

Investigators perplexed by death, mutilation of cow

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**
Capital Press

HAMPTON, Ore. — Authorities are investigating the mysterious death and mutilation of a cow on a remote ranch at the border between Oregon’s Lake and Deschutes counties.

The range cow, a breeding animal worth about \$850, was found dead and mutilated — her genitals, udder, tongue and heart cut out — last fall at Bar DR Land and Cattle, a property in Hampton owned by ranchers Clancy and Stephen Roth.

The cause of death is unknown.

Lake County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Tom Roark launched the investigation Sept. 18, 2019. The Bureau of Land Management is also on the case. Four months later, Roark said he still has no leads.

“It’s creepy, gives me chills,” rancher Clancy Roth said. “There’s no evidence of who did it or how they killed her. It’s so sad.”

This isn’t the first time the Roths have had their cattle maimed. About 20 years



A cow was found dead and mutilated at Bar DR Land and Cattle, a Deschutes County ranch in Hampton, Ore.



Photos by Clancy Roth

ago, Roth said, her father-in-law and her husband, Stephen, found multiple cattle mutilated in the same way with the same body parts removed.

And the Roths aren’t alone.

In August 2019, a similar incident involving five bulls had occurred at Silvie Valley Ranch in Eastern Oregon.

According to FBI records, thousands of killings and mutilations of cattle have happened across the

U.S. since the 1970s. The animals typically are found with the same body parts missing.

Kenyon Morehouse, the Roths’ ranch hand, found the cow dead when he visited the pasture to fill the water tanks, as he did every morning.

Deputy Roark said it’s hard to discern how the cow died. By the time he arrived on site the morning after getting a call, which he said was “a good hour-and-a-half trip” from the sheriff’s office, it was past the 24-hour win-

dow during which a necropsy could have been performed on the body.

There were no bullets, no strangulation marks, no recent lightning storms, no rope burns on trees, no tire tracks, no shoe prints — and no spilled blood.

Roth said the lack of blood is what troubles her most about her cow’s death.

“The blood was gone,” she said. “It looked like someone snipped her artery and drained her.”

On the ground beside

the cow’s hoof were agitated hoof marks, as though she had struggled in her last moments.

Roark said the missing body parts could not have been taken by scavengers.

“When a pack of coyotes or birds gets to a carcass, not much is left — just bones and hide, unevenly chewed,” said Roark. “This was clean-cut, like it was done with a blade. If somebody was hungry, they would’ve whittled up a chunk of back meat and taken it home. This wasn’t done for food. It was something sinister.”

Roth speculates that her cow may have been poisoned.

She said after the killing, her husband and his friend found a tiny scrap of fiber resembling a feather tip caught in nearby sagebrush. She said she believes the fiber was a fletch — part of a poisonous dart.

Analysis, however, did not point to a suspect.

But why, Roth said she wonders. Who would do such a thing?

The crime site was remote — about a 45 minute drive to

the nearest paved road and about 100 feet off the dirt road.

In cow mutilation cases, theories abound about who’s responsible: aliens, demons, cults, black market organ traders. In the thousands of cases since the 1970s, no culprit has ever been caught.

Deputy Roark said he thinks a cult is using the body parts for some kind of “bizarre medicinal practices.”

The Roths said they also suspect a cult is involved.

“We think it’s a satanic thing,” Roth said. “They’re probably taking the reproductive organs and using or selling them for satanic rituals.”

She also said she wonders if the practice of cow mutilation is tied to certain times or numbers. The number on the cow’s ear tag, Roth said, was doubly unlucky: 1313.

“I’ve seen too many crime scenes,” said Roark. “But this one’s got no evidence. Nothing. It’s really bizarre.”

Those with information about the case should call the Lake County Dispatch Center at 541-947-2504.

Washington bill likens salmon to 4th branch of government

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Tribal-treaty rights make salmon akin to a fourth branch of government in Washington, and fish recovery should guide farming near water, and rural and economic development, according to a bill introduced by Democratic state Rep. Debra Lekanoff.

