



Life In The Valley

Number 2 - January 2017

Table of Contents:

- ◆ Message from the CEO.....2
- ◆ Valley Wide
Board of Directors3
- ◆ This Is Our Story -
Producers Supply Coop.....4-5
- ◆ Building a Stronger Tomorrow .6
- ◆ Preparing for the Cold7
- ◆ Valley Wide Cooperative
Providing Meals.....8
- ◆ Valley Wide Cooperative
Helps Feed Idaho9
- ◆ Platinum Precision Ag10
- ◆ Valley Agronomics
and Wilco-Winfield to Form
New Agronomy Joint Venture 11
- ◆ Customer Success
Is Our Business.....12-13
- ◆ Improve Cow Comfort
by Focusing on
What Can't Be Bought14-15
- ◆ Cross Roads Travel Center
Opening Soon.....16

www.valleywidecoop.com

Message from the CEO

Greetings from Valley Wide Cooperative,

First of all, it's our hope that each and every one of you had a joyous and a Merry Christmas. What a great time of year when we get to focus on our Faith, Families and FOOD! The three most important components of life. Hopefully it's also a time we can set aside the challenges we all face every day and concentrate on the blessings. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Valley Wide Coop finished its first full year since the merger with Valley Coops on August 31st. It was a year full of challenges in trying to bring the teams together and not let anything slip through the cracks regarding customer service. The Directors and Management are confident that this merger will be a catalyst for growth, strength and success for the combined entity well into the future. Remember, this is a marathon and we're only one mile into it. To be honest, most of the first year was spent putting things together and focusing on making the company run smoothly. A huge task when considering all the moving parts. It's like rebuilding an engine.... while its running. After one year we've come a long way in streamlining processes, learning about one another's strengths, and improving on the weaknesses. Earnings are not what we had hoped or planned but making more money wasn't the reason we put these two companies together, and it wasn't our prime directive this first year. Now that the first year is behind us, we will focus more of our attention on what lies ahead and how we can manage our way through a tougher Ag economy. If I'm thankful for anything this year, it's for two things – 1. A great team of employees who are committed to the Coop and its vision to be the company of choice. 2. Loyal, supportive Coop Customers who appreciate this company and have cut us some slack while we sincerely try to put things together this past year to make Valley Wide a company they can be proud of. Priceless.

2017 is shaping up to be a year of challenge as I'm sure all of you who are growers realize but, an important lesson from the most recent election is that you never know what's around the corner and the people who thought they had all the answers..... well, they didn't. There's always hope. Remember, as you consider the record low prices you face on your crops – there's a 100% chance they will go back up. Always have.

For Valley Wide, opportunities continue to come our way. Starting in January, Valley Agronomics will have a new partner in Wilco Farmers Co-op from Mt Angel Oregon. You can read more about it on our website. Bringing Wilco in as a partner has

allowed both Wilco and Valley Agronomics to achieve common strategic goals of;

- Spreading economic risks over a larger geographic area
- Partnering with like-minded companies who share common goals and vision
- Sending a clear message to our suppliers that we are a significant player in the entire PNW, which in turn equates to better pricing and supplier support
- Allowing us to compete with any of the national brands out there

Wilco Farmers also has a highly successful retail, energy and Hazel Nut marketing division that are not part of the partnership at this time. I welcome you to visit their website at www.wilco.coop to learn more about them. Valley Wide will and must continue to look to grow and develop these key partnerships if we are to remain strong, vibrant, relevant and long lasting. It's been a key component of our success up to this point and will be going forward. Some of these partnerships will involve companies close by, others will be in areas just outside our trade area, or further. The litmus test we put every growth opportunity up against is;

- Are we able to manage the growth?
- Are we benefiting the patrons?
- Does it fit with what we currently do?
- Does it fulfill the mission of Valley Wide?
- What are the risks?
- Will others be hurt by it?
- Can we afford it?

Your Board takes all these 'opportunities' serious and is diligent in their examination of proposals brought to them by management. The Cooperative system does work for the best interests of the members. In summary, 2016 proved to be a transitional year that has allowed us to learn to work as a team and refine our resolve to see this merger through to meet the expectations of the Board and the patrons. 2017, though challenging out of the chute, will be a year where smoother operations and a focus on productivity will put us back on track to solid financial performance and will set the pace for what we anticipate will be several years of opportunity and growth.

