

# Family reels from loss of animals in flood

Neighbors, others work tirelessly in rescue effort

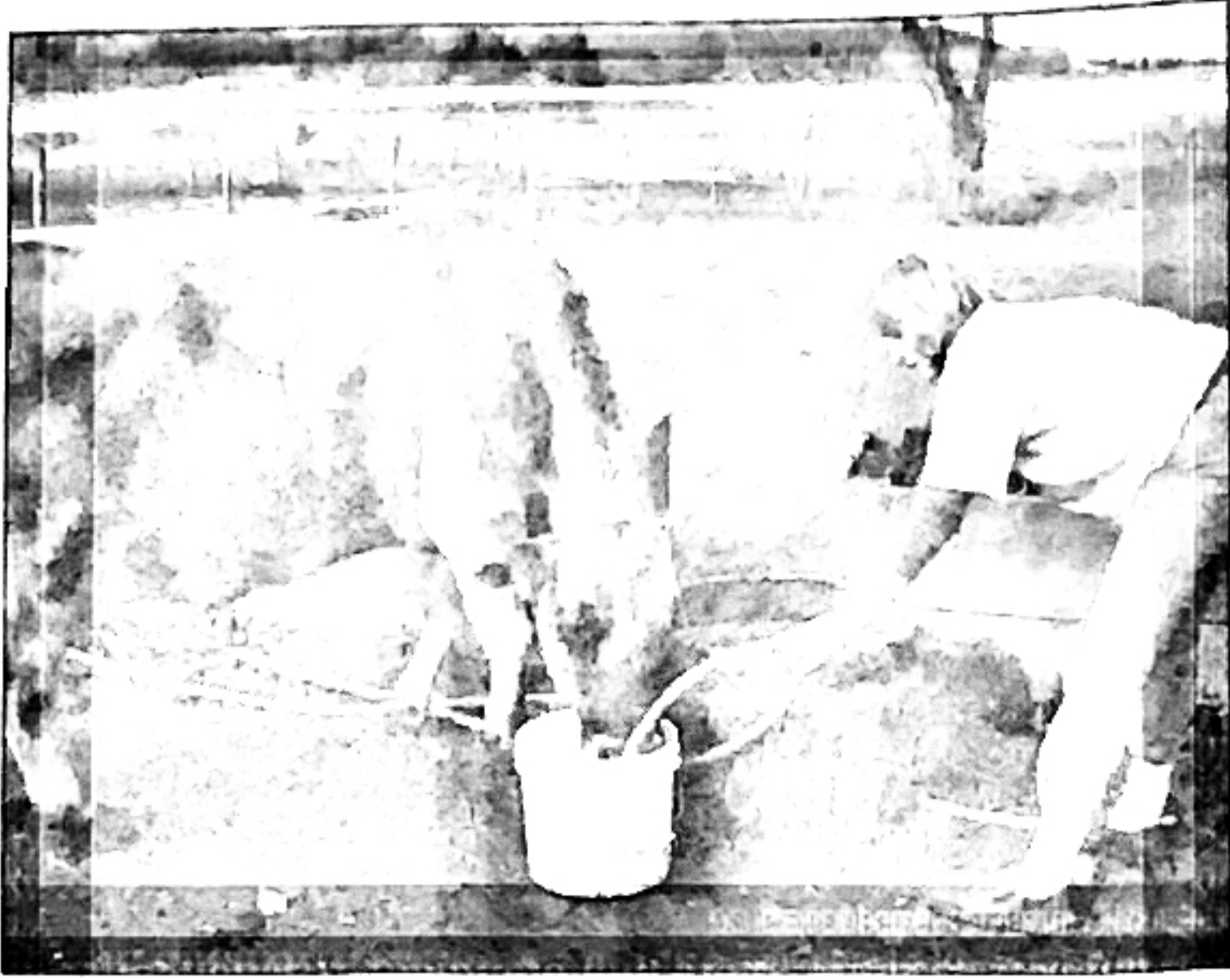
BY DENISE PORTER  
Agriculture Correspondent

TILLAMOOK — As the rampaging waters of the Trask and Tillamook rivers rose last week, the Snell family was attempting to save 90 head of yearling Jersey heifers from 6 feet of water in the pastures of their CandyLane Dairy on U.S. 101, south of here.

At the end of the three-day rescue attempt, the farm family had recovered only 33 animals.

KaShan Snell said the financial blow was awful. Early estimates of the value of the animals lost ranged \$1,000 to \$1,800 each, or \$34,000-\$84,000. Many of the heifers were pregnant and due to calve in the next few months.

But the emotional blow was even more detrimental.



DENISE PORTER/HEADLIGHT-HERALD

Kim Snell gives Paulette a drink of fresh water as floodwaters inundate pastures on the family farm.

"We know every calf on this farm and Jack, my father-in-law, has spent his lifetime breeding quality cattle," she said. "Genetically, we've lost a lot more than the monetary

value of the heifers. We've all cried."

