

# Slick's Que Co. earns "best of the best" status

Slick's Que Co. of Sisters has been named to the *National Barbecue News'* "Best of the Best Barbecue Restaurants in America."

The *National Barbecue News* released its updated guide of "Best of the Best Barbecue Restaurants in America" for the month of October. Slick's Que Co. is one of 29 on the 2016 list and the only restaurant named for the state of Oregon. The "Best of the Best" guide has currently awarded this honor to only 32 barbecue restaurants across America in the past year.

To be eligible for the list, a restaurant must be tastefully, without notice or announcement, by an affiliate of the *National Barbecue News*. The honor is awarded for a one-year period, at which time the restaurant is re-tested in the same manner to see if they make the grade for the following year.

Kell Phelps, publisher of the *National Barbecue News* said: "The Best of the Best Barbecue Restaurant Guide was set up to give recognition to the true barbecue 'joints' or places. The very first step in this process is to pass unscheduled taste and service tests. Not every place will make it past this first step. We actually turn down way more places than [sic] we accept into this elite barbecue group. Without a doubt, they've captured what real traditional barbecue is all about."

# Depredations lead to lethal control for wolves

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed five livestock depredation incidents on private land in recent weeks by some wolves in the Imnaha pack. This came despite continued efforts by ODFW, Wallowa County officials, and area livestock producers to deter wolf-livestock conflict with non-lethal measures.

With the pack now involved in chronic livestock depredation and as part of implementation of Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan provisions, ODFW will lethally remove depredating wolves to reduce the likelihood of further losses.

Information from two collared wolves — OR4, the alpha male and OR39, the alpha female — indicate that they and another two younger wolves have regularly used an area of private land on the westernmost portion of their known home range.

While infrequent visits were historically made to the area by this pack, the near-continual use of the area at this time of year is a marked departure from the pack's normal pattern. Coinciding with this changed pattern, ODFW documented livestock depredation by the pack in investigations on March 9, March 25, two more on March 28 and one more on March 30.

ODFW received a lethal order request after the March 9 depredation, but did not authorize it. At that time, the Imnaha Pack had not been involved in depredation since the previous October and ODFW didn't characterize the situation as chronic. That changed when the pack killed or injured livestock in four additional incidents, bringing the total to six separate

incidents within five months. ODFW received another lethal order request after the March 25 depredation.

"Unfortunately members of the Imnaha wolf pack are once again involved in chronic livestock depredation, and ODFW is adhering to the plan and protecting the interests of area livestock producers," said Russ Morgan, ODFW wolf coordinator. "Spring is typically the time when depredation increases. Even more cattle and sheep will be on these private lands soon as calving and lambing season continues, increasing the risk for even more losses from this group of depredating wolves."

Under the rules associated with the Wolf Plan in Phase II, ODFW can authorize lethal control of wolves at a property owner or permittee's request if a) the agency confirms at least two depredations on livestock in the area; b) the requester has documented unsuccessful attempts to solve the situation through non-lethal means; c) no identified circumstance exists that attracts wolf-livestock conflict; and d) the requester has complied with applicable laws and the conditions of any permit.

In the current Wallowa County situation, non-lethal measures were being used when the depredations

occurred and there were no bone piles or other attractants present. The preventive measures for the sheep producer included midnight spotlighting, three livestock protection dogs with the sheep 24 hours a day, three-per-day checks of livestock and a range rider patrolling the area and hazing the wolves when found. For cattle, delayed pasture rotation to keep animals closer to a public road, pasturing yearlings with cows, frequent checks on calving cattle, and patrolling/hazing by a range rider were used.

While ODFW documented eight wolves in the Imnaha Pack at the end of 2015, the department believes the pack has grown and that four of the wolves (the alpha male and female and two younger wolves) have separated from the rest of the pack. These four have been traveling together in this area and are associated with the four recent depredations on private land.

Meanwhile, other members of the pack have been spending time in an area separated from the four depredating wolves. They are not known to be involved in the chronic depredation patterns and are not subject to the lethal control order. ODFW will focus lethal control efforts on the wolves linked to the depredations.

Morgan believes the

Imnaha group of wolves could be splitting up and that age and physical condition may be playing a role in the depredation. The alpha male is nearly 10 years old and the alpha female has been known to limp.

"As wolves grow old, or if they are injured, they are unable to hunt traditional wild prey as they have in the past," said Morgan. "This could be playing a role in the pack's recent behavior."

This will be the third time ODFW has used lethal control for wolves since they returned to the state in the early 2000s. Two wolves were killed after a number of losses in Baker County in 2009, and two wolves from the Imnaha Pack were removed in 2011 due to chronic livestock depredation.

Oregon's wolf population as a whole is growing. ODFW documented 110 known wolves at the end of 2015, a 36 percent increase over 2014.

"This is the tough part of the job, but we believe lethal control is the right decision in this situation," said Morgan. "Wildlife managers must strike a balance between conserving wolves and minimizing impacts on livestock. This action in response to this situation will not affect the continued positive wolf population growth we are seeing across Oregon."

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