Thank you and again, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Dave Holtom, CEO



Dave Holtom
Chief Executive Officer



Five Divisions Of Service

Valley Wide Board of Directors

With the Annual District Meetings coming up at the end of January, I wanted to remind the membership of an exciting change in the way we will be handling the elections for Directors this year. Historically, elections have been held during the Annual Meetings by a vote of the members who were in attendance. While this proved to be adequate, it fell short of our intent to allow everyone an opportunity to vote. This year, voting will be by mail ballot. In early January, Members will receive an election packet in the mail that will include an explanation of the process, those who are running for a position on the Board for Valley Wide, a brief bio on each candidate and a voting ballot and envelope. This process will allow for us to hear from many members who are unable to make the meetings. During the District meeting, we will announce the winner of the election.



Ted Pierson
Board President

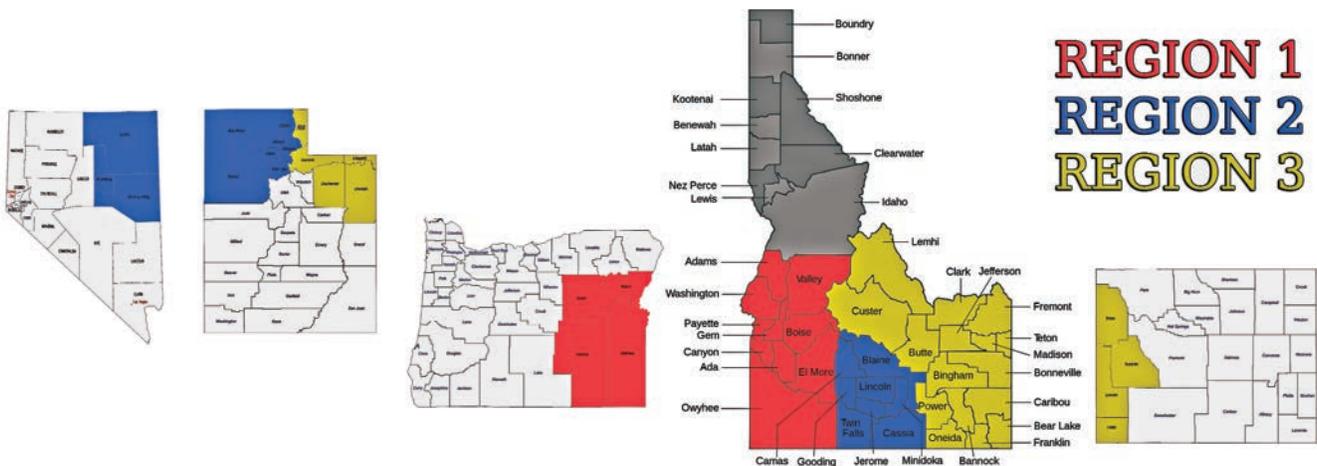
Valley Wide is broken up into three Districts.

- District 1 is the Treasure Valley area and has three candidates running for one position. Merritt Harker who has served as their Director is the incumbent and will be running again.
- District 2 is the Magic Valley area and will have 2 candidates running for one position. Don Taber is the incumbent and will also be running again.
- District 3 includes eastern Idaho and parts of northern Utah. There are two candidates running for one position and there is no incumbent.

