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Good day to our valued subscriber Allen Brogoitti of La Grande

Oregon cattle mutilations perplex detectives

Harney, Wheeler and Umatilla counties have had recent cases of bull mutilations

By GARRETT ANDREWS
The Bulletin

BEND — The udders appeared to have been removed with precision — straight, even cuts, as if made by a sharp object.

The reproductive systems had been cut out cleanly as well, and without disturbing other organs.

There was no indication of predator activity and, perhaps strangest of all, scavenging animals appeared to have hardly touched these six cow carcasses found in a seven-day span this year on ranchland in rural Crook County.

Detectives with the Crook County Sheriff's Office, long-time ranchers and a Prineville veterinarian who reviewed evidence from an ongoing case say they're stumped by the "unnatural" deaths.

But the mutilated cattle might be more ordinary than they seem, according to Brian Dunning, a Bend-based podcaster committed to deflating wild claims.

"This reads like a very typical case," he said.

Crook County Sheriff John Gautney said his office has no leads but cautioned there's "no reason to panic."

"We've had cases like this over the years," Gautney said. "They seem to come in groups and then go away. We are not speculating on how these are happening, as we try to keep an open mind and look at all possibilities."

Mutilated cattle have been reported in the American West since at least the 1960s. There have been multiple recent cases of bull mutilations in Harney, Wheeler and Umatilla counties in Eastern Oregon. But now, beef cattle have turned up dead in the remote ranchlands outside Prineville bearing signs common to the cattle mutilation phenomenon.

The current string of cases began Feb. 27, when Crook County Sheriff's Office deputy Scott Durr was dispatched to suspicious circumstances at the 96 Ranch on Southeast Van Lake Road. Owner Rickey Shannon said one of his herd had been discovered dead two days earlier with an odd cut down its spine. Shannon, who lives on the

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Nick Schramm of the La Grande Hot Shots firefighting crew keeps an eye on a prescribed fire burning Thursday, April 15, 2021, along the road leading to the boat ramp on Phillips Reservoir near Mason Dam in Baker County.

Friendly flames

Forest Service resumes prescribed burning at Phillips Reservoir



Alex McDonald, left, and Nick Schramm, both members of the La Grande Hot Shots firefighting crew, talk tactics during a prescribed fire near Phillips Reservoir on Thursday, April 15, 2021.

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

PHILLIPS RESERVOIR — They wound their way between the pines like wraiths, dripping dollops of fire with each stride.

Smoke and the blurring effect of rising waves of heat combined to obscure the figures.

But their bright yellow shirts, made of fire-resistant cloth, were visible as they bobbed along, rather like nightflies flitting among the ponderosas and the sage and the occasional clump of bitterbrush.

The firefighters were on the north side of Phillips Reservoir on the blue-sky morning of Thursday, April 15, with multiple goals to accomplish with their flaming torches and their flat-bladed tools designed to scrape away the forest duff to mineral soil.

One reason they're here, while a few scraps of snow still shelter in the north-facing gullies, was to reduce the chances they'll have to come back on a scorching day in July or August.

A day when the flames can't be wielded like a tool, when they won't be an ally. A day when every ember is a dangerous enemy.

Experts in the nuances of the forest, and its relationship with flames, call it a prescribed fire.

It is an apt term.

The second-growth ponderosa forests that

grow between the reservoir and Highway 7 from Mason Dam west up the Sumpter Valley aren't sick. The fire that's prescribed in this case serves more as a tonic, a supplement of sorts to keep the forest healthy.

Trevor Lewis eschewed the cliché of fighting fire with fire, but he conceded that's a significant part of the purpose of the April 15 fire, which covered about 535 acres.

Lewis, an assistant fire management officer for the Burnt-Powder Fire Zone on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest who served as fire boss for the operation, said the flames will remove accumulations of dry, dead grass and the layers of desiccated pine needles that could fuel a summer wildfire.

He said he also hopes the fire will kill the seedling pines that have sprouted between the mature trees. Those fledgling pines can serve as "ladder fuels," Lewis said — in effect, a combustible ladder that flames can climb from the ground to reach the trunks, and potentially even the crowns, of the tallest ponderosas.

"We want to get rid of the majority of those young saplings," Lewis said the morning of April 15 as groups of firefighters dispersed from the road leading to the boat ramp near Mason Dam.

A total of 61 people worked on the

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Open house set for new community center

Event will celebrate the history and future of the Union United Methodist Church buildings

By DICK MASON
The Observer

UNION — Sounds that could pass for echoes of the past, elegant architectural features of yesteryear and hidden history.

The old Methodist Church building complex in Union has all this plus something it did not appear to have until two months ago — a promising future.

The former Union United Methodist Church building complex, now named the Catherine Creek Community Center, no longer is in peril after a new local nonprofit, the Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall, purchased it from the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The nonprofit raised \$25,000 to make the purchase, which was finalized Feb. 24.

The magnitude of what has transpired remains hard for people such as Cherie Kausler, a member of the Historic Union Community Hall Board, to grasp.

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LaVon Hall, a member of the Historic Union Community Hall Board, examines a copy of a painting of the Last Supper on Saturday, April 17, 2021, in the chapel of what is now part of the Catherine Creek Community Center, Union.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section		
	Tonight	
	30 LOW	Wednesday
	Clear	66/38
		Mostly sunny

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