

Crystal reports passage of key farm measures

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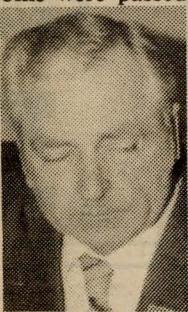
Sen. Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby, chairman of the Agricultural Affairs Committee, reported Tuesday a number of beneficial farm bills were passed this legislative session.

He said his keenest disappointment, aside from failure of the Swan Falls water rights bill, was Evans' veto of a bill that permitted stubble burning if done in conformity with practice of the past five years, and the 50-50 Tax Initiative implementation that throws more tax load to farmers.

"We did pass some bills which help farmers and a number of house-keeping bills for updating and necessary funding," he said.

Among the major farm bills passed, he said, were the following:

- HB147 mandates calfhood vaccination for brucellosis.
- HB273 creates \$300,000 fund each for Idaho Wheat Commission and for University of Idaho agriculture research from 1 cent per bushel wheat assessment under payment in kind wheat program.
- HB316 defines implements for animal husbandry farm purposes so they can legally travel state highways with proper sticker.
- 161 makes it a misdemeanor for



Sen. Vearl Crystal

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motorized vehicles, particularly aimed at snowmobiles, to trespass on private property. Crystal explained this is not a serious problem in east Idaho where most snowmobilers respect farm property but it is a problem in other sections, such as Camas Prairie, where snowmobiles damage fall seeded fields by packing the snow.

- HB260 changes sheep assessment from 40 cents per head to 6 cents per pound of wool for more efficient collection. Crystal explained only about 80 percent fees have been collected in the past from the approximate 400,000 head of sheep but the new system is intended to substantially increase collections. Proceeds will go for predatory control and animal health funds.

- HB151 changes the charge from felony to misdemeanor for theft of a livestock animal valued at less than \$1,000 with the aim of getting better convictions. The existing law remains for felony for theft of an animal valued at more than \$1,000 or for two or more head.