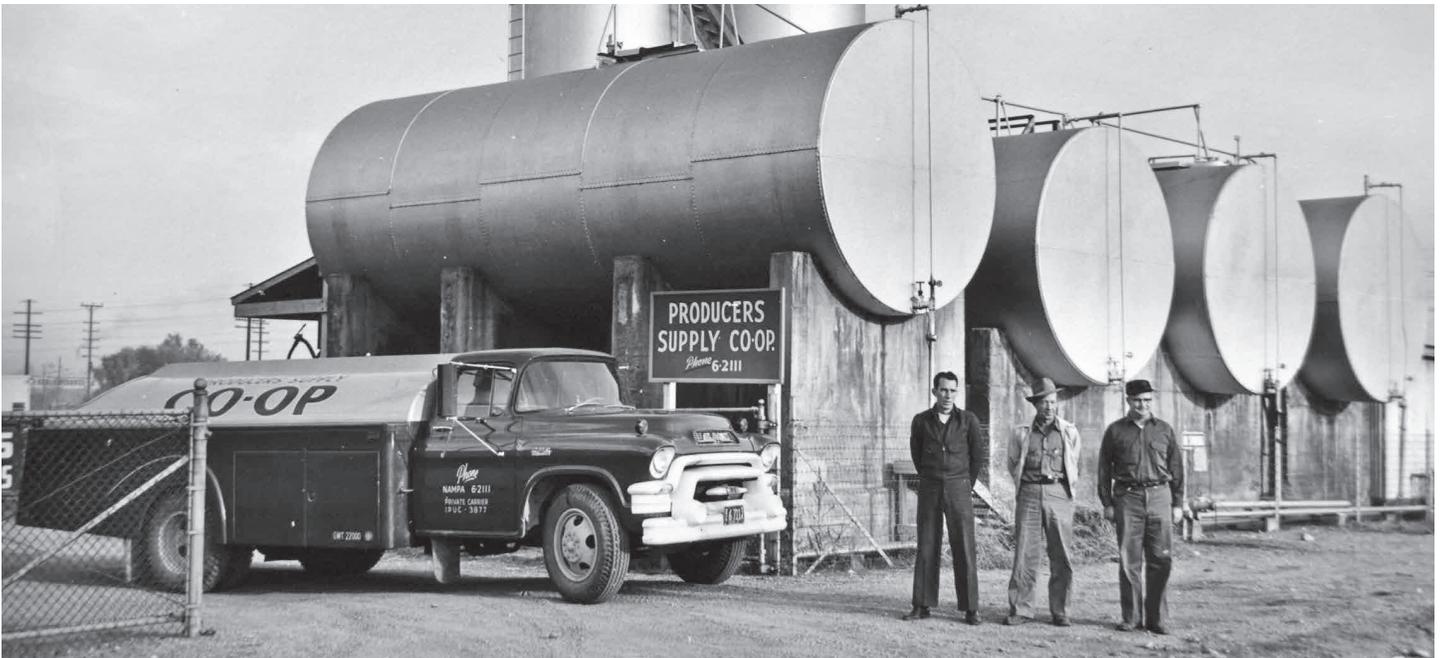
Please refer to our website at www.valleywidecoop.com to read about the candidates in each District. Valley Wide has a lot of new and exciting developments on the horizon and as your Board Chairman, I speak for the rest of the Board in saying it's important that we hear from you and involve everyone in the cooperative process through elections and producer representation on the Board of Directors. Please participate by casting your vote for a Director in your District.

I'd also like to encourage you to attend the District meeting in your area. These will be held January 31, February 1 & 2, 2017. This is our opportunity to thank you for your patronage and present to you the plans for your cooperative going forward.

Cooperatively Yours,
Ted Pierson, Chairman



This is Our Story – Producers Supply Coop



By Jason Pollard

1955 was an important year in history, and not because Elvis Presley made his first TV appearance, or because Eisenhower sent the first US advisor to South Vietnam, or because McDonalds first opened its doors in Illinois. 1955 was important because Producers Supply Cooperative was formed in May of 1955. The coop started in downtown Nampa Idaho with a service station and hardware store. At the time Nampa wasn't the thriving metropolis that it is today, but catered to the local farmers and their needs in the area.

Working with other cooperatives, mainly Pacific Supply Cooperative who was based out of Portland Oregon, Pacific Supply built a fertilizer plant on the property of Producers Supply and leased the facility to the cooperative for agricultural purposes for \$1 per year. Back then \$1 was a lot of money compared to what it is today. Partnerships like this one with Pacific Supply helped Producers grow and become a successful coop in the area. With only three General Managers in the history of the coop Don Pfost, Harold Printz and Jack Ingram the coop flourished and grew. By 2008 the cooperative sales were \$27 million with a net savings of \$747,070, becoming a cooperative that truly serviced the member owners in the state of Idaho.

Due to constant growth in the agricultural industry, companies like Land View, Simplot, and Helena began coming into the area and competing with Producers Supply Coop, because of this, Producers Supply realized there was a need to grow and provide better pricing and services to the members and growers of the coop. Working jointly with a coop out of Eastern Idaho named Valley Wide Cooperative,



Member Owned since 1920



this became the perfect opportunity for Producers Supply Coop to merge and offer more competitive rates to the growers as well as provide new services such as propane, retail, and increase their refined fuels and ag. In February of 2010, Valley Wide Cooperative and Producers Supply Cooperative merged together to form one company with a strong foundation, digging deeper roots to allow the Cooperative system to stand against the weather and have a firm foundation.

Today Producers Supply Coop's Refined Fuels, Retail, and Agronomics services still exist, with the same face to face interaction as they had back then you still have today. Producers Supply Cooperative is not forgotten, but is remembered on a daily basis of how they took care of their customers, as well as how they strived to provide quality products and services to the members and customers at a price that was fair and that they could afford.



Building a Stronger Tomorrow

By Jason Pollard

There are over 144 different crops grown in the state of Idaho. The quality, variety and availability of the food grown in Idaho is abundant. With the food that is produced in Idaho it not only meets the needs of consumers domestically but also abroad. Idaho ranks among the top producing states for several different commodities as well as specialty crops. With a large reputation to uphold, families are working hard on the farm to produce more food and maintain dad's or grandpa's farm.

