

People & Places

# Helping ranchers deal with wolves

Jay Shepherd offers ranchers help with influx of wolves in NE Washington

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

CHEWELAH, Wash. — When he worked for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, trying to keep the peace between ranchers and the wolves that attacked their livestock would keep Jay Shepherd up at night.

“It’s a relatively top-down agency,” he said. “Thinking about it from the ground up was frustrating and difficult. ... If you care about it, it drives you nuts.”

Shepherd worked for the department as a wildlife biologist for nearly 10 years. Now, he runs the nonprofit Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative for ranchers, which is in its first season. He is also wolf program lead for the environmental group Conservation Northwest, managing its range rider program.

The collaborative provides ranchers with an experienced human presence — on horses, ATVs, in vehicles or on foot — on the region’s national forest grazing allotments. Shepherd said he’s trying to get away from the term “range riders,” but nobody likes his suggested alternative: Herd monitors.

He helped spearhead the collaborative’s formation in May 2017 after deciding wolf-livestock conflicts weren’t being effectively addressed or resolved. The group modeled itself after similar collaboratives in Montana.

The collaborative doesn’t have firm membership numbers, Shepherd said, but is open to ranchers and others in the northeastern counties of Washington.

“I’ve had people ask, ‘How do I become a member?’ and it’s like, ‘Well, I think you just did,’” Shepherd said.

## High-risk areas

The collaborative serves ranchers in relatively high-risk wolf areas. Ranchers must ac-



Photos by NE Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative

Jay Shepherd, right, works with ranchers and range riders to minimize the number of wolf attacks on northeast Washington livestock.

cept some management tactics used by similar Montana organizations, including constantly moving and monitoring their herds.

One theory says the cattle are much calmer when they know the rest of the herd is around, Shepherd said. That increases the potential that the animals won’t be spooked if they see a wolf.

“It’s that fleeing, that running, that stimulates the attack,” Shepherd said.

He wonders if such methods would work in northeast Washington, where the landscape is rugged and steep. Montana experts looked at the region and said they weren’t certain how the model would work, but they were willing to stay in touch, he said.

The state offers help, but Shepherd wants to know why ranchers have to “absorb the burden of wolf recovery.” That reduces the chances of acceptance or tolerance for wolves, creating a backlash against the animals that others want to protect, he said.

Ranchers need to take ownership of the wolf issue to the extent they can, Shepherd said. They can’t legally kill a wolf where it is protected, but they can take steps to improve herd monitoring. If they can’t, then learning that is an important step, too.



One of the tactics range riders from the Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative use is keeping the cattle moving.

## Looking for answers

But ranchers need to show they are looking for the answer, he said.

“If you’re going to demand better use of public lands and less killing of wolves, maybe you should help pay for it,” he said. “The ranching community here can’t afford it.” Shepherd, whose grandfather and father were ranchers, said he tries to approach livestock conflicts in a straightforward, practical manner. The collaborative works to help ranchers with wolves, within the law and outside lethal removal, he said.

The intent is “to let them feel like they’re part of the process,” he said.

The collaborative can also take ranchers’ concerns to the state and communities, he said. The organization also wants to offer caches of equipment for calving or

the summer grazing season, since it’s too small to respond to every single rancher in need.

## Ranchers react

Danville, Wash., rancher Jake Nelson uses Shepherd’s collaborative to monitor his 350 cattle and deter wolves. Nelson said he was getting pictures of wolves on his game cameras and seeing wolf sign before bringing on Shepherd’s team, but hasn’t seen much activity since.

“They’re a good, honest bunch of guys, I think,” he said. “(Shepherd) has been 100 percent honest with me from Day One. I ask him something, he tells me the truth.”

Barstow, Wash., rancher Steve Sanders said he followed Shepherd after working with him through WDFW. “Jay tries to be real polit-



**Western Innovator**

**Jay Shepherd**  
Occupation: Administrator, Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative  
Age: 57  
Hometown: Walla Walla, Wash.  
Current location: Chewelah, Wash.  
Education: Ph.D. in natural resources, University of Idaho; master’s degree in wildlife biology at University of Montana  
Family: Married  
Website: <https://www.newwcc.org/>

ical, he’s almost too nice of a guy sometimes,” Sanders said. “He really has a desire to try to help.”

Sanders said he’s been dealing with wolves for several years, and had cows killed in 2014 and 2015. He uses the collaborative’s range riders during calving season and to put up flag-like fladry on fences, fencing and fox lights to protect his 100 cattle.

“When you have a depredation, we need somebody to come in, help clean up the mess and make you at least feel better,” Sanders said.

Shepherd hopes the collaborative can reduce stress and costs for ranching families, and reduce the volatility of the situation.

“We’re always going to have wolves put on cattle, but if we can get it where people are working together (and) owning the issue and the losses are low, then ... they can buy a new pickup or send a kid to college instead of having to pay for someone else’s wildlife,” he said. “This isn’t like a hurricane or tornado coming. It’s doable.”

# Snohomish County family wins tree farm award

Fish habitat restored

Capital Press

The New family, owner of the Nourse Tree Farm in Snohomish County, has been named the 2018 Tree Farmer of the Year in Washington.

The Washington Tree Farm Program presented the award at the Washington Farm Forestry Association’s annual meeting.

