

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

December 18, 2021

WEEKEND EDITION

\$1.50

## Disease likely won't affect deer hunting

### EHD spread through white-tailed deer in Union County

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

An insect-borne virus killed dozens of deer, most whitetails, in Baker, Union and Wallowa counties this summer, but wildlife biologists said the die-off might not lead to any reduction in hunting tags.

Officials from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) started getting reports of dead deer around the region this summer.

Tests of tissue samples confirmed that the animals were infected with a virus, spread by biting midges, that causes the frequently fatal illness, Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD).

Although EHD can kill both white-tailed and mule deer, as well as other wild animals such as elk and pronghorn antelope, and sheep and cattle, the disease typically is much more virulent among whitetails, said Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at ODFW's Baker City office.

In late summer, Ratliff said 33 of the 36 dead deer he had examined were whitetails.

#### Baker County

In Baker County the disease outbreak was mostly confined to the western edge of the Baker Valley, an area including Pine and Goodrich creeks, Ben Dier Lane and upper Hunt Mountain Lane, Ratliff said.

White-tailed deer are common in that part of the valley, about 12 miles northwest of Baker City.

Ratliff didn't have a final estimated tally of how many deer died.

But because there is no special hunting season for whitetails — they are legal quarry during seasons, the same as mule deer — Ratliff said the dieoff won't lead to a reduction in hunting tags in the Sumpter unit, which includes Baker Valley.

An outbreak of EHD killed an estimated 2,000 white-tailed deer in Umatilla County during the

See, *Deer*/Page A5

## MEASURE 110



Yes on Measure 110 Campaign/The Associated Press, File  
Volunteers with the Yes on Measure 110 Campaign on June 26, 2020, deliver boxes containing signed petitions in favor of the measure to the Oregon Secretary of State's office in Salem. Police in Oregon can no longer arrest someone for possession of small amounts of heroin, methamphetamine and other hard drugs as the ballot measure that decriminalized them took effect Monday, Feb. 1, 2021.

# MIXED RESULTS

## Opinions vary on effectiveness of drug addiction treatment and recovery act

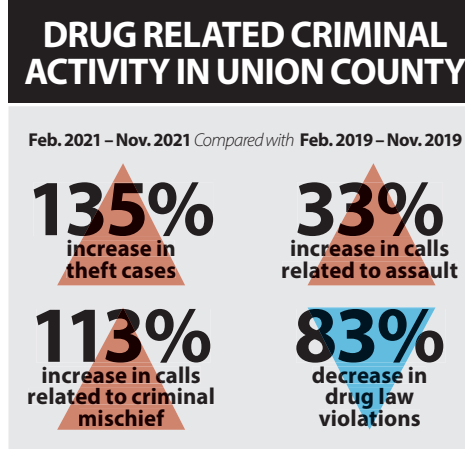
By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — Reactions remain mixed to Oregon's law decriminalizing drugs and boosting the availability and usage of addiction recovery options.

Measure 110 passed by 58.5% in Oregon in November 2020 and went into effect Feb. 1. In Union County, 5,708 individuals (37.8%) voted in favor of the measure, while 8,650 (57.3%) voted against Measure 110.

"The difficulty of measuring 110's impact on our community and policing at this time is we only have nine months of experience in determining short-term and long-term effects of Measure 110," La Grande police Lt. Jason Hays said. "COVID-19 also complicates this since COVID mandates, joblessness and other COVID stressors also impact behavior and criminal activity."

The measure adjusts the approach on



drug addiction and abuse, reclassifying the penalties for drug possession. The penalty for drug possession is essentially the price of a parking ticket. The new punishment for smaller amounts of controlled substances is a \$100 fine, which can be avoided if the individual seeks out a health assessment at an addiction recovery center.

This shift in drug possession enforcement was put into place to emphasize drug abuse as a public health issue, one that encourages addicts to reach out to addiction services instead of being placed behind bars.

#### Law enforcement

While Measure 110 was drafted with a goal of improving treatment for addictions, law enforcement across the state has had



Ashton-Williams Boyd Hays

mixed feelings regarding the new procedures. The measure changed the approach of drug abuse enforcement, as police departments across the state are taking a more reactive approach to drug usage in communities.

"Historically we were proactive in our fight against illicit drug abuse, drug possession, drug manufacturing and drug dealing in a way to increase the livability within our community," Hays said. "With the implementation of Measure 110 voted in by the people, it sends a message that illicit drug activity is not a priority within our communities in Oregon as it once was."

According to Hays, local law enforcement in La Grande saw more success in drug abuse treatment when individuals were ordered by the court to receive drug treatment.

"We deal with citizens daily who are drug dependent, whose health digresses because we don't have the ability to arrest them on drug charges that would typically get them into court-ordered drug treat-

See, *Measure 110*/Page A5

## Dinner is served

### Union County Senior Center had been closed to dining for 21 months

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — Walking into the Union County Senior Center at midday on Wednesday, Dec. 15, was a little like stepping 21 months back in time.

For the first time since March 2020 the dining area of the senior center was filled with people

eating lunch together. The sit-down meal was the first the Union County Senior Center has served since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Oregon and forced Gov. Kate Brown to ban the serving of meals in social settings.

The lunch served Dec. 15 marked the reopening of one of Union County's most popular lunch stops, a place where seniors have been enjoying midday meals every weekday for at least three decades. The center is



Alex Wittwer/The Observer  
John Turner receives a meal from Shayla Pratt at the Union County Senior Center in La Grande on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021.

See, *Dinner*/Page A5

#### INDEX

Classified.....B2	Horoscope.....B3	Outdoors.....B1
Comics.....B5	Lottery.....A2	Sports.....A7
Crossword.....B2	Obituaries.....A3	Sudoku.....B5
Dear Abby.....B6	Opinion.....A4	Weather.....B6

#### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

<b>Tonight</b> 31 LOW A little snow	<b>Sunday</b> 36/32 A bit of snow
---	---

#### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
Issue 148  
2 sections, 14 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.



TUESDAY

BAKERS SHARE SWEET HOLIDAY RECIPES

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)