

District attorney's office decided not to press charges

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"I take no pride in this at all," he said. "The only thing I'm happy about is I made it home to my wife and children."

Scott, 38, lives in Clackamas, Ore., a suburb of Portland. He and his wife have two elementary school-age children and he owns a small business. He said he has hunted since he was a boy in Texas and described himself as a "meat hunter," someone who eats what they kill. On Oct. 27 he was on his third day of hunting elk in ODFW's Starkey Wildlife Management Unit west of La Grande, in Northeast Oregon.

Scott said he was in fog-shrouded timber and intermittently saw animals moving around him, but wasn't sure if he was seeing a cougar, coyotes or something else. He made his way out of the fog to a ridge top and sat for perhaps 25 minutes, then walked out into a meadow. Two wolves emerged from the fog to his left, looked at him, then headed in what he described as a flanking move behind him. A third wolf came running directly at him.

"I screamed, got it in my (scope) crosshairs, saw fur and pulled the trigger," Scott said. He said he whirled around, fearing the other two would attack, but saw them running

away. He heard a fourth wolf howl nearby, and believes a pack was around him. ODFW has not officially designated a pack in that area, instead referring to it as territory of a collared wolf known as OR-30 and his mate. The wolf Scott shot, an 83-pound female, might be their offspring.

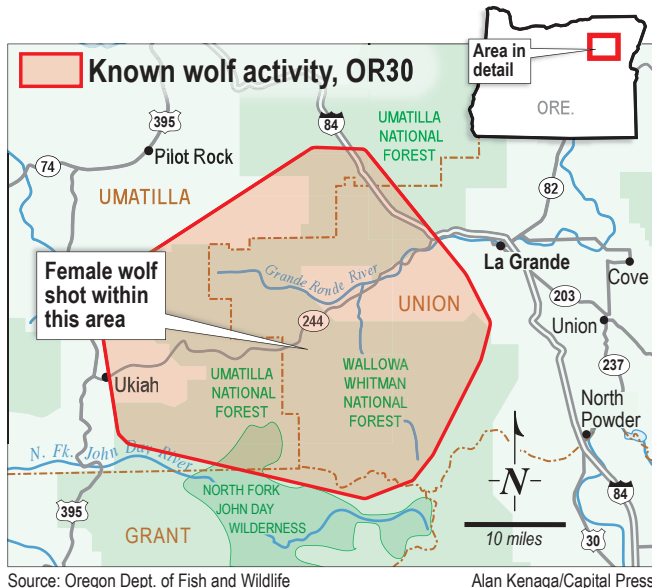
Badly shaken, Scott returned to his hunting camp about a mile away and told companions what had happened. They went to the site, confirmed it was a wolf and Scott called Oregon State Police and ODFW.

A casing from Scott's 30.06 rifle was found 27 yards from the carcass. The Union County district attorney's office in La Grande reviewed the case and decided not to press charges. An Oregon State Police spokesman said evidence at the scene backed Scott's story and said the fact that he self-reported killing the wolf was "compelling."

Scott, who was hunting alone at the time, said he could have hidden the wolf's carcass and told his companions back at camp that the gunshot he heard was him firing at an elk and missing.

"I feel like I did the right thing," he said. "I reported it immediately and was ready to face public scrutiny."

That has surely been the



Source: Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

case. On social media and in comments to on-line news articles, posters have called Scott a liar, coward and an irresponsible hunter.

Carter Niemeyer, a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who is considered one of the nation's top wolf experts, said he didn't believe Scott's story because of the bullet's path. "That's a broadside shot," he told the Capital Press.

He and others said wolves are afraid of humans. People in such situations should make their presence known, shout, throw things or, if armed, fire a shot into the ground. Niemeyer

said people venturing into the forest should carry bear repellent spray, which would work on wolves, cougars or coyotes.

Activists point out that wolves have not harmed anyone since they re-entered Oregon and the state established a management plan. At the end of 2016, ODFW confirmed 112 wolves in Oregon; the actual number is presumed to be higher.

Rob Klavins, Northeast Oregon representative for the conservation group Oregon Wild, said he's encountered wolves several times in Wallowa County without harm to his hiking

party or his dogs, which he keeps on leash in wolf territory.

"This person may have felt fear, but since wolves returned to Oregon no one has so much as been licked by a wolf, and that's still true today," he said.

Derek Broman, an ODFW carnivore biologist, said wolves often travel in pairs or packs, and seeing several together does not necessarily mean they were in a hunting formation.

He said wolves are "couraging" hunters, meaning they take down prey by chasing, repeatedly biting and wearing down elk, deer or cattle. They will approach stealthily and charge, seeking to attack in habitat that allows them to move easily, Broman said.

Broman said animals in the wild usually avoid people, and wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare. People faced with a wolf should not run, he said, because that would trigger an innate, evolutionary chase response.

Animals have evolved to recognize certain prey, and humans are "something completely different" to predators, he said.

"On a minute-by-minute basis, wildlife is trying to survive," Broman said. "If they don't have a 90 percent chance of success, they're not going to give it a go. Cougars are so powerful they could do any-

thing, but they don't.

