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Harvest Edition



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Saleyard

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Students involved in the Onionator project give a thumbs-up while demonstrating the prototype designed to turn used drip tape into diesel fuel. The group has been working with Oregon State University researchers to test the reactor’s ability to process discarded tape and show local growers how pyrolysis could offer a long-term solution for drip tape disposal in the Treasure Valley. *Photo courtesy of Skip Rochefort*

The Onionator will be back

by Dylan Brown
Weiser Signal American

It is harvest time, which means more of the bulging onion bags that farmers love and more of the big, black plastic boulders they are stuck with.

Treasure Valley farmers supply more than one-quarter of all America’s onions today thanks in part to the advent of drip tape – plastic tubing that delivers just the right amount of water straight to the roots.

But more than three decades after the drip revolution juiced yields, growers have old tape piling up in huge rolls that landfills refuse to take.

“Things have come and gone,” said Stuart Reitz, director of Oregon State University’s Malheur Experiment Station. “Nothing has really been a viable option.”

Reitz is part of a team of university students and staff with a potential solution – turn drip tape into diesel fuel.

A prototype, dubbed the “Onionator,” visited the region again this summer and hopes to set up permanent residence at Treasure Valley Community College to demonstrate its potential to local farmers.

Reitz said it was local grower, Craig Yano, who actually set his alma mater to work on drip tape disposal.

“There are huge benefits to using (drip tape), then what do we do at the end of its lifecycle? And can we put it to use?” Reitz said.

Plastic, in its flurry of forms, is notoriously hard to recycle and even harder to do economically.

“Mechanical recycling, right now, means we ship this stuff overseas – make it someone else’s problem,” said Skip Rochefort, an Oregon State chemical engineering professor supervising the Onionator project.

“Right now is a good time for recycling plastics because oil is up over \$100 per barrel.”

Rochefort has spent nearly a decade tinkering in the lab with plastics and pyrolysis – the process of using high heat in the absence of oxygen to chemically break down carbon without combustion.

Engaged on the drip tape problem, Rochefort’s students designed the Onionator reactor to demonstrate pyrolysis to farmers 24 kilograms of tape at a time.

Made mostly of high-density polyethylene, drip tape is actually

an “excellent feedstock,” Rochefort said. Superheating all but eliminates problems of moisture, dirt and residues, making the biggest issue chopping it up into a usable form.

For every kilogram of plastic, the process produces a liter of fuel.

“We produce basically a farm diesel product, so what do we do with that?” Rochefort said.

He envisions a farm co-op style operation at a central location with two alternating reactors processing 500 kilograms of material every 5-6 hours.

“People wouldn’t even know it was there,” Rochefort said. “The pile of drip tape (outside) would be the worst thing people would see.”

The Onionator is designed to help generate the funding required to establish a system capable of keeping up drip tape use in the Treasure Valley.

Reitz said the goal is to not only help defray growers’ costs, but help make an environmentally-responsible case for expanding drip tape use.

“This closes that loop if we have a really good system for producing onions and we have a good way of dealing with that plastic at the end of the season,” Reitz said.



Cosmos flowers on the Nagasaka farm that sits east off of Cove Road burst with bright orange and yellow blooms, offering late-season nourishment for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. The 10 acres were easy to spot in the morning sun in late August and through mid-September from Weiser River Road. The field drew bees, butterflies and other pollinators through the season, and Dyke Nagasaka said the ‘fieldworkers’ simply go about their business, doing what they do best. As temperatures drop, the flowers will die back and the seed crop will be harvested for seed packets for home flower gardens.



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An aerial view of a sale day at the Weiser Livestock Commission, the local saleyard that was first developed in 1939 and ran into late March of 2002. The weekly sale drew ranchers from all over this end of the Treasure Valley, and its Saleyard Cafe became the place for everyone from all walks to have lunch on Thursdays. The east end of County Road 70 was always lined with cars and pickups, and under Darrel and Bobby Sawyer’s ownership, not only did the auction service flourish, but the rest of the local economy benefited from its being here. *Courtesy photo*

Cattle, chaos, and the comfort of meatloaf

by Buck Sawyer

Betty Munsterman ran the Saleyard Café in Weiser. At one time she also did Vale and Ontario at the same time. She was busy. First Thursday of each month was Meatloaf day. Best Thursday of the month.