Lekanoff said builders, cities and counties should follow federal court decisions that guaranteed Western Washington tribes access to fish and that ordered the state to remove culverts that block spawning grounds.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington state Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow, listens to testimony Jan. 27 in Olympia on a bill she introduced to make salmon recovery part of the state’s Growth Management Act.

amend the state’s Growth Management Act and make salmon recovery a priority for local governments. Any harm to fish caused by development would have to be outweighed by fish projects, according to the bill.

The standard — called “net ecological gain” — would go a step beyond requirements to not hurt fish. The higher standard also would apply to the Voluntary Stewardship Program, a conservation initiative championed by the Washington Farm Bureau and embraced by some counties to help farmers preserve fish and wildlife habitat without being regulated off the land.

Tribes and environmental groups have endorsed Lekanoff’s bill. The Farm Bureau, Washington State Dairy Federation, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers and the Washington Potato and Onion Association formally opposed the bill at a House environment

committee hearing Monday.

Farm Bureau director of government relations Tom Davis said the definition of “net ecological gain” was too vague. “That frankly scares us to death,” he said.

Lekanoff said her intent is to avoid more fish-damaging development that has been costly to repair. “Taxpayers are paying a lot of money for what happened in the past,” she said. “This is an opportunity to grow well.”

Lekanoff, the only Native American woman in the Legislature, said likening salmon to a fourth branch was an attempt to give salmon a voice. “I strongly believe in my cultural upbringing,” she said.

The GMA requires local governments to plan for transportation, housing and industrial development, while curbing urban sprawl and preserving farmland. HB 2549 would add a “salmon and steelhead protection and

recovery element.”

Local governments that help salmon won’t be as likely to be sued for violating treaty rights, according to the bill. Cities and counties would be obligated to plan to remove fish barriers.

The bill also would direct the Department of Fish and Wildlife and tribes to set fish recovery goals for cities and counties.

A new state work group, led by the governor’s office, would review activities, including agriculture, in “riparian ecosystems.”

Supporters of the bill said the do-no-harm standard hasn’t been enough to bring back endangered fish runs. Critics said net ecological benefit would amount to an unconstitutional taking of property.

Wolf spotted by trail camera northwest of Medford, Ore.

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

MEDFORD, Ore. — A gray wolf was spotted on camera earlier this month roughly 10 miles northwest of Medford in Southern Oregon.

Sam Dodenhoff, a wolf biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said a trail camera set up by Jacksonville, Ore., resident Eric Anderson captured several images of the animal on Jan. 3, roaming west of Highway 62 in the foothills of the Evans Creek Wildlife Management Unit.

It is the first confirmed report of a wolf in that area, Dodenhoff said, after years of unverified sightings.

“It’s just kind of an interesting set of photographs, and not an area where we’ve been able to document wolves in the past,” Dodenhoff said.

Little is known about the wolf at this time. Dodenhoff said the images, shot in daylight, clearly show it is an adult, though he cannot not tell whether it is male or female. The wolf also was not wearing a GPS collar, making it difficult to know whether it came from out of state or another pack.

“It’s possible that this animal was just moving through, and now it’s out of the area,” Dodenhoff said. “But of course,

they’re wild animals, and you can’t write a script for them.”

The wolf was pictured on public land owned by the Bureau of Land Management. Anderson reported the images to ODFW on Jan. 20, and Dodenhoff said they were able to confirm it was, in fact, a wolf.

The area is also home to several hobby farms and small cattle operations, grazing in a mix of pine conifer forest and different types of terrain. Dodenhoff said there is no evidence the wolf has harassed any livestock, or that it is part of a new pack.

Wolves are federally protected in Western Oregon, though Dodenhoff said producers can use non-lethal deterrents to protect their livestock, such as increasing human presence or installing motion sensor lights.

“At this time, we’re just kid of keeping our ear to the ground,” Dodenhoff said. “It wouldn’t be too concerning at this point.”

Jackson County is no stranger to wolves. Oregon’s famous wandering wolf, OR-7, dispersed from the Imnaha pack in northeast Oregon in 2011, traveling more than 1,000 miles before finding a mate.

The pair had pups in 2014, establishing the Rogue pack which, as of the end of 2018, now has at least six known individuals.



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