

Wolves kill dog near Halfway

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A wolf or wolves from the Cornucopia pack inflicted fatal injuries on a working dog on a cattle ranch near Halfway this week.

And a state wildlife biologist who monitors wolves in Baker County said wolves from the Cornucopia and Keating packs — a total of at least 15 animals — have been making some unusual movements over the past month or so.

“It makes it harder to predict what’s going to happen, and it makes it harder on producers,” said Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Baker City office.

Six wolves — three from each pack — are fitted with GPS tracking collars, but Ratliff said that in the past week or so two of those collars, one from each pack, ceased working.

The collars don’t allow anything approaching real-time information about the wolves’ location, Ratliff said.

The collars typically report their location once a day although some collars can report more often — the time varies to give a wider range of data — which is usually enough to allow Ratliff to spot trends and, when necessary, to alert ranchers that wolves have been frequenting a specific area.

That’s been the case recently in the north end of the Eagle Valley, north of Richland, Ratliff said.

Ranchers have frequently been hazing wolves in that area. Ratliff said he has hazed wolves there as well.

So far there have been no reports of wolves attacking livestock in that area, he said on Thursday, March 17.

The fatal attack on the working dog, a 40-pound heeler, happened across the Halfway Grade in the south end of Pine Valley, near Pine Town Lane.

The dog’s owner found the animal by its kennel the morning of March 15, Ratliff said.

The dog died later, after being treated by a veterinarian, and Ratliff said the owner, after burying the animal, called ODFW.

Ratliff said the dog was disinterred and, after he and another biologist examined its wounds on March 16, they confirmed that it had been attacked by a wolf or wolves.

He said it’s not certain where the attack happened, but he doesn’t think the dog, given the severity of its injuries, could have traveled very far after the attack.

According to the ODFW depredation report, the dog had “premortem bite punctures to the head and throat with associated muscle tissue trauma. Bruising of the hide and muscle trauma were found on the back, hips, and groin. The location and size of the tooth marks are consistent with wolf attack injuries on dogs.”

According to the report, GPS collar data from a yearling male wolf from the Cornucopia pack placed that wolf a half-mile from



Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife/Contributed Photo, File
A wolf or wolves from the Cornucopia Pack inflicted fatal injuries on a working dog on a cattle ranch near Halfway last week.

the ranch where the dog lived, at 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. on March 15.

Ratliff said the rancher told him that another of his dogs died on Christmas Day after showing up with severe injuries. Although ODFW biologists didn’t examine that dog, Ratliff said he looked at GPS collar data from that day and a wolf was near the ranch then, and it’s possible a wolf or wolves also attacked that dog.

Ratliff said he’s concerned about a pit, which is one mile from the ranch, where cattle carcasses are dumped.

He said wolves have roamed near that pit occasionally over the past several years, and he worries that it will continue to lure the predators.

Ratliff said ranchers who use that pit have partially buried and in some cases burned carcasses, but the site continues to remain a potential attractant for wolves.

Burying carcasses is the best way to avoid that problem, he said.

“I know it’s a lot more work for producers,” Ratliff said. “I don’t have a perfect solution. Sometimes even when carcasses are buried there’s still scent there. But burying carcasses is the best option.”

Wolves from two packs mingling

Ratliff said wolves from the Keating and Cornucopia packs have been mingling, and at times traveling together recently.

That’s uncommon, he said.

Wolves from the Keating

Pack, which numbers at least 10 animals, including five pups born in the spring of 2021, had spent much of the winter around the north side of Keating Valley.

But recently at least five Keating wolves had moved east into the Low Hills country southeast of Halfway. That’s an area where wolves from the former Pine Creek Pack attacked cattle repeatedly during the spring of 2018, killing four and injuring at least seven.

Wolves from the Cornucopia Pack, meanwhile, have moved west and have been lingering in the north part of Eagle Valley.

The Cornucopia Pack consists of at least five wolves, but the pack has no breeding male, and Ratliff said it’s possible the pack’s breeding female won’t have a litter of pups this spring.

On March 18, wolves from the Cornucopia Pack had moved back across the Halfway grade and were in the northern part of Pine Valley, Ratliff said. He alerted ranchers in that area about the wolves’ latest movements.

The pack’s breeding male was illegally shot and killed in late September 2020 near Eagle Forks campground. A second wolf, a subadult female, was shot and killed in late October 2020 northeast of Halfway. It’s not clear whether that wolf was a member of a pack.

More recently, a 2-year-old male wolf from the Cornucopia Pack was hit by a car and killed along Highway 86, about 5 miles west of Richland, in April 2021.

Testing of drones is becoming more integrated into Pendleton

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton’s drone testing program is starting to come off the hill.