Joe Jeppesen, an Idaho native born and raised in Rexburg, Idaho did just that and joined with his dad Dale in running the family farm. The Jeppesen farm produces small grains, dry land grains and potatoes. Their grains are sold to the local Idaho Falls Anheuser-Busch Budweiser Malt Plant to help produce two bottles of beer in every American's six pack. This is just one of the ways that the Jeppesen family is producing food that is consumed by people all over the United States. Likewise, their potatoes are sold locally.

Joe joined up with his dad in 2006. Being the 5th generation farming the family land, Joe said of the day to day

work, "I enjoy farming, this has become a passion of mine over the years, and this has become my life. There is always a new challenge and that is what makes this work enjoyable because I am putting all my time and effort into continuing the growth of my family farm." The Jeppesen family has been farming for over a hundred years in the Rexburg area, and has become well known and well established throughout the community.

Building a stronger tomorrow by maintaining the family farm has created an awareness for the Jeppesen family because they understand the importance of feeding the world. Without farmers, we as consumers wouldn't be able to put food on the table to feed our families. To help increase their yields Joe stated that "we mainly use a dry fertilizer on our crop with some liquid fertilizer toward the end of the season. Our crop advisor keeps us up to date on the different diseases in the area and what we should be watching for. Every year is different and it is beneficial to have someone dedicated to my success as a farmer. Valley Ag is competitive and they offer great customer service. As a whole, the employees of the coop are great to work with." Utilizing the coop for the services offered, the Jeppesen family has been able to maximize their yields building a strong tomorrow avoiding crop disease, using the right applications to grow their crops, and working hard is his passion.

Preparing for the Cold

By Marty Humphries

Valley Wide Refined Fuels Division makes deliveries to a wide range of customers across Idaho, Northern Nevada and Eastern Oregon. Our customer base includes dairies, farms, ranches, construction, industrial, trucking and government agencies. We have 10 bulk fuel plants which allows us many options to draw from when fulfilling the needs of our customers. During harvest, it is our goal to make sure our patrons don't have to worry about equipment being down waiting for deliveries. We have many customers on a keep full route, but also deliver on a need by call in situation. We also place tank monitors in many locations to allow easy online access to current fuel levels.

A major concern this time of year is making sure the fuel in the tanks we deliver to is winterized to protect against gelling. We are happy to work with our customers to insure they won't have down time when that temperature finally drops. Often times, this requires an extra additive to a tank when the first winterized fuel is delivered. We treat our fuel with Power Service which not only protects against gelling, but adds lubricity and a cetane booster. We can also blend with #1 diesel for the colder climates.



Along with our diesel products, we deliver gasoline in various octane options. In many locations, this includes ethanol-free gasoline. Along with our fuel deliveries, we also offer a wide range of lubricant options. We deliver bulk oil to all the areas we service and recently added drum and package product to our services in many locations. Our progressive sales team attends lubricant training and completes online courses to assist our patrons in making informed decisions for their lubricant needs. The Valley Wide Refined Fuels and Lube division works hard to fulfill the needs of our customers with quality products and good service.





Valley Wide Cooperative Providing Meals

By Jason Pollard

Idaho – Valley Wide Cooperative, Valley Agronomics, with matching funds from Land O’ Lakes donated a total of **\$30,000** to various Idaho state agencies working with the Meals on Wheels Programs. The donations were presented in four key points of distribution throughout the state. The donations were made in Twin Falls to the CSI Office on Aging, Pocatello to the Southeast Idaho Council of Governments, Inc., Idaho Falls to the Eastern Idaho Community Action

Partnership and in Boise to the Planning & Service Area III (Idaho Commission on Aging). “What a great opportunity we have to support our Seniors by giving back to the communities that we are in. We have been making this donation the last couple of years and we find that we are helping more and more people every year. Valley Wide Coop is committed to making communities a better place for everyone” said Valley Wide Cooperative Director of Marketing & Communications Jason Pollard. Valley Wide Cooperative, Valley Agronomics and Land O’ Lakes have teamed up for the past four years to donate \$30,000 to the Meals on Wheels program and plan to continue to contribute in the future.