The dairy's heifer pastures and barns, located on the old Hathaway farm at the end of Matejcek Road, were purchased

recently but the family has been leasing the property for several years. The land is bordered by both the Trask and Tillamook Rivers and is a well-known flood plain within the county.

Last week's was the first serious flood the Snell family had encountered.

"We were busy helping our neighbors farther down Tone Road (who had lost cattle in 1996) evacuate their cows because we knew they would lose them if the cows weren't evacuated," said Jack Snell, owner of the dairy. "When I got home that evening, there was water coming across Highway 101 into our main dairy where the milk cows were. Even then, we thought the heifers were OK."

Snell said that, once the main dairy was secured, he drove to the heifer farm and realized the water had risen much faster than he'd anticipated. He and his son, Ben, immediately began trying to save the 12- to 20-month-old heifers.

Rescue efforts went on for nearly three days with help from Search and Rescue, the Salvation Army, the Humane Society, many community volunteers, and nearly 25 dairymen from across Central County.

Nearly 40 other heifers that were in a barn when waters began to rise were brought safely to the neighboring Matejcek Dairy, owned by the Rocha family.

Two cows, ages 21 and 22, were also rescued from the barn. The cows, named Flint and Paulette, are "retired" milk cows Snell had purchased for their outstanding genetics nearly 20 years ago. They are special pets of Snell's 14-year-old daughter, Katie, and his wife, Kim.

The search teams then began the daunting task of floating through the 6 feet of water in search of the 90 heifers still on the pastureland. The task, Snell said, was difficult at best because the heifers would panic, causing the boats to tot-

ter and become unstable. In addition, the water was so high on the first day it was hard to see where the fences for the pastures were.

Several eyewitnesses observed heifers spread across pastureland from nearby farms and one reported seeing several heifers swept into the rivers.

One volunteer held onto a struggling heifer with his hands to keep her from falling into the fast-moving Trask river for nearly 20 minutes before exhaustion forced him to let go.

A group of about 15 heifers was found and safely rescued from neighbor Butch Schriber's dike the second day.

Snell said he was thankful for the help of all of his neighbors and the volunteers who worked long hours to save the animals.

"I don't know of any other community where the farmers and the neighbors are so willing to help in times of crisis. We are all grateful."

## Vets offer tips on keeping pets safe during disasters

If you must evacuate, take pets with you

In the wake of last week's flood emergency, the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association issued the following list of tips for keeping pets safe in hazardous situations:

- If you must evacuate, take your pets. They are not better off if left alone at home, where they could be injured, lost or killed. Animals left inside can escape through damaged parts of the

home. Pets left to fend for themselves can become victims of exposure, starvation, predators or contaminated food and water. Never leave a dog tied or chained outside.

If you think you will be called up on to evacuate, bring your pets inside and confine them so you can leave with them quickly. Make sure you have your 72-hour pet emergency kit ready to go.

- Use sturdy leashes, harnesses or carriers to transport your pets.

- Make arrangements with a trusted neighbor to take your pets to a prearranged

location if you're not home when an evacuation order is issued.

- Make sure your pet is wearing an up-to-date identification tag at all times. It's a good idea to include on the tag a phone number of a friend or relative who lives outside of your immediate area. Collars and tags can come off, so you might want to talk to your veterinarian about additional permanent identification options, such as microchips or tattoos.

- Find a safe place ahead of time. Evacuation shelters usually do not allow pets, except service animals. So,

find a friend, a boarding kennel, veterinary facility, or hotel or motel that could take your pet. Most boarding facilities require proof of current rabies and distemper vaccinations. Keep copies of these and your pet's other medical records in your emergency kit.

- If you don't evacuate and must wait out a storm or other disaster in your home, identify a safe area where you and your pets can stay together.

- When you return home after a disaster, don't allow your pets to roam loose. Familiar landmarks and

smells may be gone and your pet could become disoriented. Pets can get lost in such situations. It's a good idea to keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers for a few days inside the house, especially if it has been damaged.

- Comfort your pet. In an emergency, your pet can become as frightened as you. Give attention and affection, but don't force it. Let your pet come to you.

Sue Cameron, chair of the Tillamook Animal Shelter nonprofit organization, said she had not heard reports of any pets lost, injured or killed in last week's flood.

## FARMS

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were swept away from the Wilson River RV Park to the east on SR 6 ended up on the Jost and Prince properties.

The Josts had to dump nearly 9,000 pounds of milk and, along with Sander, had floodwater running through all their barns.

A logjam ruined Sander's well system, causing the loss of fresh, clean water for his cows and his home for 24 hours.

"If it wasn't for my family, friends and neighbors, it would have been really ugly," Sander said. "The worst for me will come in the next month. God knows what bugs my cows have picked up from drinking that (flood) water."

Stock losses were the most severe along the Trask and Tillamook rivers.

Jack Snell, at the CandyLane Dairy, said he lost 67 heifers and Liz Clausen, who milks 160 cows on Tone Road, lost 15 milk cows and five heifers.

Eric Bodie, Clausen's neighbor, had water over his entire farm and he and Clausen were unable to milk their cows for several days. Bodie estimated he lost 2,500 pounds of milk.