In February, the unmanned aerial systems company Spright announced it was starting a proof-of-concept program with Interpath Laboratory and Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center to transport medical tests from Interpath’s 2640 S.W. Perkins Ave. facilities to Yellowhawk’s clinic in Mission.

Spright ran its first test in mid-February, but it was a long time in the making.

Pendleton Economic Development Director Steve Chrisman said the origins of Spright in Pendleton can be traced back to a conference sponsored by the Association for Unmanned Aerial Systems International last year.

“It was just kind of fortuitous, bumping into each other,” he said.

Chrisman didn’t bump into the people behind Spright, an Arizona subsidiary of a medical transport company, but instead found himself at the booth for Wingcopter, a German aerospace company that was situated across the way from Pendleton’s booth.

Chrisman began chatting with a man from Wingcopter, who told Chrisman the company was working with a customer who specialized in unmanned medical test delivery.

Chrisman connected the dots between Interpath’s presence in Pendleton and Spright, which eventually led to Spright renting a hangar from the Pendleton UAS Range.

In an email, Justin Steinke, Spright’s vice president of operations, explained what drew the company to

VERIZON STARTS TESTING AT PENDLETON UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS RANGE

PENDLETON — The telecom giant Verizon is now one of the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range’s newest customers.

Verizon Robotics announced on Tuesday, March 15 that it is now running tests at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range. According to a press release, testing at the range will focus on improving their research and development efforts, which will include training range staff in how to use a mobile command vehicle to communicate with its drones. “The operations we are deploying at Pendleton Range will help advance R&D initiatives for customers,” Verizon Robotics President Mariah Scott said in a statement. “The range’s location helps create a local innovation testbed that can emulate real-life conditions, helping to bring products and services to market faster.”

In the press release, Verizon touted its efforts at developing UAS software that will help integrate drones into the national airspace, which is the main reason the Federal Aviation Administration designated Pendleton and other communities around the country as designated test sites. Verizon is just the latest large corporation to take an interest in Pendleton. Amazon recently confirmed that it was testing drones at the range.

—East Oregonian

Pendleton. While Spright’s unmanned vehicles are undergoing the Federal Aviation Administration certification process, Steinke said Interpath and Pendleton offered the right conditions for it to test its product.

“Interpath Laboratory is located inside the current test range, which allows us to accelerate the testing of the aircraft and the business case,” he wrote. “Having usable airspace to test and validate our operations in Pendleton is enabling Spright to accelerate the development of our solutions and more rapidly help people around the globe. Most importantly, Spright intends to continue to operate with Interpath after the testing phase is complete, making it an innovative win for the community of Pendleton.”

Steinke said Spright intends to test for the next six to nine months in locations around Pendleton before making its product fully available next year.

Interpath CEO Tom Kennedy did not return a request for comment, but in a press release, he explained why the lab testing company would be interested in

investing in drones.

“Medical laboratory services in rural areas frequently must invest intensive time and resources into sample pick-up,” Kennedy said in a statement. “We anticipate Spright’s drone delivery service will alleviate many of the drawbacks and costs associated with automobile-based delivery. This initiative represents an example of our embrace of innovative solutions that provide more efficient and effective services to our clients.”

Yellowhawk became the third partner in the group through Interpath, which processes the medical tests conducted at the Mission clinic.

Yellowhawk CEO Aaron Hines said the medical center was attracted to the test program because it could mean faster test results for their patients. As it stands now, an Interpath vehicle picks up tests at Yellowhawk once per day. But if UAS took over test delivery, Yellowhawk could deliver and receive tests multiple times per day, meaning their patients could be treated more quickly.

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To our family, friends and relatives:

We love and appreciate each and every one of you.

Wyatt, Larry, Jan, Kyle and Tanner Hallgarth

We cannot thank you enough for the thoughtfulness and love you have shared with our family during this difficult time with the loss of Ty, our son, father, brother and uncle. We are truly grateful for your visits and the stories that were shared of special times spent with Ty. Thank you for your calls, cards and thoughtful words, prayers, food, flowers and generous contributions to Wyatt’s college fund. You have all made this tragedy a little more bearable for our family. We would like to have been able to thank each of you personally. Ty’s death has left a huge hole in our hearts, as well as in the hearts of his friends and relatives.

A special thank you to everyone who was able to attend Ty’s Celebration of Life, either in person or online. Your presence brought light and comfort to our family. To the Elgin Stampeders for the wonderful dinner following the service, and to everyone who contributed food for the dinner and helped serve. Also, those who helped set up the hall and for cleaning up after. Thank you all.

Thank you to Marty Campbell for officiating, Bud Scoubes, Kyle Evans and Kevin Loveland for speaking at the service. Thank you all for delivering such a heartfelt tribute to Ty.

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