

Rules may take man's treasured deer herd

JEFFERSON, Ore. (AP) — The passion of Lloyd Wickett's life these days is watching his herd of 27 sika and fallow deer wander behind his house.

A heart attack and diabetes have confined the 74 year old to his home. He uses a golf cart to make the 50-foot trip from his house to a smaller building where he sits and watches the herd roam a 10-acre impoundment.

"It's just about the only real enjoyment he has anymore," said Wickett's son, Ron Wickett.

But the state of Oregon is threatening to take the herd because Wickett's animals violate a relatively new permit process. Officials are giving Wickett 60 days to sell or destroy the herd.

The regulations are intended to restrict the presence of sika deer in Oregon because of the threat of disease and crossbreeding with native black-tail deer.

"The thing that really cuts me," Wickett said, "is that these are just like pets to me. When my wife goes out there and feeds them in the winter, they come right up to her. Slaughtering them just doesn't make any sense."

When he learned of the new state rules last fall, Ron Wickett figured he had a strong case for appeal. His father had not been notified of the new regulations, and the new rules allowed existing herds to remain.

All Wickett had missed was the deadline for filing a form that

lists his name, address, location, the size of his herd — and paying a \$10.50 permit fee.

Ron Wickett said the denial of his appeal came as a shock to his father.

"I'd never seen him visibly upset before, except at funerals," Ron Wickett said. "His health isn't good and he can't take that kind of emotional strain."

With the help of Oregon House Speaker Larry Campbell, Wickett got a chance to plead his case to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission last week.

The agency allowed the Wicketts to keep their deer for another 18 months, time Ron Wickett says he needs to sell or swap the sika for other deer his father would enjoy.

But things quickly deteriorated when an agency official showed up this week to stark working out details.

"They insisted that the only deal they can make would have to be approved by a district attorney and a judge," Ron Wickett said. "I thought we were going to work something out, and they came here with a sergeant, a lieutenant and a captain from the state police talking about admitting guilt. I just don't see why that's necessary."

Commission chairman Peter L. said the agency is trying to be understanding, but it wouldn't be fair to make an exception for the Wicketts when other exotic animal owners have complied with the new rules.

Ron Wickett maintains that the deer only violate a state regulation and that the commission could vote to grant him an exception without all the talk of court.

The herd came to the attention of the state police after vandals cut a hole in the Wickett's fence last December, allowing a doe and fawn to escape. The pair were later shot behind a neighbor's house.

State police investigating the shooting learned of the Wicketts' herd and took the case to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Ron Wickett said the case has gone too far.

"This is a classic case of bureaucracy getting caught up in its own web," he said.

Student becomes first black president of FFA

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (AP) — Growing up in Chicago, Corey Flournoy knew just enough about agriculture to remain unimpressed.

"I'd seen farming portrayed on shows like 'Green Acres,'" he says.

He was disappointed when the only public magnet high school to accept him was the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, and enrolled reluctantly.

Now he's the national president of the FFA, once known as Future Farmers of America. That makes the 20-year-old student the agricultural youth group's first urban president — and its first black president.

It's a world far from the neighborhood he grew up in, where an 11-year-old was assassinated this summer by members of his own gang, who wanted him out of the way after he accidentally

killed a girl when he shot at members of a rival gang.

"I know that it could have been either of my children," says Flournoy's mother, Barbara Flournoy.

Flournoy's background inspires other students, FFA spokesman Bill Stagg says.

A sophomore at the University of Illinois College of Agriculture, Flournoy got involved in FFA because in high school, enrollment was required. Less than 5 percent of the FFA's members are black, he says.

He began to travel on FFA projects, evaluating dairy cattle, judging beef carcasses and tasting milk samples, and spent six weeks working on a farm.

He was named president Nov. 12 at the FFA convention, selected from a pool of 39 candidates after a grueling, months-long process that included interviews and tests.

Governors will discuss hot issues

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — What better place for western governors to gather and discuss states' rights than southern Utah? All of the flash point issues are there: water, growth, tourism and especially, the ubiquitous hand of the federal government.

Governors from 18 western states and three U.S. territories are expected to attend the winter meeting of the Western Governors' Association Monday and Tuesday in St. George, a desert boom town 270 miles south of Salt Lake City. Nine governors-elect are also invited.

Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt, recently elected chair of the Republican Governors' Association and a powerful voice against federal meddling in states' affairs, will lead the conference as vice chairman.

Given that, it comes as no surprise that the topics of a series of discussions Tuesday involve such issues as mining law reform, the Endangered Species Act, grazing issues and national parks — all points of friction between western states and the federal government.

A main topic will be lessons learned from the 1994 Republican tidal wave that swept the nation and the West. The WGA's new makeup will be decidedly Republican, after Democrats gave up the statehouses in Texas, Kansas, Idaho, New Mexico and Wyoming on Nov. 8. The current breakdown is 11 Democrats, six Republicans and an Independent. After the first of the year, it will be 11 Republicans and seven Democrats.

"There's very little question that people want less government and more decisions being made closer to home," said Leavitt on Friday. "It's for us to decide now how best we can do that."

While more than a dozen issues will be touched on, Leavitt plans to focus on a couple issues on which he thinks progress can be made. One is the Endangered Species Act, up for review by Congress next year.

The act has been a ball-and-chain on development in a number of states, including Utah. In fact, just 10 miles from the city where the governors will meet, huge tracts of land have been tied up as protected habitat for the threatened desert tortoise, infuriating local governments and developers alike.

Efforts by the federal government to impose restrictions on water rights, grazing and right-of-way access over federal lands also will be discussed. All are issues in southern Utah, where upwards of 80 percent of the land is federally owned and managed.

"All of these things are related," Leavitt said. "And yes, I guess much of it comes down to development" — the burning issue in St. George and surrounding Washington County, the fastest growing areas in the state.

"There's no question that we're going to be reassessing the role of states and the federal government," Leavitt said. "Hence the theme of the meeting, 'A Better Balance, a Stronger Voice, a West that Works.'"

The conference convenes with a brief meeting Monday afternoon with the executive committee, consisting of Nevada Gov. Robert Miller, WGA chair; Leavitt, the vice chair; and Nebraska Gov. Ben Nelson. Retiring governors will be honored at a dinner later that evening.

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1. Healthy persons 65 years or older.
2. Persons with long-term heart or lung problems.
3. Persons with any of the following: kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, anemia, severe asthma and conditions which compromise immune mechanism.

Influenza vaccine may be given to persons wishing to reduce their chances of catching the flu, persons who provide essential community services and students or others in schools or colleges.

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