, was supposed to report to a Federal prison in Sheridan, Oregon, on Dec. 30 to begin serving a 28-month sentence for making false statements to the US Dept. of Agriculture about more than \$3 million he received in federal loans.

Instead, Laidlaw came to Montana. But instead of laying low, he made a series of phone calls that enabled federal authorities to track him down in Potomac. The US Marshall's Service and Missoula

County Sheriff's Department arrived at the home earlier this week, finding Laidlaw and his six-year-old son hiding in a bedroom.

Laidlaw appeared before US Magistrate Bart Erickson, who ordered him held until the US Bureau of Prisons can decide what to do with him.

Laidlaw's troubles date back to 1988, when his Idaho-based company, Laidlaw Apiaries, began receiving price support loans from the USDA, according to court records. Those nine-month loans were made to honey producers to allow them to sell their products when the market was most favorable.

When Laidlaw applied for the loans, he was required to state that he had produced a certain amount of honey, which was to be kept at the business as collateral for the loans. A subsequent investigation made it clear that Laidlaw didn't have the honey on hand. In one instance, he claimed he's sold the honey to a Seattle company, but that company's records showed no such sale. Instead, Laidlaw had been using new loans to pay back old ones, court records state.

In February, 1996, the USDA inspected Laidlaw's business. He should have had 5.5 million pounds of honey on hand as collateral, but the USDA found almost none. Eventually, Laidlaw was charged with making false statements about more than \$3 million in loans.

He pleaded guilty in US District Court in Idaho in September and was sentenced to 28 months in prison. He also was ordered to repay the USDA. When he didn't report to the federal prison in Oregon, a warrant was issued for his arrest.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 12-15, 2000 ABF Annual Conference
Fort Worth, TX. See related articles.

Feb. 15 Deadline for *The Bee Line*

Nov. 2,3,4 OSBA Fall Conference, Hood River

National Honey Board Updates PRIDE Program

The National Honey Board has completed the update of the PRIDE package, which was developed to assist honey producers, packers and producer-packers with information to keep honey quality standards as high as possible.

The new PRIDE package discusses the importance of keeping retention samples, of having recall plans and maintaining good manufacturing practices. The package also includes a beekeeper self-evaluation and the NHB brochure *How to Keep Your Honey Naturally Safe*.

The information contained in the package could be invaluable to beekeepers in promoting the purity of honey and in demonstrating to the public and public officials alike the professionalism that beekeepers bring to their industry.

For your own copy of the PRIDE package, call the National Honey Board at their toll-free number at 888-421-2977, and press "8" at the menu. There is no charge for the package.

ABF Convention Details

The American Beekeeping Federation will hold its annual convention in Fort Worth, Texas from January 12-15, 2000. The keynote speaker, Dr. William T. Wilson, will speak on "Bee Research Priorities in 200 and beyond. Dr. Wilson is retiring from his position as Lead Scientist on the Honey Bee Research Group in Weslaco, Texas.

Topics to be presented include "Keeping Your Honey Clean: Is It Worth the Effort?," "What Does Honey Adulteration Cost You?," "Selling Honey in a World Economy," and "Honey Bees that are Resistant to Varroa." Special interest groups such as the package and queen breeders, commercial beekeepers and the honey packers will present panels. Many other topics are on the agenda. The OSBA representative will be at the Conference, and will write a more detailed report.

Reader's Choice Award Program Announced

In order to encourage submission of articles to *The Bee Line*, the Executive Board voted last fall to offer an incentive. This incentive will involve both writers and readers.

Writers are encouraged to submit articles of interest to beekeepers. If you feel your writing is a little rusty but you have a good idea, the editor will help polish your article, and you'll get a byline.

Readers will be asked to vote for their favorite article once a year, and you can vote by mail or electronically. The article with the most votes wins \$25 for the writer. We'll stick with a calendar year, so writers - you have nine more issues to get your article in. Readers - you get to vote next January. The editor can't wait to hear from you!

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National Honey Board Briefs

If it seems like you're seeing a lot of honey promotion in January, you're right! The month of January is the second Annual National In-Store Honey Promotion campaign for the NHB. The 1999 program produced a four-week honey category sales increase of 7.4% nationally, and individual store measurements showed a four-week increase of over 11%.