Since 1920, Valley Wide Cooperative has been helping farmers and ranchers build their homes and businesses through dedication and expertise. Valley Wide Cooperative is involved in every community we are a part of, and we are helping to cultivate and strengthen the current and next generation of farmers. As we continue to support the communities that we are located in we are building a stronger tomorrow.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.valleywidecoop.com> or <http://www.landolakes.com/>



Member Owned since 1920



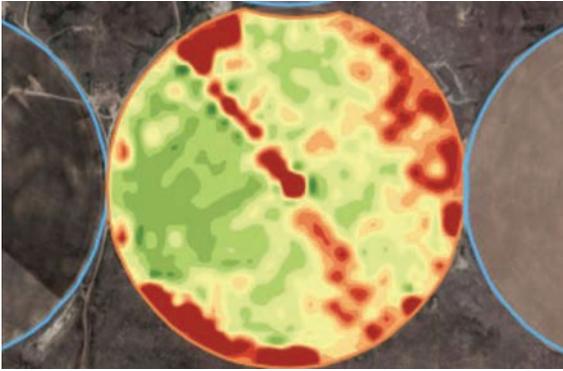
Valley Wide Cooperative Helps Feed Idaho

By Jason Pollard

Boise & Twin Falls, Idaho – Valley Wide Cooperative and Valley Agronomics LLC, with matching funds from Land O' Lakes, donated a total of **\$15,000** to the 7 Cares Idaho Shares program. The 7 Cares program is held yearly and directly funds The Idaho Food Bank, The Salvation Army and various Women and Children's shelters throughout the state of Idaho. Twelve tons of food were donated with the \$15,000, split \$7,500 in the Treasure Valley and \$7,500 in the Magic Valley. "As a member of the communities we work in, we are always looking for an opportunity to serve those around us. This donation allows us to give back to those individuals that are not able to be sustained on nutritious food," stated Valley Wide Cooperative Director of Marketing Jason Pollard.

Since 1920, Valley Wide Cooperative has been helping farmers and ranchers build their homes and businesses through dedication and expertise. Valley Wide Cooperative is involved in every community we are a part of, and we are helping to cultivate and strengthen the current and next generation of farmers. Our Vision is to be the company of choice in the areas of Agronomy, Energy, Feed, and Farm Supply in all markets we serve.

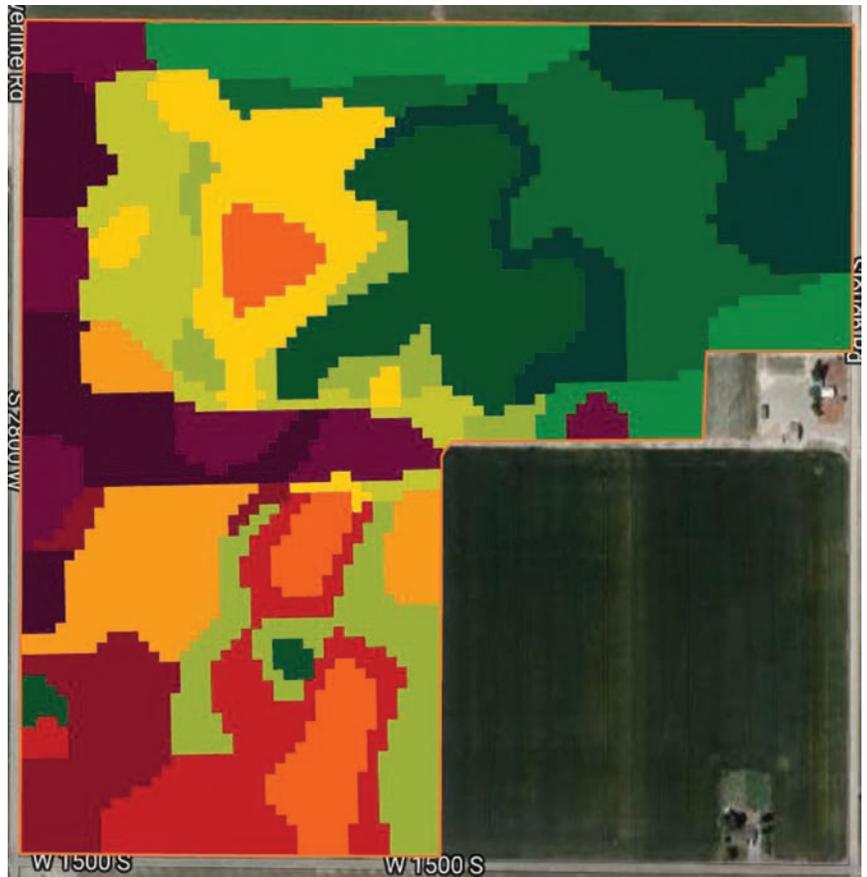
For more information, please visit: <http://www.valleywidecoop.com> or <http://www.landolakes.com/>