Description

People from town would come, it was marked on calendars hung in banker’s offices. Ranchers, who’d put on their best jeans, shirts and neck scarves, would sit on spinning stools next to guys in suits and ties, who rubbed elbows with us worker bees covered with cowshit dust, or cowshit mud, depending on the season. Whether it was Jess Walker’s suit, Carnell Upton’s freshly ironed shirt, or questionable hygiene, we were a brotherhood and sisterhood united; gathered for peak meatloaf! Fluffy, not bricklike, and draped with a simple Ketchup based glaze. The flavor was good, the texture divine.

In the summer when cattle were on grass – the cows with their calves, the bulls out doing bull stuff, and the yearlings gaining weight – the sales were small and might only run from noon to 3 p.m. Being shorter staffed, the day was still about 7-7. Good timing could get you two meatloaf meals. In the winter, when weaned calves and cull cows were

sold, commitment to mission could allow you to knock down three. All hail 2500 head sales! A friendship with the cook’s daughter Jeanette might net me a held back late day serving. Oh the side-eye from the person next to me eating a sandwich! Sorry, cowboy, all’s fair in love and meatloaf. It was served next to mashed potatoes, gravy, and disgusting canned peas. Her light hand on the mix made for a cake like texture that pulled in gravy and pushed back happiness. I’ve tried, oh how I’ve tried, to duplicate. Maybe it’s the lack of an auctioneer in the background, cow sounds, the yelling cowboys. Perhaps it’s because there is no lingering cloud of smoke. Store cigarettes, roll-your-owns, cigars and pipes were the finish to the meal consumed beside you. Maybe it was the characters, or the open kitchen of cobbled together equipment before open kitchens were cool, that made it what it was. Stay with me, there will be a happy ending.

I ran the trailer chute for quite a while before graduating to jobs horseback. That meant unloading the small guys bringing in a handful. Count and describe for the paperwork, deal with the questions and quirks. Then I’d load out the small buyers at the end of the day. It was a good learning experience. Some people couldn’t back in trailers. Others thought they could

and couldn’t. Loading trailers, that hadn’t been positioned properly, could lead to cattle getting out and heading for the street, then the railroad, then the houses of town, and that was a problem. Heading that off meant a 16-year-old coaching a 40-year-old, chastising, or saying, “You’ll get your cattle when the trailer is in the right spot. You can back it in or I will. You want to explain the hold-up to the people that are waiting their turn?” Drawing trailer chute duty meant catching, throwing, tying feet, and lifting calves into the back of a pickup, loading rickety wooden trailers pulled by tractors. I’m currently typing amongst waves of trailer chute drama PTSD that I thought left years ago...

At its best the job was social! It was by the office and sale ring, Pat Palmer was nearby, old guys hung on the fence, once there was a fistfight between a couple of cow buyers. Trash talk, laughter and bitching. Buyer and seller dramas playing out with the subtle shifts of mood from market price fluctuations. The worst were the mix-ups with some old boy saying, “That’s not the calf I bought!” That meant Darrel might have to be brought in. It’s likely that he’d say, “No. You bid on two calves that came through as singles. You made your first run

see SALEYARD, Page 5

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at one that got pulled off McKinney’s calves. That one hadn’t thrived like his relatives. This one got taken off Gilbert Ball’s calves as bigger than the rest. I remember thinking that you bought the one that had outperformed. That was a good move!” Then he’d mention some detail, like where the guy had been sitting, or how he’d bid. “Look, if you don’t want him, I’ll take him. He’s worth every penny, but it’s up to you.” By the end there would be a small tussle, with the guy and Darrel both wanting the calf. Dad used to say, “Tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they’d look forward to the trip.”

One time, to test him, because I didn’t believe he could do it, I showed him a pen full of singles that someone had bought. I asked him the history on each one. 1500 head of cattle going through with a hundred other things happening and he could remember many, if not most of the cattle, just by sight. As to weights, it was scary. I was okay at guessing weights, but Dad was consistently within 5 lbs., 10 at the most. The amount in their stomach accounted for that much variation. He could drive a pickup through a field and say, “We’ll

sort off 10% and the average will be 545 lbs. on the steers and 518 on the heifers.” All the good hats, that I have of his, were probably won by him guessing weights.

