



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

**A Washington state sheriff will use hunters with hounds to track down cougars that cause problems in his county.**

## Washington sheriff takes lead in pursuing cougars

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Central Washington sheriff has sworn in hound handlers to pursue cougars and black bears, saying he expects his office to be quicker and more aggressive in responding to dangerous animals than the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Klickitat County Sheriff Bob Songer said he's heard increasing concerns from ranchers and others about predators.

Since the sheriff took charge of chasing predators last month, a cougar seen in a field with cattle was chased and euthanized, a livestock-protection measure Songer said he doubts Fish and Wildlife would have taken.

"We don't have to wait for a killing," he said. "I feel very strongly that prevention is better than waiting for something to happen."

Fish and Wildlife's chief law enforcement officer, Steve Bear, said he understands the sheriff has a duty to protect the public. He cautioned, however, against using hounds too freely.

In the Pacific Northwest, people expect tolerance toward wildlife, he said.

"Generally, if a cougar has not killed livestock, we do not euthanize the animal," Bear said. "If we ran dogs every time we got a report about a cougar around livestock, the public would take us to task, rightfully so."

Using dogs to hunt cougars is banned in Washington, but wildlife managers can summon hound handlers to track and dispatch problem cougars. Previously, the Klickitat County Sheriff's Office relied on Fish and Wildlife to do that.

State law, however, also gives sheriffs authority to use dogs to remove cougars, black bears, bobcats or lynx to protect livestock, pets, property or people. A rancher recently brought that to his attention, Songer said.

"Otherwise, I would have launched this project much sooner," he said. "My intent is to maintain a good working relationship with the wildlife department. However, the sheriff's office, under this program, will be in charge."

"I feel very strongly that

this program will benefit public safety, and certainly be a big help to farmers and ranchers, and people who have domestic pets."

Klickitat County rancher Keith Kreps said bears and cougars are a growing threat to livestock and people. The problem needs a stronger response than Fish and Wildlife provides, he said. "This is going to be good," he said. "We're going to get on it."

Songer said his office now has a posse of four or five hound handlers.

"We will have the ability to respond 24/7," Songer said. "We can probably make a quicker response due to the fact we have more deputies than they have wildlife people."

Fish and Wildlife assigns two law enforcement officers to the county. They could be patrolling on the Columbia River and hours away from a predator incident, Bear said.

"They aren't always available for public-safety calls," he said. The sheriff's office will "be able to provide a better service for public safety."

Fish and Wildlife won't always pursue a predator that's killed another animal, Bear said. For example, the department may not seek to euthanize a cougar that killed a goat tied up in the woods all night, he said.

"We'll say, 'Well, you really shouldn't have tied up the animal there,'" Bear said. "We talk to people about their animal husbandry at bad times."

"I think what's unusual about the sheriff's policy is that he's using dogs," Bear said. "If the sheriff is careful about when he applies that, he'll be fine."

About 100 cougars were killed statewide last year after being chased by dogs called out by Fish and Wildlife. One cougar that was euthanized had killed a cyclist in King County. Some 244 cougars were harvested by hunters.

Fish and Wildlife estimates Washington has 3,350 cougars, a number based on a formula rather than an actual count. The department says it's not practical to tally cougars and can't say whether the population is increasing.

Because of complaints about cougars by rural residents, particularly in Eastern Washington, the department is studying whether to increase recreational hunting in 2020.

# 'Cowgirl Camps' expanding to keep up with demand

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Another successful season of "New Cowgirl Camps" recently concluded, and more sessions are being planned.

"It turns out there are a whole bunch of women out there who are curious about ranching," said Beth Robinette, the Cheney, Wash., rancher who, with retired veterinarian Sandy Matheson, puts on the event.

The camp provides an introduction to ranching for women. Topics include holistic management, low-stress livestock handling, animal husbandry, fencing and facilities, and business and financial planning.

Robinette and Matheson held two workshops this year, in June and August. They typically draw 11 to 15 people for each session. This was the camp's third year.

This year, they added a demonstration on sheepdog herding and cattle roping.

Their inclusion in a New York Times article about the growing number of female ranchers also increased attention. Robinette and Matheson offered the second camp to accommodate the increased interest.

Participants this year ranged from a fifth-generation rancher taking over her



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File

**Cheney, Wash., rancher Beth Robinette, left, talks about managed grazing during a "Cowgirl Camp" session.**

family operation to a retired airline pilot looking for a second career.

"We get people from all across the spectrum, which is really cool," Robinette said.

Some participants might not ever want to own their own ranch, but are interested in land management issues.

Robinette said she welcomes the opportunity to familiarize urban residents with the realities of ranch life, and for ranchers to be more sensitive to their customers' needs.

If these camps are "Ranching 101," Robinette and Matheson are considering what a 200-level course might look like. Next summer they'll add more in-depth, focused and shorter classes.

"It's an intense five days and we cover a lot of ground, but you can only get so deep into topics when you're trying to cover so much stuff," Robinette said.

Robinette and Matheson also offer a new rancher camp, essentially the same program, but open to men and women.

"We're just trying to create more space for people interested in land management to learn what they should know before they jump into the deep end," Robinette said.

They're also looking for other collaborators to increase their offerings.

Robinette will speak about grazing management and animal husbandry in October during a butchery course for

women in Rice, Wash.

She says the camps are living up to their hopes.

"Sandy and I are both women in ranching, we've both experienced the isolating nature that that role can bring, and we've both experienced a benefit from being around other women doing that work and creating a space that feels safe for new people to come in and try stuff, maybe ask silly questions," she said. "It's a very supportive, encouraging environment ... and I think people are really responding to that."