Damage was extensive at Clausen's farm, which is situated on a bend of the Trask River. The dairy was owned by Tom Blaser in 1996 and he lost nearly his entire herd that year. Since then, a cow pad — a raised area of rock with a steep ramp that cows can be moved onto during floods — had been installed but, according to Clausen, it wasn't high enough to keep all her cows safe this time.

"The cow pad was built to 1996 flood heights and this

water was higher," Clausen said. "However, if we hadn't had the pad, we would have lost everything."

Farther down Tone Road, dairymen Butch Schriber and Dan Landolt, were able to evacuate their herds.

"I am so glad all of those men came to take our cows out of the barns," said Schriber's wife, Cheryl. "Bless their hearts!"

Schriber's 100 cattle, as well as the young stock were split between the Coppini Dairy and Fairview Acres, owned by the Obrist family. Landolt's 65 milk cows and all of the young stock were housed at his son Ryan's farm on Trask River Road.

Ten heifers were reported lost at a property along Ekroth Road on the Miami River near Garibaldi. The property is owned by Chuck Carlson and is leased to a family which is raising replacement heifers, according to Bethany Roach, a volunteer who helped rescue 30 of the farm's 60 heifers. Ten to 15 neighbors and volunteers spent two days in the rescue attempt.

Almost no damage, except for the usual water through the barns, was reported along the Kilchis River.

"We did fine for some reason," said lower Kilchis dairyman Sean Dooher.

The same was true for some farms along the Wilson.

Misty Meadows Dairy, owned by the Hogan family, had water running through its barns up to the cows' udders, but lost no animals. The Hogan family lost several hundred head of cattle in the 1996 flood.

"The hard work we've done the last several years has paid off," said Rita Hogan. "We reinforced our dike and made it three times higher than it was prior to 1996. We also invested in sev-

eral small pumps, as well as a \$15,000 pump that moves 15,000 gallons of water per minute. At times, the large amount of money we spent was hard to justify, but now we realize how fortunate we are."

North County farms fared relatively well last week.

"It was so much easier for us this time," said dairywoman Joan Marti, whose farm is located along the Nehalem River. "We've certainly had it worse before."

Late last week, Marti said the flooding prevented her cows from being milked for about 30 hours, but that it was too early to tell if she will lose any cows because of the severe mastitis problems that can result from the lack of milking.

She said her cows' average production last week was down by 18 pounds of milk each from the week prior to the flood, a significant loss. She said the farm lost 3,000 pounds of milk while the cows couldn't be milked.

Marti's neighbor, Mike Whalen, also lost 3,000 pounds of milk and sustained water damage in two employee houses.

Steve Neahrng, another dairyman severely affected in the flood of 1996, lost only five heifers and had some equipment damage.

All three dairy farmers agreed that putting in cow pads was instrumental to the improved conditions during this flood.

South County farms fared especially well. Only minimal damage to fences and fields was reported, and some had small amounts of water through barns and buildings.

Farmers near Pacific City reported that the money they spent after the 1996 flood raising their homes and installing cow pads paid off.

## Most animals saved at Blue Heron

BY LINDA L. EDIGER  
Headlight-Herald Staff

TILLAMOOK — The majority of the animals at the Blue Heron French Cheese Co. petting pen were saved during the flood.

"I couldn't sleep. I just kept thinking of those animals," said Blue Heron co-owner Denny Pastega. Caught in the middle of the flood on U.S. 101, Pastega feared devastating results for his store and the animals.

"I finally got a Pepsi semi-truck through the flood around midnight Monday," said Pastega, against the advice of local law enforcement. It was scary, said Pastega. "The water was moving pretty fast."

The petting pen lost two sheep and two goats. "They were smaller. The water would have been way over their heads," said Paste-

ga, who also discovered a foot of water in the store. "We've lost at least a quarter of a million in inventory," he said. At this early report, he was also unsure of the integrity of the building. "In 1996, we only had about 4 inches of water in the store," Pastega said.

"I was so happy when I saw one of the llamas and then a horse. I thought they'd be all dead."

He credits the help of a group of volunteers, including Coast Guard personnel, and, especially local contractors Mychal Bush and Jason Hahn, and Pepsi employee Scott Conrad. "The animals would be dead if it wouldn't have been for them helping to move them out," said Pastega.

More than 25 animals are being housed at the Tillamook

County Fairgrounds.

"They're in the horse barns and have been fed and watered," Pastega said. "I'm happy."

Tuesday morning, Nov. 7, he said the Blue Heron French Cheese Co. will be down for "at least a month."

Pastega hopes, that spurred by this incident, the proper permits will be approved so he "can build an animal pad, so this doesn't happen again."

"Thank, God, we had no loss of (human) life," said Pastega. "We lost our chickens, but the guinea fow in the trellis. We threw a lot feed out to the ducks and geese, who are very happy with all this water." The longhorn cattle are still on the property. "They're on high ground and we fed them well," said Pastega Tuesday morning before the water started to recede.