The trailer chute wasn’t a coveted job. I grew to like it. It was a good education, dealing with, “I didn’t see that horse’s bad eye in the sale ring, I don’t want her now.” Or telling someone that I wouldn’t load their falling-apart trailer; that they’d best go borrow the neighbors. Whenever I take the cut off through Payette from the Oregon side, I pass the place that I used to take two steers to every spring to a guy that didn’t have a trailer and was too crochety to borrow one. I liked that old turd. I learned people skills; when to give in, negotiating compromises, and how to know it was time to dig in my heels.

Were the bad days made worthwhile by the meatloaf? Depended on the day, but damn, it was great meatloaf! I couldn’t duplicate Betty’s, but false humility aside, I landed as good a texture and I think I beat the flavor by using ingredients that she flat could not use when making that much at a time. So, for me, for what she needed to accomplish, she’s still the Meatloaf Alpha.

Weiser Saleyard meatloaf

Ingredients

Ingredient Quantity
3-lbs. ground meat, I recommend using 3 different types.
1 large onion
6 cloves of garlic
3 cups large bread crumbs
1 cup milk
3 eggs, beaten
3 tbsp. herb. I like sage, fresh if it works
3 tbsp. Worcestershire
½ cup parsley. Fresh is best
1.5 cups grated parmesan
1-2 grated apple if they’re small

For the Glaze:

1 cup Ketchup
3 tbsp. sweet chili sauce
6 tbsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. yellow mustard
3 tbsp. Siracha

Instructions

Rough chop the onion, don’t be afraid of a big dice. Saute just enough to soften it, don’t let it caramelize. Just before it’s done, throw in the garlic to let it heat up but don’t brown or cook it. Take off heat and let it cool down before using.

Combine breadcrumbs with the milk, egg, and dry spices. Let it sit while you’re doing the other stuff.

Super important: Use three different meats. I like really lean hamburger, lean game meat, plus pork sausage. Not everyone has elk, veal is nice, I haven’t tried turkey. The pork sausage is the game changer. This below is fussy but worth it – if you treasure texture. And it’s more efficient than it sounds. Sausage is sticky because of the fat content, cut it into chunks and spread out on a sheet pan, if the burger is lean, it will just flake off, same with the game meat. You want three loose layers.

Grate the apple on a cheese grater. Don’t have one? Then you’re not great! (See what I did there?) Grating is nice for texture, but you can always small-dice



the apple. Don’t worry, the meatloaf won’t really taste like apple, it mostly adds sweetness. The flavor, with the pork and sage, is solid.

Layer the ingredients, (except for the glaze) onto the meat.

Mix. The objective here is to keep as much integrity to the meat as possible. If you mix it in a bowl, the traditional way, it breaks down and purees the meat. Wash your hands you heathen, and get them in there. It’s almost like folding layers of pastry dough. Fold them on top of each other repeatedly until they’re barely mixed. This is judgment call time, Captain, you can do this. When it’s right there will be pockets of the individual meat and ingredients, that’s what bestows texture. If you want it to feel like eating bologna, do it the traditional way, but do not speak of that to me.

Now that it’s mixed, gently form into a big flat loaf about 2 inches thick, nearly the size of the sheet pan. Don’t be making it into a ball to flatten it! (Texture!) Just mix and crowd it together into one big ugly lump. Smooth the outside and work the cracks out, gently. Trust the fat from the pork, and the egg, to hold it together.

Take another sheet pan and put parchment or foil on it. Turn it upside

down and press onto the top of the meatloaf, flip the whole thing over and you have the meatloaf on the parchment. Again, it’s easier than it sounds. Yes, it’s fussy, that’s what artists do. Should someone laugh at your fussiness, they will apologize one bite in.

Mix up the glaze while cooking.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Put it in. It’s going to take 30-40 minutes to get to about 150 degrees. Honestly, this is the time for a thermometer. Take it out, spread the glaze. Now broil it on high. It’ll take about 10 minutes but keep an eye on it. You’re looking for a little brown-ing on the meat and some black spots on the glaze. You’ll want the internal temp to be about 160°. The black spots are just the brown sugar, it’s all good. Meatloaf is meant to be well cooked, it’ll spike up another 5 degrees or so, don’t worry about it.

