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Farm Briefs: Dan Walters visits Chico, online check for nitrates, award-winning olive oil

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Farm bureau hosts Dan Walters talks

Long-time Sacramento Bee columnist Dan Walters will be the keynote speakers for the annual dinner of the Butte County Farm Bureau. The event is Jan. 29 at the Bell Memorial Union at Chico State University. Tickets for the program and dinner should be reserved by Jan. 15. The cost is \$75 for the public and \$60 for Farm Bureau members. Mail reservation payments to 2580 Feather River Blvd., Oroville CA 95965.

New Dairy Margin deadline is Dec. 19

USDA has extended the application deadline for the Dairy Margin Protection Program to Dec. 19. The program, from the 2014 Farm Bill, protects participating dairy producers when the margin — the difference between the price of milk and feed costs — falls below levels of protection selected by the applicant.

Producers must visit their local Farm Service Agency office to enroll. Those who apply this year will receive a slight increase in production protection that will not be available in the future. Farmers who do not sign up for the Margin Protection Program for 2015 will forfeit the 1 percent base production increase.

Information is also available online: www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool

Free tool to check nitrates in wells

The State Water Resources Control Board has launched an interactive tool called “Is My Property Near a Nitrate-Impacted Water Well?” (See press release here: <http://goo.gl/50MFqC>).

The public can access the interactive tool from the State Water Board’s home page or at www.waterboards.ca.gov/nitrate_tool.

A “nitrate-impacted well” is a well with at least one detection above the health standard since 2000. The interactive tool allows users to determine if their well is in the vicinity (2,000 feet) of a nitrate-impacted well. In addition, the interactive tool includes a “frequently asked questions” document for users to learn more about nitrate in groundwater.

Yolo farm garners conservation award

Full Belly Farm is the recipient of the 2014 California Leopold Conservation Award, presented by the Sand County Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation and the Sustainable Conservation.

The farm, in Yolo County, has been a certified organic farm since 1985 and is a pioneer for Community Supported Agriculture marketing.

In addition to using sustainable practices, the farm has an extensive education and outreach program, including popular on-farm tours, events, children's summer camp and a farm internship program.

The Leopold Conservation Award program inspires other landowners through these examples and provides a visible forum where farmers, ranchers and other private landowners are recognized as conservation leaders. Full Belly Farm will receive the award Monday at the California Farm Bureau Federation's annual meeting in Garden Grove.

Local olive oils win big at olive festival

Two Northern California olive producers impressed judges at the San Benito Olive Festival's olive oil awards in Hollister.

Ascolano, a Tuscan mono-varietal harvested by Lucero Olive Oil, of Corning, won the grand prize in the extra-virgin olive oil category.

The grand prize for flavor-infused olive oil went to MoonShadow Grove, of Oroville, for their Mandarin Orange. Owned by Rich and Diane Mathews, MoonShadow Grove is one of the largest organic olive groves in California.

To submit local farm brief items, send to hhacking@chicoer.com, or P.O. Box 9, Chico CA 95927, attention: Farm briefs.