Platinum Precision Ag

By Connor Lankford

During the evening of the Presidential Election, the New York Times had a special election blog. The blog kept track in near real time the delegate count and the percentage of votes reported state by state. Perhaps the most interesting however, was the indicator that showed the chances of either of the two major party candidates winning. The candidates chances of winning changed as millions of data points (votes) were counted and then weighed against historical data (previous year's votes). Very early on in the election, the indicator predicted with a high degree of certainty, the outcome of the election. A very impressive achievement made possible through "big data" analytics. Wouldn't it be nice if there was a yield indicator that early in the year could predict with a high degree of certainty a fields yield? There is perhaps no greater "big data" challenge than agriculture due to the many factors that can influence yield. Weather, soil, disease, water, insect pressure, fertility, and genetics (just to name a few) all play a part in determining the productivity of a field. Complicating matters is the fact that a crop is produced over many months with many of the above mentioned factors coming into play several times over the growing season. With that in mind, it can be an almost overwhelming task to try and zero in on challenges and opportunities in a single field, let alone on a farm. While the type of data analysis used by the New York Times election blog is still in its infancy when it comes to agriculture, simple data analysis can still be extremely useful if data is made readily available.



With that thought in mind, Valley Agronomics has recently launched the Valley Ag Platinum Precision Subscription. The subscription includes in-season imagery services, Satellite and High Resolution Imagery both, to help monitor fields during the growing season, EC Soil mapping to identify soil texture changes, and an AgWorld subscription for easy record keeping. In-season imagery can be used to identify potential problem areas and help with knowing when and what areas of a field to scout. EC Soil mapping can be used to determine where to soil sample or how many soil samples should be taken. AgWorld, by making record keeping easy, can put information in the grower's hands to help keep track of fertility or crop protection applications, as well as budget information. While these tools today may not be able to predict yield, they can help to begin to manage and keep track of the many variables that can affect yield, and help to establish a baseline for future analytics. Today, the Valley Agronomics Platinum Precision Subscription makes information readily available to both the crop advisor and the grower, and can be used to make everyday decisions.

Valley Agronomics and Wilco-Winfield to Form New Agronomy Joint Venture

Valley Agronomics LLC, headquartered in Rupert, Idaho, is a joint venture between Valley Wide Cooperative and Winfield Solutions, LLC. Wilco-Winfield, headquartered in Mt. Angel, Oregon, is a joint venture between Wilco Farmers and Winfield Solutions, LLC. Both joint ventures have excelled in providing agronomy expertise to their grower-owners. Their growth over the years, has allowed the businesses to attract, retain, and develop a team and business partners to help grower-owners succeed.

To remain relevant, both organizations always look for the right strategic partners to continue this growth to help their owners be successful, operate sustainably and remain relevant with the best suppliers in the industry.

To achieve these objectives, Valley Agronomics LLC and Wilco-Winfield intend to combine Wilco-Winfield into Valley Agronomics LLC to create a new, stronger agronomy joint venture.

“This is a great opportunity for Wilco members, customers and team members to strengthen the partnership with Winfield and join a talented and successful Valley Agronomics,” says Doug Hoffman Wilco’s CEO.

This new combined joint venture involves only the agronomy businesses of the partners. Wilco Farmers will continue to operate its retail farm stores, hazelnut processing and fuel business outside of the joint venture. Valley Wide Cooperatives will continue to operate its retail farm stores and fuel, propane and feed businesses outside of the joint venture.



This joint venture will provide geographic and crop diversity and add more crop advisors, locations and opportunities for growth. It will also provide economies of scale in managing their supply chain. The party’s leadership teams and boards are most excited for the teams to learn from each other and focus on bringing great service and innovation to their combined customer base.

This new joint venture transaction is expected to close Jan. 1, 2017. Upon closing, the new combined entity will be operated as Valley Agronomics LLC.

Dave Holtom is the current CEO of Valley Wide and will remain the CEO of the new joint venture. “We’re very excited for the opportunities that lie ahead for growers and team members with this combination of Joint Ventures. This is great news for our co-ops and supports our strategic growth to better serve growers,” said Holtom.

There will be many questions over the coming weeks as teams go through the details and integration work. As the work is completed, they intend to share this progress to those involved.

For more information about Valley Wide Cooperative visit <https://www.valleywidecoop.com/>. For more information about Wilco Farmers visit <http://www.wilco.coop/>.

For information about Winfield Solutions, LLC visit <http://www.winfield.com/>.



Wilco-Winfield Agronomy combines with Valley Agronomics to better serve members now and into the future



Customer Success Is Our Business

By Sean Durham

Whenever you think about customer service from a company, you almost always think about the interaction you have with any of the employees you have been able to have contact with. Sometimes your concerns are heard and dealt with and other times they are not. Valley Wide Cooperative takes our relationship with customers seriously, because we know that the success of our customers is a very big part of the success of our company.