You’re on the final lap, don’t weaken on me. Let it cool for a good 20 minutes. If you need to microwave a chunk when you eat, that’s ok. You’ll want to dig in early, this is the time to stay strong.

Notes:

Rehearse the smug look that you’ll give to anyone critical of fussiness (which is spelled, “Doing-it-the-right-way.”)



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The Harvest Bazaar will return Oct. 2-3 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days. With nearly 100 vendors, breakfast served by the Weiser FFA chapter, a dog adoption event, and a Kid Zone, there is something for everyone to enjoy as the fall season begins.

Harvest Bazaar returns with Northwest flavor

by Nancy Grindstaff

Weiser Classic Candy’s Patrick Nauman is once again rolling out the welcome mat for one of Weiser’s most anticipated fall traditions, the Harvest Bazaar, set for Oct. 2-3 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For two full days, State Street will transform into a corridor of color and community, lined with nearly 100 vendors offering handmade crafts, art, décor, and specialty goods from across Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. The Vendome Events Center will host additional booths indoors, giving visitors plenty to explore rain or shine.

Early risers can start both mornings with the Weiser FFA Chapter’s Huckleberry Pancake Feed beginning at 8 a.m., a sweet kickoff to a weekend of shopping and celebration. Friday also brings a CASPR dog adoption event, while families can enjoy a Kid Zone featuring bounce houses, face painting, and other activities.

Adults can sip and stroll thanks to the returning bar cart, operated by V Twin of Payette, serving beverages throughout the day. Nauman is also adding live music, planning a mix of duets and DJ sets to keep the downtown atmosphere lively.

Vendor applications are still being accepted on a limited basis, especially for indoor spaces at the Vendome. Those interested are encouraged to contact Nauman before the remaining spots are filled.

Beyond the fun, the event carries a deeper purpose: 100 percent of vendor fees, after expenses, go toward local scholarships, supporting Weiser students and future community leaders.

As autumn’s crisp air settles in, Nauman says he’s ready to bring on his famous caramel apples.

With the Harvest Bazaar, Mud Drags, and another full weekend of fall festivities coming our way, Weiser is ready to celebrate the season in true hometown style.

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Washington County Sheriff's Office ends brand inspections

by Nancy Grindstaff

Washington County Sheriff Matt Thomas announced Wednesday, Sept. 9, that his office will no longer provide brand inspection services, ending one of the last remaining sheriff run programs of its kind in Idaho.

In a Facebook post, Thomas said the change came at the request of the State Brand Inspector’s Office, which has asked all counties to discontinue local inspections.

“We were actually one of the last sheriff’s offices in the state still conducting brand inspections,” Thomas said. “Our role was pretty limited to people coming to the office with a few head in a trailer before taking them to butcher. The State Brand Board has wanted us to stop doing them for a while now because they want to do them all, we just held out as long as we could.”

Thomas emphasized that his deputies will still respond to livestock related calls, including reports of loose or stolen cattle.

“We just can’t get any brand inspection booklets to continue doing brand inspections,” he said.

For future inspections, livestock owners must contact the Idaho State Brand Inspector, a division of the Idaho State Police, or reach out directly to district inspectors Dave Moyle (208-969-8270) and Codi Askew (208-965-6739).

A shift in tradition

Brand inspections, required when livestock change ownership, leave Idaho, or go to slaughter, have been a state responsibility since 1905. For decades, county sheriffs helped perform inspections because they were closest to ranchers and had access to livestock in their jurisdictions. That changed as the State Brand Board professionalized the process, employing full time inspectors trained through the POST Academy. Today, no sheriff’s office in Idaho conducts brand inspections, leaving the task entirely to the state’s four district offices in Lewiston, Caldwell, Twin Falls, and Idaho Falls.

Remembering Weiser’s saleyard era

The announcement stirred memories of the days when Weiser Livestock Commission held weekly Thursday sales, starting in 1939 until its closure in 2002. The saleyard drew ranchers from

see **BRAND**, Page 7



A group of heifers feed in a green pasture, a reminder that fall brings key decisions about feed resources, record-keeping, and which replacements to keep. Photo by Nancy Grindstaff

Should you keep that heifer?

by Tyler O'Donnell,
Washington County
Extension Educator

Another summer has come and gone, and cattle producers are starting to shift their attention to weaning and shipping calves. With those come decisions about how many heifers to keep, and what type. Cattle markets have begun to rebound since their recent drop; however, the market is still extremely volatile due to the constrained supply of the beef herd entering a rebuild. I would be remiss in not mentioning the range conditions that we have seen this year with low production and of course the wildfires that have burned many acres of rangeland.

