Strong westward winds, low humidity and hot temperatures on Tuesday, September 8, transformed small fires burning in the Cascades into super-charged, fast-moving infernos that forced thousands of Oregonians out of their homes. We have since heard many amazing stories about people banding together to save their communities, homes, farms, and livelihoods. Almost immediately, shelters were stood up to host people, their livestock, and pets. It's estimated that more than 5,000 animals were sheltered across the state, finding safety at several of our county fairgrounds facilities. Countless more animals were rescued and sheltered by various private groups and citizens at no charge.

Thousands of Oregonians pulled together during this time, including farmers and ranchers. Those with equipment and local knowledge of the terrain, hopped on their dozers and filled up their water trucks before firefighters could respond. They began battling the flames, saving homes, farms, and livestock. In several communities—such as Scotts Mills—farmers, ranchers, and other local residents are credited by many with saving the town. These acts best describe how tight-knit and selfless Oregonians and the agriculture community really are.

While the Department of Agriculture was not on the front lines with the heroic firefighters, first responders, and local residents, it was all hands on deck at the department. Staff were dispatched all over the state to help support the active response as wildfires burned thousands of acres. In addition to managing logistics at several county fairgrounds, ODA helped coordinate feed, veterinary care, and animal identification for those affected by the fires. The outpouring of support from local businesses and individuals was truly amazing. Every day, donations came into the facilities to be distributed to those in need—many who escaped with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Thanks to rain, cooler weather, countless Oregonians, and more than 9,000 firefighters and emergency management professionals from 47 states, the number of wildfires burning across the state has decreased dramatically. Now, Oregonians can focus on recovery.

While the full effect of the wildfires will not be known for some time, we do know about 58,000 acres of land zoned for agriculture was inside the fire boundaries. Estimates on losses will take time. Meanwhile, ODA is working closely with our federal partners to ensure information about disaster support is reaching our agriculture community. A list of resources and information, including how to care for animals after wildfire, locating lost animals, and federal programs assisting with the cost of livestock loss can be found at https://oda.direct/Wildfire.

USDA announces second round of Coronavirus Food Assistance for farmers and ranchers; many more commodities included

On Friday, September 18, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced details of the new $14 billion Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, or CFAP 2. The program expansion will provide payments to farmers and ranchers to offset COVID-19 related losses.

“We are pleased to see more commodities included in this second round of aid,” said Alexis Taylor, director, Oregon Department of Agriculture. “The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant and continuing market disruptions and these dollars will provide Oregon growers with some much-needed relief.”

Sign up for CFAP 2 began September 21 and runs through December 11. Producers interested should contact their local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office (FSA Service Center Locator.)

Additional information, eligibility requirements and application forms can be found online at https://www.farmers.gov/cfap.

The CFAP 2 includes more commodities than the original program which focused on livestock, dairy and non-specialty crop producers. For more information about CFAP 2 eligible commodities and payment rates, the USDA has an online tool to help, CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder

Customers seeking one-on-one support with CFAP 2 application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.
Caring for Livestock After Wildfires

When thousands of Oregonians, their livestock, and their animals needed to quickly leave their homes because of wildfires, many landed at the nearest county fairgrounds. Fairground facilities around the state from Clackamas to Jackson county began serving as a shelter for people and their animals within hours of evacuation orders.

County staff and countless volunteers were activated to help care for livestock and animals, everything from horses, goats, chickens, dogs, cats and even a sugar glider. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) also assigned staff throughout the state to help. Jonathan Sandau, special assistant to the director helped manage the Marion County Fairgrounds animal operation setting up pens, feed, water troughs and helping to organize generous donations from local businesses and private groups and citizens.

Dr. Ryan Scholz, a Regional Veterinarian with ODA connected each of the county fairgrounds with local veterinarians among many other duties. More than 5,000 animals checked into county facilities statewide. Emergency care was needed for some animals like Poppy, an almost 2-year-old goat. She was rescued from her home in Lyons. Her rescuer says when she found Poppy, her hair was burning, ears singed and her leg injured. Poppy’s mother and sibling were already gone. Her rescuer took Poppy to the Marion County Fairgrounds. Her owner was found, but Poppy’s home was gone, everything lost in the fire. Her owner decided to give Poppy to a friend who has other goats on her farm near Newport.

While most of the animals displaced by wildfires have owners, there are some still some waiting to be claimed. In anticipation of this need, ODA created an online database to help. The ODA Animal Tracker (https://oda.direct/AnimalTrack) is meant to assist Oregonians looking for animals displaced during the wildfires. This tracker is not intended to replace existing systems already in place at county animal shelters, instead it works as an additional service to the public. Most recently, about 26 animals are reported lost on the Animal Tracker, mostly cats. ODA is asking those who are missing their animals to report them to the ODA Tracker and continue to check the database. Oregon’s state, regional, and local agencies, together with local citizens, helped rescue and evacuate thousands of animals.

What Effect Will the 2020 Fires Have on Bees?

If 2020 couldn’t get any worse, it has. We are facing the worst series of fires in the state’s history. And it seemed to come out of nowhere. It was nice on Labor Day and then the smoke appeared. The skies are now the most foreboding shade of red. Thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes or are nervously waiting for a call to evacuate.

In the midst of this all, OSU Extension has gotten questions from gardeners and the public wondering what effects these fires have on bees. People have noticed that the bees have suddenly stopped flying. People wonder whether honey bee colonies are being choked by the smoke. People want to know that in spite of all the mayhem and loss “Will the bees be okay?”

In this article we discuss what is known about the effect of forest fires on bees, how bees respond to the land ravaged by fire and how you can help bees while also protecting your property from future fires.

