Wyoming residents grow grapes for wines, jellies

By Sandra Frost

Backin' horses, coal mines, gas wells, and high, cold desert are images that come to mind first when asked about Wyoming. Grapes and wine are not nearly as popular. Grapes are successfully grown in Wyoming, though, at both the homeowner and commercial scales. Grape varieties may be suitable for juice, jams, and jellies, table grapes, or wine production. Grape variety research was done at the University of Wyoming Sheridan Research and Extension Center (SUREC) over several years (www.uwyo.edu/uwexpstn/Sheridan.asp). Colorado State University has also conducted grape variety trials under conditions similar to Wyoming and makes variety recommendations (www.coopext.colostate.edu/TRA/PLANTS/fruit.shtml).

Site and variety selection are the most important factors for growing grapes in Wyoming. A site on the sunny south side of a house that provides protection on the north and west sides from snow and wind is ideal. Winter hardness is an important variety characteristic since grape vines may live many years. Taking soil samples and having them tested for grape production is a good idea. Soil testing information sheets can be obtained at any University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service county office in the state or online at http://ces.uwyo.edu/Forms/CEX_Subject_Forms.htm. There is a $20 fee for the standard fertility test at the UW Soil Testing Laboratory (http://ces.uwyo.edu/Soil_Main.asp), which includes pH, salts, organic matter, phosphate-phosphorus, nitrate nitrogen, lime, and texture. Specify that the site will be used for grape production on the questionnaire mailed to the lab with the samples. There is a fee for additional tests. The lab is on the UW campus in Laramie and can be reached at (307) 745-4825 or soiltest@uwyo.edu.

Grape growers and winemakers have formed the Wyoming Grape and Wine Association (www.WyoGrape.com) to promote interest and success in the industry. Growers in Wyoming harvested nearly 45 tons of grapes in 2009. The association has a list of preferred grape varieties that do well in Wyoming. Association members also share information on resources, getting started in the industry, and sources of nursery stock.

Winter hardy varieties recommended by the association include:

- Grapes for wine:
  - Frontenac (red)
  - Marquette (red)
  - Marechal Foch (red)
  - LaCrosse (white)
  - Elvira (white)
  - Frontenac Gris (white)
  - LaCrescent (white)

- Grapes for dessert jams and jellies that have grown well at SREC include:
  - Beta (blue-black)
  - Valiant (red)
  - Concord (blue-black)
  - Kay Gray (white)
  - Worden (blue-black)
  - Bluebell

Sandra Frost is a University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service educator based in Powell serving northwest Wyoming. She can be contacted at (307) 754-8836 or at sfrost1@uwyo.edu.

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Farm bill disaster aid programs available

By James Sedman and John Hewlett

Past federal farm bill legislation dealt with disaster aid on a case-by-case basis requiring special votes and appropriations each time a disaster payment was deemed necessary.

The 2008 Farm Bill makes disaster relief semi-permanent by creating the Agriculture Disaster Relief Trust Fund. Several new disaster relief programs have been created as part of this fund. Some are triggered by a disaster declaration while others may be available on a continuing basis to crop and livestock producers. Counties adjacent to those declared a disaster also qualify.

Depending on the details for individual operations, these programs may be a good fit for farmland or ranch risk management plans.

**Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program**

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) is funded by the Agriculture Disaster Relief Trust Fund to provide crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms and ranches in counties declared a disaster who have experienced production losses (excluding grazing), crop quality losses, or both, during the crop year.

Crop disaster payments to eligible producers will be made at 60 percent of the difference between the disaster assistance program guarantee and the total farm revenue for the farm. The disaster assistance program guarantee for a crop used to calculate the payments for a farm may not be greater than 90 percent of the sum of the expected revenue for each of the crops for the farm. To qualify for SURE, crop producers must have a minimum of catastrophic coverage (CAT) crop insurance policy for all insurable crops and Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for all non-insurable crops. A producer’s actual production history (APH) is used to help determine the extent of any losses. Crop losses must be judged at least 10 percent due to a natural disaster in a county declared a disaster or at least 50 percent due to a natural disaster in an adjacent, non-disaster county.

**Livestock Indemnity Program**

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) was designed to assist livestock producers who have experienced losses due to adverse weather at higher than normal mortality rates. This program does not require a specific disaster declaration and was intended to cover losses due to extreme weather such as blizzards, tornadoes, and heat waves. Losses are paid based on 75 percent of the fair market value of the livestock.

**Livestock Forage Assistance Program**

The Livestock Forage Assistance Program (LFAP) is designed to assist producers experiencing losses of forage and pasture associated with extreme drought.

A county disaster declaration is not necessary for qualification; however, U.S. Drought Monitor information is used to determine if the area qualifies as extreme drought. Producers in a severe drought will receive one month’s payment, extreme drought qualifies for two months, and an exceptional drought merits three months. The payment is 60 percent of the smaller of either the monthly feed cost for the total number of livestock covered or the monthly feed cost calculated by using the normal carrying capacity of the eligible grazing land. This program requires a producer to carry either Pasture, Rangeland and Forage or NAP coverage to be eligible for assistance.

**For More Information**

Payment limits of $100,000 per person and $500,000 maximum gross income apply to any program payments as part of the new farm bill. Producers should keep in mind that, for the most part, these programs require enrollment in some type of crop insurance policy to qualify.

For more information on this and other risk management topics on the Web, including three recently completed bulletins on disaster assistance programs for Wyoming, visit the Western Risk Management Library online at agecon.uwyo.edu/riskmg.

For more information on what crop insurance policies will qualify for the SURE program and other risk management programs, consult a crop insurance agent. Agents can help tailor a policy to fit specific risk management needs.

A list of insurance agents may be found at the RMA Web site at www.rma.usda.gov under “Agent/ company Locator” in the upper right sidebar.

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