"For a wolf to come near is not totally unheard of, and it's not necessarily concerning," he said. "We don't know what the animal was keying in on, or if it was keying in on anything at all."

Scott said critics should put themselves in his shoes.

"I felt I had run out of time," he said. "I'm a dog owner, I grew up on a ranch, I know how fast dogs are. Twenty-seven yards gave me seconds to react."

Scott said he doesn't demonize wolves; he considers them majestic animals. He said hunters and others going into the wild should be aware they are more likely now to encounter wolves. He thinks ODFW should do more to educate the public, an effort that could include posting warning signs at the approaches to known pack territory.

In the meantime, he's enduring ridicule and doubt about his account.

"This isn't me sitting there watching a wolf, taking a pot shot, then panicking, calling up Oregon State Police and making up an absurd story," he said.

"I was being charged by a wolf," he said. "The wolf is now dead and I got to come home. Whether people want to buy that or not, I don't care."

'We're in limbo right now'

GMOS from Page 1

"We're in limbo right now, and Trump's USDA wants to keep up in this state of limbo," said Bill Freese, science policy analyst for the Center of Food Safety, a nonprofit that's been involved in litigation over biotechnology.

Biotech developers, meanwhile, were cheered by the rescission because they think USDA should take additional time to refine the regulations, which contained both positive and negative elements for the industry.

"We don't think they should throw the whole baby out with the bathwater," but some aspects of the Obama-era proposal bear closer scrutiny, said Karen Batra, food and agriculture communications director for the Biotechnology Industry Organization.

Biotech critics were hoping the new regulations would be interpreted broadly, potentially allowing the USDA to restrict genetically modified organisms that disrupt international markets and accelerate the weeding of other plants.

"We've argued all along that herbicide-resistant crop systems are promoters of herbicide-resistant weeds," said Freese of the Center for Food Safety.

When glyphosate is sprayed on crops that have been genetically engineered to withstand the chemical, for example, the process inadvertently selects for weeds that can withstand it as well.

Over time, those resistant weeds reproduce and render glyphosate less effective overall.

"Our regulators have done absolutely nothing," said Freese.

The organization also believed that USDA could also invoke its noxious weed authority against GMOs that hinder exports of U.S. crops to foreign countries.

The agency already bars importation of certain conventional crops because they have the potential to harbor noxious weed seeds, Freese said.

While the Center for Food Safety disagreed with aspects of the rules — such as the exclusion of gene-edited crops from regulation — it thought they should be enacted and strengthened over time, he said.

Biotech developers, conversely, applauded the USDA's approach to gene-edited crops, in which the genetic code is altered without incorporating DNA from other organisms.

"We thought that was a positive step," Batra said.

Nonetheless, BIO was dissatisfied with USDA's proposed risk assessment approach for GMOs, under which release into the environment wouldn't be allowed until a crop is determined not to be a plant pest or noxious weed.

Currently, biotech developers can obtain permits to test GMOs in the field and transport them between states until the crops are fully deregulated by USDA.

The new "up front" approach would serve as a barrier to developing GMOs, particularly for public universities and small companies with limited resources who would face uncertain regulation, according to BIO.

"That type of ambiguity would hinder people trying to bring things into the process," Batra said.

Coalition issues competitive grants through its Fellowship Fund

VETERANS from Page 1

Thousands of veterans

Paddock is one of thousands of veterans across the country who've either taken up, or returned to, farming or a related field in recent years. Some seek a new identity after their years in the military. Others just need to make a living.

And many find a form of therapy in working with nature.

"There is a peace to being out in your orchard," Paddock said. "There's a oneness with God because you're working in his creation. It's all around you. You just can't ignore it."

Paddock and many other veterans who entered farming did so with the help of the Davis, Calif.-based Farmer Veteran Coalition, whose nearly 10,000 veteran members nationwide include 1,191 in California, 194 in Oregon, 277 in Washington and 69 in Idaho, spokesman Evan Eagan said.

Started by long-time organic farmer Michael O'Gorman, the coalition has given out \$1.5 million in small grants since 2011 to buy equipment for beginning farmers and created the Home Grown By Heroes label, which veteran farmers can use to market their goods.

O'Gorman worked in agriculture some 40 years, developing a specialty in farm management in vegetable production, and never served in the military. But his oldest daughter worked in a building facing the World Trade Center during the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001, he said.

"She escaped only with the trauma that people get when they go into combat," O'Gorman said.



Michael O'Gorman

"My son joined the military a week later and served two tours overseas."

O'Gorman pointed to a 2007 study by the Carsay Institute of the University of New Hampshire finding that rural areas bore a disproportionate share of military fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan, meaning many service members are from farming communities.

"I was wanting to do something for veterans because my son was soon to be one, and it hit me," he said. "We need some new people in agriculture, so we put the two things together."

The coalition issues competitive grants through its Fellowship Fund with the help of companies such as Kubota Tractor Corp., which donates four tractors a year to members, O'Gorman said.

One of those tractors last month went to Cherri Marin, a 21-year Air Force veteran, who owns Sunshine and Reins farm in Sweet Home, Ore.

