

Chief Joseph Days Court finds new ways to sell tickets

■ Coronavirus prompts move away from door-to-door ticket sales

By Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

JOSEPH — Nothing, no matter how sacred to Wallowa County, seems immune to the concerns about coronavirus. One of the latest casualties of tradition is the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo court's door-to-door ticket sales for event's 75th anniversary.

That's a serious problem for three young women because the one who sells the most tickets has an excellent chance of being coronated queen.

In deference to the need for social distancing, the rodeo board banned the CJD court members — Destiny Weeks, Casidee Harrod and Brianna Micka — from selling tickets door-to-door. Instead, the trio will sell online, via phone or through the mail. To purchase tickets you can contact them through their websites, emails or cellphones. Ticket sales end May 2. The coronation is that night.



Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media Group
Casidee Harrod and her two horses Gemma and Fred.

The path to becoming the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo queen is long and demanding. It requires outstanding horsemanship, public speaking, a high degree of social skills, and last but not least, selling tickets. The aspiring court members are:

•**Casidee Harrod** is a junior at Enterprise High School who loves horses, and is active in FFA, basketball and the National Honor Society. Harrod is a skilled rider in western and dressage. She was a court member for the Elgin Stampede in 2017. She is proud



Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media Group
Brianna Micka and her horse Chesney.

of how the community works together to make Chief Joseph Days work each year and admires the poise of court members. She plans a career in nursing or dentistry.

•**Brianna Micka** is a junior at Joseph Charter School where she sports a 4.0 gpa, is a member of the National Honor Society, and was named to the state 1A all-star basketball second team after helping lead her team through the playoffs.

Micka rode for the Tuckerettes and was on the Elgin Rodeo court.



Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media Group
Destiny Weeks and her horse Fred.

She also won the gold medal in 4H dressage at the 2018 and 2019 Oregon State Fair. Micka wants to be a teacher and also run a ranch.

•**Destiny Weeks** is a sophomore at Enterprise High School. She writes a monthly column for the Chieftain. Weeks also rode in the Tuckerettes and was on the Wallowa County Fair court last year. Her ambitions include competing in Miss Teen Rodeo Oregon, then to Miss Rodeo Oregon, and then national.

Weeks is eyeing a career in veterinary medicine.

CHIEF JOSEPH RODEO TICKET INFORMATION

The three members of the 75th Chief Joseph Rodeo Court will not sell tickets door-to-door this year. Instead, contact any of them at the information below to purchase tickets.

Your ticket purchase is a vote for them as queen.

If you wish to purchase a ticket but prefer to not attend, your ticket can be donated to help a local person attend the rodeo.

Tickets for Wednesday (Family Night) and Thursday (Brave enough to wear pink breast cancer awareness night) are \$15. Friday and Saturday are \$17.

Tickets may be purchased through May 2.

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Pneumonia outbreak hits bighorn sheep in the Lookout Mountain Unit

■ Illness in Baker County prompts state to cancel two hunts this year

By Jayson Jacoby
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — Brian Ratliff is investigating a medical mystery that threatens the future of Baker County's biggest herd of bighorn sheep.

Ratliff is the district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office. His sleuthing has turned up some facts about the more than 300 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep that roam the Lookout Mountain Unit, which makes up of much of Baker County east and north of Interstate 84, extending to the Idaho border.

At least a handful of sheep have died over the past month or so from pneumonia caused by a strain of bacteria that had not previously been found in bighorns anywhere in Oregon, Ratliff said.

What's not yet clear, he said, is how dangerous this strain is.

Of the more than 50 identified strains of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, some can eliminate an entire herd rapidly, while others are comparatively mild and kill few animals, Ratliff said.

'I don't know how bad it's going to be,' he said Thursday.

The threat is serious enough, however, that ODFW last week canceled the two bighorn sheep hunts scheduled this summer and fall in the Lookout Mountain Unit.

'I'm always going to err on the side of caution,' Ratliff said.

Ratliff said he and other ODFW employees are monitoring

bighorns in the Lookout Mountain Unit to try to gauge the lethality of the bacteria strain.

This is relatively easy to do because the bighorns, and in particular the ewes, lambs and young rams, tend to congregate in early spring along the Snake River Road between Huntington and Richland, where they graze on new grass.

The mystery dates to Feb. 13, when ODFW received a report of a dead bighorn ram on the Snake River Road near Connor Creek, about 18 miles north of Huntington.

Ratliff said samples from the sheep were tested, and the results showed the novel strain of bacteria.

There is no vaccine for the bacteria, nor any other type of effective treatment for such a large herd of wild animals, Ratliff said.



EO Media Group file photo

Baker County is home to two bighorn sheep herds. The photo above shows the California subspecies of bighorns in the Burnt River Canyon. The county's biggest herd, numbering more than 300 animals, is in the Lookout Mountain Unit. Those bighorns are the Rocky Mountain subspecies, and state biologists have determined a strain of bacteria has infected some of the Lookout Mountain sheep, causing potentially fatal pneumonia.



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