Tates Rents is one customer who decided to make the switch to Valley Wide Cooperative three years ago. It is a locally owned and operated, 3rd generation, family business. Started in 1946 as Safway Scaffolding Co. in Boise, Tates Rents has gradually expanded throughout the years



continually adding locations in the Treasure Valley. Currently, Tates Rents consists of 9 tool rental stores and an event location, Tates Tents and Events.



Joe Plehal at his desk in Boise, Idaho

Sales Manager, Joe Plehal of Tates Rents,

was able to tell us their experience of working with Valley Wide, in providing propane for their projects. Previously, Tates Rents was with the competition, but they were not having their needs met. In Joe's words, "There was a lot of political red tape, lack of communication, and delayed billing. We really struggled to try to keep them at our pace of business." Running a business is already hard enough, but to have to try to take care of any partnerships with constant attention takes lots of resources that are typically needed elsewhere, causing a drain in resources and money. When business gets really busy, you don't have time to be worrying whether your business needs are going to be met. Something had to change for Tates Rents.

After deciding to switch to Valley Wide Cooperative, Joe noticed "...it was really nice to scale back and deal with somebody directly, [and] meet the people behind sending the paperwork our direction." The concern and care that we take in making sure we are truly helping our customers, should be something tangible and evident. Joe observed this as "a sense of accountability and friendship, all at the same time," while dealing with Valley Wide employees.

Due to competitive prices, proactivity in making sure problems are solved, tanks are full and available, and more, Valley Wide Cooperative has been able to help Tates Rents profitability.



Member Owned since 1920



Joe commented about it in the following statement: “The way that Valley Wide adds value and profitability to Tates Rents, is a very long list. I’ve been overwhelmed with the level of service.

The expectations that I have, have been completely exceeded. It’s so nice when I walk into one of our ten locations and I see Valley Wide Cooperative hats on my guys, or on the shelf, and a box of donuts from Valley Wide... They came by and painted our dispensers without asking... It’s really the little things that have added up. Each one of your employees I’ve ever dealt with, in our three year relationship, [have] been accessible, [have] been responsive, and I know that with the demand that my company brings we’re taking people away from their wives, and their kids... and it’s the ultimate sacrifice. It’s a beautiful relationship.”

Since our customer’s success is a great part of our success, we make sure to keep things simple and clear, and make sure we are there when we are needed. Joe explains, “The main reason

we stay with Valley Wide is because they are understanding. I am not under the impression that there is fine print. There’s this belief that we are in it together, and that sense of comradery, that teamwork, really works well for our companies.”

Valley Wide Cooperative and Tates Rents have been able to enjoy a great relationship for the last three years. Joe’s final comments were, “I would recommend Valley Wide Cooperative... because they are honest, they’re loyal, they’re productive. They say what they are going to do, and then they do it. There’s just this level of trust that I don’t see with too many other providers, or even partnerships, in town. I can’t even begin to emphasize it enough, but our relationship with Valley Wide Cooperative is just excellent!”

Thank you for your words Joe, and we strive to continue that level of service and trust for all our customers.

Improve Cow Comfort by Focusing on What Can't Be Bought



[www.progressivedairy.com /topics/herd-health/improve-cow-comfort-by-focusing-on-what-can-t-be-bought](http://www.progressivedairy.com/topics/herd-health/improve-cow-comfort-by-focusing-on-what-can-t-be-bought)

It doesn't matter whether the margins are reasonable, like we saw in 2014, or drawn tight, like they are in 2016 – one thing we can always invest in is cow comfort. How can we continually improve upon the housing we provide for our cows – cows we have such high expectations for – to provide the income stream for our dairy?

In a good year, we look to buy, build and replace, spending money on remodeling, ventilation, bedding and other comfort products. But when times are tight, there are still so many things that can be done to deliver a cow comfort return. Some are improving processes we may have let slide during a flush time; others are simple maintenance chores.

Examine your cow-handling techniques

As prey animals, cows do not respond well to aggressive handling techniques. It is reported that poor cow-handling practices can result in enough stress on the animal to reduce milk yields by as much as 20 percent.

Have you spent time with those people who move the cows from one location to the next on the dairy to ensure they understand the importance of cow handling? Is it clear to those who handle your cows how you want them handled? Are you watching how the cows respond to different individuals?

Step in the barn and close your eyes

Hearing and listening play important roles in keeping cow stress levels down. Go in the barn during different times of day and smell and listen. What bothers you will likely bother your animals.