New chapter

The Farmer Veteran Coalition may soon have an Oregon chapter. Marin and more than a dozen others were scheduled to attend a Nov. 8 organizational meeting in Salem.

Wendy Knopp, an employee of Northwest Farm Credit Services in Spokane, Wash., and who heads the Coalition program in that state, was invited to speak to the Oregon group.

Knopp directs the FCS "Ag Vision" program, which supports young and beginning producers. She and others believe veterans



and farmers share common traits, including work ethic, a sense of responsibility and attention to detail.

Other groups help veterans start in agriculture, too. One is the San Rafael, Calif.-based Ranchin' Vets, which was started five years ago by Kevin and Cory Downs after Kevin's brother, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Phil Downs, came home from tours in Iraq.

With assistance from the California Cattlemen's Association and private fundraisers, Ranchin' Vets works with agricultural employers to place veterans in jobs and gives them a 6-month stipend to augment their income, Cory Downs said.

Kevin was working on a cattle ranch in Marin County when his brother and his fellow Marines came home and were "very much thrown into the civilian world," and it wasn't an easy transition, she said.

"One day while Kevin was working on the ranch, there was a particular moment when he came up with the idea," she said. "It was right along the coast, the sun was going down and the fog was rolling in over the hills, and it was just incredibly peaceful. All he could hear was the sound of cows ripping grass out of the ground, and he thought, 'This is what veterans should be doing.'"

Back to school

Other veterans find their own way into agriculture after going

back to school. Clayton Churchill, 27, of Weaverville, Calif., served four years in the Army and spent 13 months in Baghdad, Iraq, before getting out in 2012. He then spent a year and a half in the National Guard.

Afterward, he started working in construction in Washington state but found that "the excavator operator was making four times as much as I was" swinging a hammer, he said.

That brought him to the heavy equipment program at Shasta College in Redding, Calif., where he has earned a certificate in diesel mechanics and is earning another one in welding. His goal is to work in logging, he said.

"I like being out in the woods, and having a vocational skill and a technical skill will help me in the long run," Churchill said. "With being a veteran, it'll help me out because (employers) know I can do the hard work."

Paddock, the Esparto almond grower, hasn't needed a degree to make it in agriculture, although he's relied on help from the Farmer Veteran Coalition and others. His Capay Hills Orchard is just now turning profitable after seven years of bringing his trees along and building a brand.

He said he values the help he's received.

"This is a family operation, and I've had influence from many different groups," he said. "Military, civilian, government, neighbors — all have played a role in it."

"If it weren't for them, I really couldn't have done it," he said. "I've been associated with some pretty brilliant people. The smartest people I've ever met have been farmers, hands down."

Jill Knittel: Veterans are a natural fit to take over when farmers retire

COUPLE from Page 1

Jill had wanted a pig farm since she was 10 years old, growing up in West Seattle.

"And all of a sudden, here I was in my 40s going, 'You know what? Let's raise pigs,'" she remembered with a laugh.

Paul grew up on a farm in Aumsville, Ore., and his father was a meatcutter.

Paul said he believes pigs require a bit more involvement than raising cattle. Throw cattle some hay and water, and that's it, he said.

"Pigs, if they can break it, they'll break it," he said. "If they can get out of the fence, they'll get out of the fence. It's challenging."

The irregular hours and the work ethic developed in the Navy helped train them for the farm.

"There are some days that are easy, you just do feeding and whatever and nothing goes wrong," Jill said. "And when it gets crazy, working crazy long hours in the Navy was good. Because no matter how bad it gets here, we still go to bed at some point."



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Jill Knittel leads a group of hogs on the farm she runs with her husband near Davenport, Wash.

Paul Knittel maintains a day job as a Grand Coulee Dam power plant operator. The couple hopes the farm will break even this year.

They sell hogs at a Wenatchee farmers' market, through the LINC Foods Cooperative in Spokane, to individual customers and to restaurants in Seattle.

Jill hopes to get into several more restaurants, to the point where it makes up the majority of their sales.

The Knittels have a fan in Paul Shewchuk, executive chef at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in Seattle. Shewchuk started using a hog a month over the summer, incorporating the entire animal into his menu, including prosciutto, salami, head cheeses, pork chops and the fat.

"Their fat content on their animals is insane — I've actually never worked with a pig that had so much fat on it," Shewchuk said.

Online

<https://www.facebook.com/ScablandFarm/>

Chefs like fat because it provides flavor and richness, Shewchuk said.

Shewchuk hopes to see the farm become sustainable for the Knittels, and hopes to support them in building a foundation.

"I look forward to when they come and drop a pig off," he said. "That conversation we have, that's the most important part to me. The pig's great, but it's that interaction between chef and farmer. I hope they never lose that."

Jill believes veterans are a natural fit to take over when farmers retire.

"In the morning or at night, after we've done all our chores and all the animals are peacefully eating, you get a good feeling from that and just a sense of accomplishment," she said. "Even though you have to do the same thing 12 hours later, there's something very satisfying. Much more than an office job."