

# Outdoor Rec / Local

## On wolves and beef ...



**THE OUTDOOR COLUMN**  
By Todd Arriola

During the last Baker County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee meeting, on Wednesday, February 8, 2017, Richland livestock producer Chad Del Curto claimed the loss of eleven Angus cows, and forty-one Angus calves, from possible depredation. His application, representing the largest claimed loss for 2016, was approved by the committee to be submitted for compensation.

Del Curto brought up a valid point later, post-meeting to this reporter, which he said is often missed: the psychological, as well as the physiological effects of wolf depredation on livestock.

Aside from the claimed loss from physical wolf depredation, which commanded a lengthy discussion during the meeting, Del Curto referenced a study—one of several, he said—conducted by the Burns-based Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center (EOARC), a cooperative between Oregon State University (OSU)

and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service.

An OSU Beef Cattle Sciences Special Research Report, published on June 5, 2013, titled “Impact of Previous Exposure

To Wolves On Temperament And Physiological Responses Of Beef Cattle Following A Simulated Wolf Encounter,” is one of the related studies, to the economic losses due to the presence of wolves in northeast Oregon.

The study, financially supported by the Oregon Beef Council and conducted at EOARC, involved one hundred multiparous, pregnant, non-lactating crossbreed beef cows; fifty from EOARC, a herd (dubbed “CON”) that was unfamiliar with wolves, and fifty from a commercial operation in Council, Idaho, a herd (dubbed “WLF”) that had experienced multiple, confirmed wolf depredation scenarios.

The wolf simulation included cotton plugs, saturated with wolf urine, and attached to the drylot fence; the continuous reproduction of wolf howls; and the walking of trained dogs, outside the drylot perimeter fence. Evalua-

tions of the cattle during the study included temperament (chute score, exit velocity, and temperament score), blood samples, and body temperature.

During the study, one group of ten CON cows was placed in a drylot pen, adjacent to a similar pen, separated by a fence, with ten WLF cows, and upon hearing the simulated wolf howls, which were recorded from Wallowa County area wolves, the WLF cows immediately bunched up in the farthest corner of the pen, staying there during the whole process, while the CON cows remained dispersed (the report included photos indicating that behavior).

Following the simulated wolf encounter, according to the report, the WLF cows became more excitable, and there was an increase in their plasma cortisol and body temperature, however, this effect was not seen in the CON cows (a small increase in the CON cows’s body temperature was attributed to handling and physical activity during the process).

According to the report, “To our knowledge, no other research has evaluated temperament and physiological stress parameters in beef cows previously exposed or not to wolves, and subjected to a simulated or actual wolf encounter...fear of predation and its behavioral and physiological consequences are based on the anticipatory memory of the attack...”

and cows that haven’t been exposed to wolf predation may not experience a fear-related stress response when interacting for the first time, since there aren’t adverse memories of wolf predation to reference.

However, the behavior and responses detected in the WLF cows, according to the report, “...are known to impair performance, reproductive, and health parameters in cattle. These results support the assumption that the impacts of wolf presence and predation on beef cattle systems are not limited to cattle death and injuries, but may also extend to overall productivity and welfare of the herd.”

According to the report, more research is warranted, in order to evaluate the productive and economic losses to beef cattle operations, due to wolf predation.

The report concluded that, “...the simulated wolf encounter increased excitability and fear-related physiological stress responses in cows previously exposed to wolves, but not in cows unfamiliar with this predator. Therefore, the presence of wolf packs near cattle herds may negatively impact beef production systems via predatory activities and subsequent death and injury of animals, as well as by inducing stress responses known to impair cattle productivity and welfare when packs are in close proximity to previously preyed herds.”

## Three charged in game violations

After receiving information of illegal hunting activity occurring in NE Oregon, OSP launched an investigation into the unlawful taking of several trophy class bull elk and mule deer.

The investigation revealed that in September, 2016 Travis Mooden-Baugh of Elgin, Oregon and a juvenile had killed a trophy class bull in the Wenaha Unit without a valid tag. The bull is suspected to have been killed with a rifle during the 2016 archery controlled hunt season. The investigation resulted in multiple search warrants being executed and the collection and analysis of DNA evidence.

Multiple sets of deer antlers, a black bear, a trophy class set of Elk antlers, drug paraphernalia, cell phones, and other items were seized.

On December 19, 2016 Travis Mooden-Baugh was charged with Unlawful Possession of a Game Mammal, Aiding in a Game Violation, and Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine. The juvenile was charged with Unlawful Take of a Game Mammal, Unlawful Possession of a Game Mammal, and Failing to Check-in Bear with ODFW.