The New family has a 160-acre tree farm and has owned the land for 75 years. The family has managed the forest for seven years and received American Tree Farm System certification last year, according to a press release.

“To be honest, I was quite surprised to hear that I was receiving the Tree Farmer of



Washington Tree Farm Program

The New family, owners of the Nourse Tree Farm in Snohomish County, received the 2018 Tree Farmer of the Year award from the Washington Tree Farm Program. From left to right are Jenn Parker, Tyler Parker, Dave New, Dar New, Jeff Parker and Alex Parker.

the Year award,” David New said in a written statement. “I thought there were people who have been doing this a lot lon-

ger than I have.”

New credited Washington State University Forestry Extension and the Washington

Farm Forestry Association with helping the family develop a plan and meet stewardship goals.

In partnership with the Snohomish Conservation District, the New family restored more than 30 acres of fish habitat by planting conifers and redirecting a stream. One of the side channels had drained into a grass field, causing spawning salmon to die.

“One of our many goals is restoring fish habitat,” said Ryan Williams, program manager at the conservation district.

Because of the restoration, the Nourse Tree Farm has been an outdoor classroom for school groups and WSU Extension classes. The New family also donates firewood to a church that distributes it.

“Their management ap-

proach, which incorporates sustainable harvests, wildlife enhancement and recreation, fulfills the spirit of being an American Tree Farm System certified tree farmer,” said Jenny Koth, co-chairwoman of the Washington Tree Farm Program.

The Nourse Tree Farm will have an open house and a tour July 21. More details are available online at [watreefarm.org/](http://watreefarm.org/) events.

The Washington Tree Farm Program certifies more than 40,000 acres under the American Tree Farm System, a program of the American Forest Foundation. Each state in the system picks a tree farmer of the year. A national winner will be named at the foundation’s annual leadership conference next spring.

## Calendar

### Wednesday, July 18

Blueberry Field Day, 1-5 p.m. OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, Ore. This is the annual field day for commercial and backyard growers. Sponsored by Oregon State University. Website: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC/>

Forestry Shortcourse. 9 a.m.-noon. Sandpoint Orchard, 10881 N. Boyer Road, Sandpoint, Idaho. This is the fifth session of a six-session course on forest ecology, silviculture, wildlife habitat, and other forestry topics. Cost: \$38 Email: [cschnepf@uidaho.edu](mailto:cschnepf@uidaho.edu)

Bee Workshop. 6:30-8 p.m. OSU Extension Office, 505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, Ore. Retired East Coast bee specialist Dewey Caron will talk about the 2017 honeybee survey on the effects of various beekeeping practices on colony survival. He will also

speak on “Darwinian Beekeeping” for those who want to create locally adapted survivor bees. Cost: Free

### Friday, July 20

Agriculture Law Seminar 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Oxford Hotel, 10 NW Minnesota Ave., Bend, Ore. This program will examine key legal issues affecting Oregon agriculture including issues related to the environment, water, land use, employment, and bankruptcy. The program will include a timely recap of the 2018 legislative session, and a look ahead to the 2019 legislative session. There will be presentations from the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Farm Bureau Federation. Website: <https://bit.ly/2L8dEOD>

### Wednesday, July 25

Forestry Shortcourse. 9 a.m.-noon. Sandpoint Orchard, 10881 N. Boyer Road, Sandpoint, Idaho. This is the last session of a six-session course. Cost: \$38 Email: [cschnepf@uidaho.edu](mailto:cschnepf@uidaho.edu)

### Thursday, July 26

Fresno Food Expo. 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Fresno Convention & Entertainment Center, 848 M. St., Fresno, Calif. The Fresno Food Expo is a food industry trade event that exclusively showcases California’s biggest brands and hottest new food trends, featuring food and beverage products from every category. Website: [www.FresnoFoodExpo.com](http://www.FresnoFoodExpo.com)

### Friday, July 27

Forest Insect and Disease Field Day. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Bonner County Fairgrounds, 4203 N. Boyer Road, Sandpoint, Idaho. The focus will be on the insects and diseases that can kill northern Idaho trees. Cost: \$15. Website: [www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry](http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry)

### Saturday-Sunday July 28-29, Aug. 4-5

The Great Oregon Steam-Up. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Powerland Heritage Park, 3995 Brooklake Road NE, Brooks,

Ore. Foreign and garden tractors are featured in this year’s event, which also includes a steam-powered sawmill and threshing and hundreds of displays and museums. The Parade of Power is each day at 1:30 p.m. Cost: \$12. Website: <http://antiquepowerland.com/>

### Sunday, Aug. 5

Raised Country Music Festival. 1-6 p.m. Antelope Church Lawn, Antelope, Ore. Steve and RonLee Campbell, a Chuckwagon Barbecue by Paradise Rose Ranch, a petting zoo and face painting; the Mud Springs Gospel Band and Joni Harms are featured. Cost: Free

### Tuesday, Aug. 7

Rice Production Workshop. 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Lundberg Family Farms, 5311 Midway, Richvale, Calif. Topics include rice growth, water management, tillage, variety selection, fertility and weeds. Enrollment is limited to 75 people. Cost: \$100. Website: <http://ucanr.edu/rice2018>

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.