Honey Bee Colonies

The fires will be disruptive to the state’s 80,000 bee colonies. As we write this, a number of apiaries are at risk of being consumed by the advancing flames. If you recall, 10,000 colonies were lost to the massive brush fires in New South Wales, Australia in 2019-2020. Already in California there are reports of large apiaries that are lost.

Fires move quickly and an apiary can turn into a pile of ash in hours. But even among surviving colonies, beekeepers are struggling to get to their apiaries ready for winter, since conditions are currently unsafe for beekeepers to work and manage their colonies. These preparations are particularly important to ensure high colony survival over the next five months.

Wild Bee Nests

By now, most of the state’s native bees have completed their reproduction and are hunkering down in nests for winter. But the susceptibility of these nests depends on where they are located. About 70% of our bee species nest in underground chambers. While soil temperatures can be very hot directly at the surface of a fire, they can fall to normal temperatures just 4 inches down.

Although we don’t exactly know the average depth our bees nest in Oregon, a global survey estimated that over 75% put their young in chambers deeper than 4 inches. So, most of these bees won’t even notice the fire.

But around 30% of our bee fauna nest above ground in twigs and stems, including small carpenter bees, mason bees and leafcutting bees. Nests of these bees that are not directly burned, will likely overheat and die. Research by the OSU Forest Animal Ecology Lab, for example, noticed a conspicuous absence of typically common stem-nesting small carpenter bees 5 years after the big Douglas Complex Fires in southern Oregon.

Smoke and Bee Behavior and Physiology

Many people noticed something was wrong with the bees when the smoke rolled in; they suddenly weren’t visiting the flowers like they were when it was clear. One reason is that smoke has lowered temperatures and bees just aren’t as
Think of it — there is a huge diversity and abundance typically increases in the years following a fire. Okay. But there is a bright spot in all this gloom. Very few bees live in closed canopy forests. For this reason, bee your home. OSU Extension has a great publication to help you balance fire-preparedness and planting for bees in a way that is “fire safe”. That means if people live in fire-prone areas they should practice fire-resistant landscaping, using plants that feed bees but that do not add to the fuel-load. And it means planting in a way that ensures a defensible space around your home.

After things return to some semblance of normality, it’s time to think about landscaping for bees in a way that is “fire safe”. That means if people live in fire-prone areas they should practice fire-resistant landscaping, using plants that feed bees but that do not add to the fuel-load. And it means planting in a way that ensures a defensible space around your home. OSU Extension has a great publication to help you balance fire-preparedness and planting for bees.

Oregon Announces New Top 20 Agricultural Commodities List

Agriculture remains vital to Oregon’s economy. The state is home to more than 37,200 farms and ranches and with the commercial fishing industry, the state produces more than 220 commodities, generating about $5 billion in annual farm gate sales and services a year. According to the latest estimated data, greenhouse and nursery products remain Oregon’s leading agricultural commodity with an estimated value of production of nearly $1 billion ($955,166,000) in 2019. Hay became the second top grossing commodity at $674,280,000 for 2019 value of production, up from $590,414,000 last year.

Cattle and calves ranked third, recording value of production at $625,158,000. Milk and grass seed round out the state’s top five spots. The data used to create the state’s top 20 agricultural commodities list is gathered using several sources of estimates including the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistic Service (NASS), Oregon State University, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Wine Board.

The rest of Oregon’s top 20 list contains the same commodities as the previous year, although some positions have changed. Please note, cannabis (hemp and marijuana) is not included in the agricultural commodities list. Before the enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill, hemp was not federally recognized as a legal agricultural commodity. For crops such as hemp, surveys and data is collected by USDA NASS. It is anticipated that hemp will be added to the list of crops surveyed by USDA NASS in the next couple of years. Additionally, there is no farm gate value available for marijuana at this time.

For additional statistics, please see the Oregon Agricultural Statistics brochure in English at https://oda.direct/AgStats and in Spanish at https://oda.direct/AgStatsSPA. This brochure was created in collaboration with USDA NASS.
FSFS PROGRAM APPLICATION REMINDER

Oregon's Food Security and Farmworker Safety (FSFS) Program provides assistance to Oregon’s agricultural producers in order to help secure Oregon’s food supply chain and protect essential agricultural workers from COVID-19 exposure and illness.

Agricultural producers are responsible for complying with COVID-19 emergency OR-OSHA requirements for housing, transportation, and field sanitation. Producers faced with additional costs because of this can apply for assistance in any or all categories.

Applications are due October 25 and receipts must be submitted by November 16.

Apply at https://oda.direct/FSFS

Food Security & Farmworker Safety Program
A single application covers all financial support categories

- Financial support
  - housing
  - transportation
  - field sanitation
- Free COVID-19 testing
- Free face coverings
- Safety consultations

COMING SOON

WEBINAR: Q&A ABOUT HEMP PROPOSED RULES
OCTOBER 2, 2020 • 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM
ONLINE: https://oda.direct/HempLawsRules

HEMP PROPOSED RULES PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING
OCTOBER 8, 2020 • 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
ONLINE: https://oda.direct/HempLawsRules

CONFINED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS (CAFO) ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 8, 2020 • 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM
Virtual meeting by video/conference call
503-986-4792 | https://oda.direct/Meetings

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION (SWCC) QUARTERLY MEETING
NOVEMBER 17, 2020 • 8:45w AM - 12:00 PM
Virtual meeting by video/conference call
503-986-4704 | https://oda.direct/Meetings

PESTICIDE ANALYTICAL & RESPONSE CENTER (PARC) BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2020 • 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Virtual meeting by video/conference call
503-986-4562 | https://oda.direct/PARC

OREGON STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE MEETING
DECEMBER 1-3, 2020
503-986-4554 | https://oda.direct/BoardAgriculture