After analyzing the seized items another investigation ensued resulting in the discovery of a trophy sized mule deer that was shot on or about November 3, 2016. Investigation revealed the buck was killed in the Catherine Creek Unit by Samuel Neitch of Elgin, Oregon without having a valid mule deer tag.

On January 28th, 2017 Samuel Neitch was charged with Unlawful Take/Possession of a Game Mammal and Tampering with Physical Evidence.

This is the third case in as many months investigated by OSP in which trophy class animals have been unlawfully killed in Union County. One of which the suspect, Nathan Crough Elgin, Oregon, is still at large. A warrant has been issued by the Union County District Attorney's office for his arrest. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Nathan Crouch is asked to contact OSP Senior Trooper Marcus McDowell at 1-541-531-5906 or Email at [marcus.mcdowell@state.or.us](mailto:marcus.mcdowell@state.or.us). Information may be kept anonymous.

## Baker County legislative hotlines scheduled

Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) and Sen. Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) will hold a “Legislative Hotline” (video conference) call once per month during the 2017 Legislative Session.

These appearances, hosted by the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, provide Baker County residents an opportunity

to discuss with the Representative and Senator legislative events and other statewide and local issues of interest.

Those interested should be at the Baker County OSU Extension Office’s media room (2600 East St., Baker City) at 7:00 a.m. (pacific time) on the following dates:

- March 7th at 7:00 a.m. (PST)
  - April 4th at 7:00 a.m. (PST)
  - May 2nd at 7:00 a.m. (PST)
  - June 6th at 7:00 a.m. (PST)
- “These meetings will provide the opportunity to review what is happening in Salem with Baker

County residents. I hope that those who follow the Oregon Legislature will join the two of us talk about proposed bills and other legislative actions. We want to know what you think and what you believe should be happening in the Legislature,” said Rep. Bentz.

## Ferrioli invites all to Cherry Festival

Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli, of John Day, today invited members of the Legislature and all Oregonians to the 38th Annual Northwest Cherry Festival.

The invitation comes on the heels of the passage of Senate Bill 146, which “designates the third Saturday in March of each year as Cherry Blossom Day.” Ferrioli said, “The 38th Northwest Cherry Festival is one of Oregon’s great community celebrations. It features the crowning of King Bing, Queen Anne and Royal Anne and Andy, a grand parade, live music, cruise-in and activities for the whole family.

“This year the Northwest Cherry Festival will take place from April 21st to 23rd in the Dalles, under clear and sunny skies.

Senate Bill 146 is a great opportunity to cross-publicize Salem’s beautiful ornamental cherries and the Northwest Cherry Festival.”

## Hard winter means more wildlife on road

Eastern and central Oregon’s harsh winter season has not only resulted in more snow and ice on the roadway, but it has also contributed to numerous vehicle-wildlife collisions. Exact figures are not available at this time, but both the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife indicate the number of deer and other wildlife on and near roadways is higher than usual.

“Deeper snow in the mountains brings more animals further down into valley areas,” said Randy Lewis, ODFW Assistant District Wildlife biologist. “They are looking for the easiest path that will use the least amount of energy as they search for food.”

The path of least resistance may include sections of highways or other transportation routes. In some cases high snow berms along road shoulders have created corridors where animals get trapped.

Some travelers who express concern about wildlife on the roadway often request more wildlife crossing signs. ODOT says that wildlife warning signs are not very effective at reducing the number of crashes.

“We have numerous wildlife warning signs, including two new signs with flashing lights that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife installed last year along U.S. 20 between Vale and Juntura,” said ODOT District 14 Assistant Manager Jeff Berry.

Unfortunately, motorists have a tendency to become complacent and ignore signs if there are too many of them, or forget about them within a minute or two, especially if they don’t see an associated danger near the sign.

Both ODOT and ODFW agree that the key to avoiding a collision with deer, elk or other critters is to stay alert and be prepared, particularly during early morning and late afternoon.

If you not expecting wildlife on the roadway, you should. They can be just about anywhere in eastern and central Oregon.

Deer typically travel in groups so if you see one slow down and watch out for others. Don’t expect them to do the logical thing, either. Too often deer crossing the highway will unexpectedly reverse direction when they reach the opposite site, heading straight into your moving vehicle.

“Think about what action you would need to take if a deer or elk suddenly bolted across your path,” said Berry.

**Special wildlife crossing**  
In some cases grade-separated wildlife crossings have been constructed to channel animals over or under busy highways, typically using large culverts or bridge-like structures.

In eastern Oregon there are few sites that meet the criteria for a dedicated, grade-separated wildlife crossing. At this time there are no plans to build any in the area.

For more information about ODOT’s wildlife crossing program, plus links to videos and related driving tips <https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION4/Pages/WildlifeCrossings.aspx>.

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