Mitigate the effects of heat stress

Though heat stress season is ending, now is a good time to think about a strategy for heat and humidity next year.

We all understand the importance of keeping the cows cool because of how heat stress directly affects the level of milk in the tank, so what else can we do to ensure the exposure to heat-related stress activities is minimized?

The greatest heat is generated when the cows are standing in the holding areas. Are we doing all we can to minimize the amount of time cows spend in the holding area?

Do those in the parlor understand the importance of moving cows through the parlor as efficiently and quickly as possible to get them back in their cooler stalls?

Have you brainstormed a “summer routine” that may look different to help reduce this hot time? Perhaps we can take a lesson from manufacturing:

“just-in-time” planning.

Just-in-time planning drives us to focus on ways to deliver the cows to the holding area “just in time” to be milked and then get them back to the pens quickly and safely without causing undue stress.

In addition to process improvements, have you taken the time to make sure all fans and water misters are working properly? When overnight lows climb closer to 80°F, cows never get a chance to catch a break from the heat.

Couple that with high humidity levels, and you have a recipe for cow stress that could last through the entire lactation cycle.

Do you remain vigilant in providing clean fresh water for the cows? Cleaning water troughs once a week is simply not good enough. I am not suggesting there is a “right” number of times to clean troughs, as each farm is different, but I am suggesting that as you walk through the barn, look at the water.

Would you drink from that trough? Is there debris in the water? Is there sediment on the bottom? If your routine is



49 Locations To Serve You!

“when we have time,” it’s time to change your routine. The cows will pay you back.

Ensure comfortable bedding

What are we doing to provide the very best stall bed surface for our dairy cows? By that, I am not asking: What is our choice of bedding? Rather, have we examined our bedding management practices to provide the most comfortable bed every day, year-round?

This summer was boiling. But soon, it will be brutally frigid with brisk winds. Have you become stuck in a routine that delivers the same bedding day in and day out? We know cows perform best when routines remain the same day after day. But in this case, I think we need to be vigilant in assessing the barn conditions and adjusting our practices to compensate for fluctuating conditions.

On a -10°F or -20°F day, there are always challenges delivering bedding to cows. Frozen bedding, difficulty scraping, unique bacteria growth. Six months later, with temperatures in the 70's overnight, we will have new challenges.

Humidity, bacteria, wetness. If we don’t adjust our bedding routine to compensate for barn conditions, cow comfort suffers.

Examine the number of days beds are groomed, bedding added and beds cleaned. Look at different bedding materials or surfaces that react and perform differently, meeting different needs, as the seasons change.

Our goal is a comfortable, sanitary stall surface – and that doesn’t always fit into a simple formula for day in and day out.

Try cross-training employees

In industry, you often hear of cross-training, the practice of training one employee to do more than one job. It is one thing to do a job the same each and every time. We clean the water troughs the same; we bed the stalls the same; we follow the same routine while milking. If we are consistently good, these are all solid daily practices to ensure cow comfort. But could there be a better way or a more efficient way of performing the “routine tasks?” If we have one person doing the same thing day after day



after day, they lose the creative edge. Allow occasional routine changes and see if you do not experience changes in attitudes and morale or receive suggestions for improvement in the routine.

As the owner/manager, you should change your routine as well. Do you walk in the dairy the same way every day? Do you talk to the same people every day? Do you talk to them at the same time every day?

Perhaps it is time for you to take a look at your routine.

Consider changing your routine; change the way you look at your dairy every day.

Show up at a different time, enter the barn from a different door, pick something new every week to look at that you have not looked at or neglected to look at for some time, and as your employees learn new tasks, talk to them and encourage them to talk to one another.

Commit to continual improvement

Often, we see far too much reaction to changing conditions than we see action.

Action means we have anticipated the changing conditions before they occur. We change our practices or routines before they become a problem. We manage. We think ahead. We then have a much better chance of determining the outcome instead of letting the outcome determine our reaction.

There is a lot to be said for routines and processes in the dairy industry, and especially for cows. Do not, however, let routines be a management tool. You are the master of your destiny, and as such it requires you to think, to be proactive and to anticipate.

Routines should be your staple, but they should not become so dominant as to take the

place of continually improving management practices.



Dean Thronsdon

President

ACT Inc.

Email Dean Thronsdon





Whether you need agronomic services, propane, feed, or goods from our Valley Country Stores, Valley Wide Cooperative's **GOT YOU COVERED!**



*Visit our
Cross Roads
Travel Center Located
in Twin Falls, Idaho.
OPENING SOON!*

Connect with us:



www.valleywidecoop.com