Before you can answer the question of how many heifers, you must determine the number your feed resources can sustain. Once the number of heifers being kept has been established, the pool must be whittled down to the number you have determined.

Before selection can occur, you must outline what traits are of importance to your operation. Once relevant traits have been established, phenotypic records that are relevant to said traits must be evaluated. For example, if you were selecting animals for higher calving ease, a good predictor of calving ease is lower birth weights. There are many other traits of interest to cattle producers; however

there must be records to review to make these decisions.

Evaluating your record keeping system and aligning it with your breeding goals is essential to making genetic progress. For example, if you are interested in weaning heavier calves, make sure you weigh all your calves, not just the ones being shipped. By collecting more data on animals, you can enable more informed decision making on your operation.

Data collection can become tedious, and most operations do not have time or resources to collect every ounce of data that your herd can produce. However, I encourage producers to identify one trait that has economic relevance and perform data collection to assess the current phenotype on their operation and potential avenues for progress.

The answer to the question about whether to keep that heifer is one that is unique to every operation and relies on a multitude of factors including feed availability and availability of records, in addition to many others which simply do not fit in one article.

If you require assistance with heifer selection, or if you have other extension-relevant questions, please feel free to reach out to our office at (208) 414-0415, follow us on Facebook and in the *Signal American* for upcoming events/classes.

Continued from page 6

End of an era for brand checks

across the valley and eastern Oregon, and the local brand inspector spent sale days on site as cattle were unloaded and loaded out. The saleyard's bustling Thursdays, complete with a popular lunch counter, once rippled through downtown businesses, making livestock trade a cornerstone of Weiser's economy.

State oversight continues

Under Idaho Code §25-1120, the State Brand

Board's mission is to prevent livestock theft and ensure ownership verification. The board, composed of five members representing beef, dairy, and auction interests, operates as a self governing, industry funded agency within the Idaho State Police. Deputy brand inspectors retain full police powers and may issue citations or make arrests for violations of brand laws.

As Thomas put it, "We'll still see more of it (theft) when cattle prices

are high."

For ranchers, that means vigilance remains essential, even as the paperwork moves from the county office to the state. The duties of investigating livestock theft and rustling are likewise centralized with the State Brand Inspector and Idaho State Police, with the Washington County Sheriff's Office continuing to provide the initial investigation before turning cases over for full inquiry.