This year's promotion will feature on-shelf messages telling people about easy ways to enjoy healthy great tasting honey. Additionally, in-store radio spots will direct people to the honey section. If you sell honey in supermarkets, visit the NHM web site at www.nhb.org to see if your supermarkets are participating (or just check to see if your local store is, whether or not your honey is there!).

The Honey Hotline number has been discontinued. Hotline calls will now be accepted at the main toll-free number of 800-553-7162.

Want answers to questions like "What information should I put on my label?" "How do I determine the price for my honey?" "How can I promote my product?" "Where should I advertise?" The NHB has developed the Official National Honey Board Marketing Kit for producer-packers. The first section of the three part kit, "Honey, Get Selling" is now available. The kit includes information, tips and resources that will help you sell your honey:

- Find out what to put on your labels
- Gain insight into pricing strategies
- Generate free publicity
- Learn about advertising
- Increase the effectiveness of point-of-purchase displays
- Develop a network in your community
- Obtain valuable tips about printing, photography, the electronic media and more.

To obtain the FREE kit, just call the NHB at the toll-free number 800-421-2977 and press 5. Leave your name, address (no PO boxes, please) and phone number and the kit will be mailed to you. When the additional sections for the kit are developed next year, they will automatically be mailed to you.

Newsletter for Farmer Direct Marketers

A new newsletter will soon deliver marketing and business information to farmer direct marketers throughout the US. The newsletter, entitled *The Seasonal Marketer*, will be published quarterly beginning in January 2000. Whether people sell products grown in several acres or in a backyard garden, they will find information in the newsletter that can be applied to their own business.

The number of farmer direct marketers is steadily increasing as farmers seek to retain more of the profit by eliminating the middleman and selling direct to the public. The USDA reports that its 1998 *National Farmers Market Directory* listed 2,746 farmers' markets for fresh, seasonal, locally grown produce.

In 1995, USDA surveyed farmers at 772 farmers' markets. More than 6,000 farmers said that they sell their products only at farmers' markets.

Other farmers sell directly to the public through roadside stands or farm stands. Products include fruits and vegetables, cut flowers, herbs, maple syrup, honey, Christmas trees, wool, freezer meat and eggs. Some farmers also sell craft items and home-baked goods.

Subscriptions to *The Seasonal Marketer* will cost \$7 per year. To receive a free sample issue, which will be mailed in January 2000, please write to *The Seasonal Marketer*, 76 Applewood Dr., Meriden, CT 06450-7900, call or fax at 203-440-3092 or e-mail: the-red-pen@home.com. Be sure to include your name and complete mailing address, including zip code.

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503-662-4559

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Dave Graber
2601 SE 141st
Portland, OR 97266
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REGIONAL REPS

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Rocky Pisto
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Eastern Oregon

Jan Lohman
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Metropolitan Area

Chuck Sowers
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Canby, OR 97013-9373
503-266-1740
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North Coast

Bob Allen
PO Box 434
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Fax 541-737-3643
email: burgettm@bcc.orst.edu

Dr. Lynn Royce
Dept. of Entomology
Cordley Hall 2051 / OSU
Corvallis, OR 97331-2907
541-737-5520

Jim Cramer
Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0110
503-986-4620
Fax 503-986-4737
www.oda.state.or.us/oda.html

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Meets 7:30 pm third Friday (except
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VP: Don Barney 541-267-5945
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Ken O'Grain 541-935-7065
Treas: Nancy O'Grain 541-935-
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Southern Oregon

Meets 7:30 pm first Monday
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President: Stan Kee 541-664-3238
VP: John Campbell 541-664-4867
Sec.: George Steffensen
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Tillamook County

Meets 7 pm first Thursday
Forestry Building
4909 Third Street, Tillamook
President: Bob Allen 503-322-3819
VP: Doug Taylor 503-842-4245
Sec./Treas.: Wayne Auble

Tualatin Valley

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OSU Extension Office, 18640 SW
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VP: Bob Ward 503-324-8123
Sec.: Mary Moss 503-357-4782
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Willamette Valley

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Chemeketa Community College,
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VP: Ray Varner 503-662-4559
Sec.: Ron Bennett 503-838-2328
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