

## Cow Palace dairy near Granger to close with more than 100 jobs lost

JOEL DONOFRIO, Yakima Herald Republic, March 13, 2025

A Granger-area dairy that was one of three sued by the Environmental Protection Agency will close this spring, affecting more than 100 people who work there.

The state's Employment Security Department issued a notification this week saying Cow Palace would close permanently on May 9.

Located just north of Granger, the open-lot dairy has thousands of cows and could produce more than a half-million pounds of Grade A milk each day. Cow Palace President Adam Dolsen is the third generation of the Dolsen family to own and operate the company.

The family's attorney, Brendan Monahan of Yakima, issued a statement on behalf of the Dolsens Tuesday confirming that the dairy is closing.

"Cow Palace has indeed made the incredibly difficult decision to cease its dairy operations," Monahan said in an email to the Yakima Herald-Republic. "Ceasing operations will result in the loss of work for more than 100 employees. Employees have been provided notice of the decision. "Cow Palace is proud of its history as a multi-generational, family-owned company that has helped hundreds of workers provide for their families," the statement continued. "In these difficult times, it is that legacy that will be remembered."

### EPA Lawsuit

In December, a federal judge granted a preliminary injunction requested by the EPA that would force three Granger-area dairies — the Cow Palace, DeRuyter and Bosma dairies — to test for nitrates in nearby residential drinking water.

The decision from U.S. District Judge Thomas Rice would require the dairies to conduct well testing and, if needed, provide bottled water or water treatment systems to nearby community members at risk from nitrate-contaminated wells.

Rice's ruling was part of a lawsuit filed claiming that the three dairies failed to comply with a legal agreement they entered into with EPA in 2013 to adequately control nitrate contamination from their operations.

In Tuesday's statement to the Herald-Republic, Monahan cited the recent injunction and ongoing battle with the EPA as a reason for the dairy's closure.

"The decision to cease operations was the direct result of the expense and uncertainty posed by what the company views as the unrelenting litigiousness of the EPA," Monahan wrote.

"Cow Palace has worked closely and collaboratively with the EPA and community groups for over a decade now, spending extraordinary sums to double-line its lagoons and implementing every single control measure that was asked of it," he added. "But despite a consistent record of

compliance, the EPA continues to make demands that have made dairying under these conditions unviable.”

Since the EPA lawsuit was filed in June, the Liberty-Bosma dairy closed and auctioned off its cows in fall 2024, said Dillon Honcoop, communications director at Save Family Farming.

It was unclear on Tuesday what would happen to the animals at Cow Palace.

## Other Developments

Environmentalists praised Rice’s ruling in December, stating the dairies have generated “massive” amounts of pollution over the past four or five decades of operation. Charlie Tebbutt, an attorney who has represented Friends of Toppenish Creek and other environmental groups for years in other lawsuits, said the dairies need to fully clean up the pollution.

EPA leadership has changed under the Trump administration. In a court filing March 4, attorneys for the EPA said they were working to resolve outstanding issues through settlement discussions, and a 180-day extension of deadlines would allow them to resolve some of the issues without further litigation.

An EPA website for Lower Yakima Valley groundwater users shows the affected area is east of Zillah and northeast and across Interstate 82 from Granger.

Yakima County, the Yakima Health District and the state also have been working on nitrate issues in the Lower Valley. Valley Environmental Services is testing water, and some households may qualify for free water filtration systems and bottled drinking water.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to high nitrate levels can decrease the blood’s ability to carry oxygen. Babies and older adults are at the highest risk for becoming sick from high exposure to nitrates.