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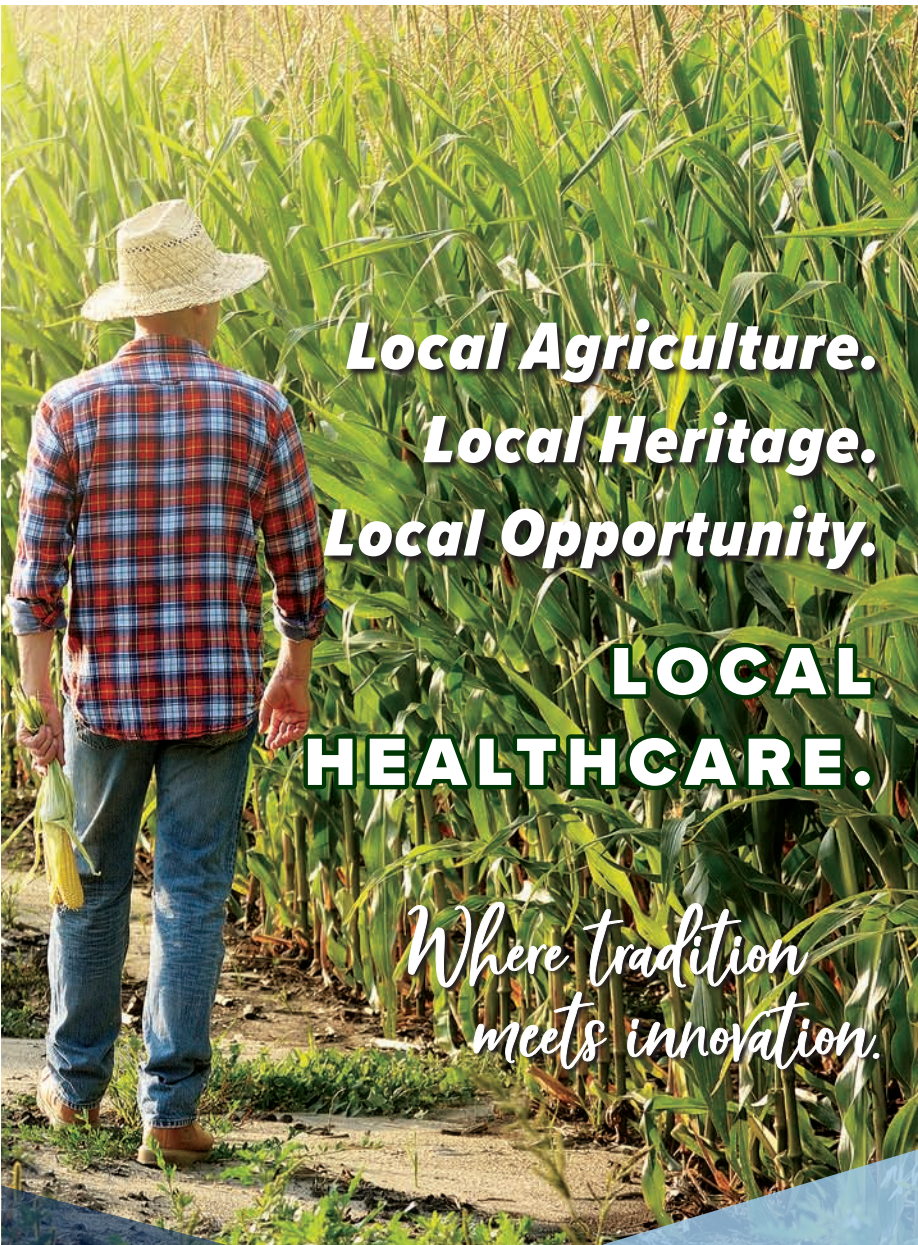
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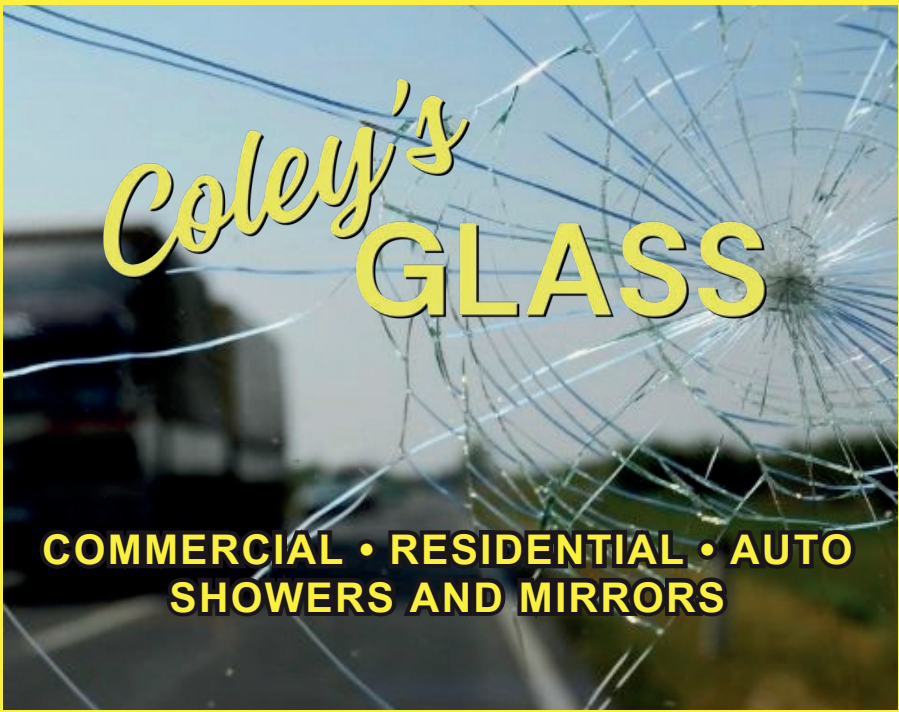
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