Robinette expects to announce the schedule for next year's camps soon. The cost to attend the camp is \$995.

## Judge halts 50% pay hike for blueberry pickers

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — A federal judge has blocked the government from imposing a 50% wage hike for blueberry pickers.

The Olympian reports U.S. District Court Judge Salvador Mendoza Jr. temporarily stopped the Department of Labor from implementing a July order raising wages for pickers.

Zirkle Fruit southeast of Seattle sued to prevent the government from starting the new wage structure.

The government notified

Zirkle of the new pay rate on July 24, a day after the increase actually took effect.

Zirkle said it was blindsided by the mid-harvest pay hike. The blueberry harvest began in June and continues through September.

The injunction will remain in effect until it is lifted or the case is resolved at trial.

In the interim, Zirkle is required to deposit the difference between the old and new wages, as well as taxes, into a trust account.



Aliya Hall/Capital Press

**A federal judge has blocked the government from imposing a 50% wage hike for blueberry pickers.**

## Dispute over NORPAC payments to farmers resolved

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Concerns that an agricultural lender was pushing ahead of farmers to be repaid for loans to the bankrupt NORPAC cooperative were resolved during a Sept. 10 court hearing.

In late August, the farmer-owned vegetable processor announced it was selling most of its assets to entrepreneur Frank Tiegs for \$155.5 million as part of a Chapter 11 bankruptcy, which allows companies to operate while restructuring debt.

While the cooperative said suppliers would be "paid in the ordinary course of business," two farms raised objections to a financing agreement intended to keep NORPAC solvent until the asset sale is completed by the end of October.

CoBank, part of the Farm Credit System of agricultural lenders, is owed about \$125 million by NORPAC and is prepared to extend another \$15 million, without which the cooperative and its subsidiaries said they "will not be able to continue the operation of their business."



Capital Press File

**A worker checks mixed vegetables flowing toward bagging machines at a NORPAC plant. A conflict was recently resolved among farmers and an agricultural bank who'd disagreed over priority for repayment when the bankrupt cooperative's assets are sold.**

The problem, according to the farms that raised objections, is that CoBank had structured the agreement so that it would be repaid from sale proceeds ahead of growers who sold crops to NORPAC and whose liens on the cooperative's assets have priority for repayment.

J&M Farming of Echo, Ore., said it's still owed more than \$800,000 for sugar snap peas delivered to the processor in June and July and fully supports the cooperative's continued operations.

However, the company said it's concerned that CoBank would immediately be repaid from sale proceeds while growers would be paid by Tiegs afterwards, even

though he'd acquired NORPAC's assets "free and clear of the growers' liens."

Castle Rock Farming of Boardman, Ore., likewise said it had supplied an unspecified amount of sweet corn to NORPAC and complained CoBank wanted to have its "liens attach to the sale proceeds ahead of producer liens."

"It's something I don't think is reasonable," said Oren Haker, attorney for Castle Rock, during the Sept. 10 bankruptcy court hearing.

The financing agreement must be amended so that CoBank isn't paid before growers who have priority liens, he said. "There needs to be a mechanism to ensure

that's what's going to be what happens here."

CoBank's attorney, Teresa Pearson, said the dispute resulted from a "misunderstanding" of the financing agreement, which preserves the seniority of farmers' liens over the lender's liens.

The bank simply wants assurances that if it extends another \$15 million to keep NORPAC operational, it will be repaid at the time of the sale instead of the repayment being postponed while conflicts among other lien holders are resolved.

"Our concern is just timing," Pearson said.

At one point during the hearing, Bankruptcy Judge Peter McKittrick said he would not sign an order approving the financing agreement if CoBank is repaid ahead of priority lien holders and later gave the parties time to modify the agreement.

CoBank, the farms and other creditors who had filed objections ultimately reported to the judge that they'd agreed to changes and would submit the financing agreement for an approval order.

Under the provisions related to crop payments, farmers would be paid directly out of the sale proceeds or their liens would be assumed by Tiegs, who'd deduct those amounts from the purchase price for NORPAC's assets.

### LEGAL

**PUBLIC LIEN SALE  
U-STORE SELF STORAGE  
SAT, September 21, 2019  
1st location 10 AM  
1668 Industrial Way SW  
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Heidi Henderson, J031; Darrel R Loughmiller, H061; Curtis S Ostlund, J008; Darrell Eugene Sandvig, H037; Drew K Matthews, J015; Brandi Wiebe, H004

**2nd Location 11 AM  
1501 Hawthorne Ave NE  
Salem, Oregon**

Andy Bill Jr, 2F05; Express Medical Supply, RD11, R116; Michelle Gomez, 1F47; Marcella Gonzalez, 2A19; Leah D Grey, 1B12; Randall Jordan, 2A77; Ayla Martin, 1C32, 1G03; Heather A McPherson, 2D72; Ignatius T Mera, 1C27; Kimberly Munz, Y217; Joaquin Alejandro Resendiz Pena, 2A69; Amy Rachele Russell, 1B16; Brian Siegmund, 2A73; Jordan C Thatcher, 1C04; Mary Lou Vasques, 1D28; Kristina Wason, 2B23; Kimberly Wollin, 2B23, 2B25

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### LEGAL

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CHAPTER 87  
Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 9/27/2019. The sale will be held at 10:00am by**

**COPART OF WASHINGTON INC  
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR  
2013 CHRYSLER 200 4DR  
VIN=1C3CCB9D9N556474  
Amount due on lien \$1,485.00**

Reputed owner(s)  
TANYA L SPEAR  
WELLS FARGO AUTO

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