

# Decoys: Plastic coyotes idea came from former Gov. Kulongoski

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on the golf course. We love the elk. They're beautiful. But for a small town, it seems like an awful lot of them."

Sometimes the herd will be "polite" and gently walk across the golf course and skip the greens, Bangild said. "But I can't tell you how many times they've completely ruined greens. Obviously that's a big pain in the neck for the maintenance crew. And a huge expense."

Elk droppings are probably the easiest of elk-related concerns, Bangild said. Those can be scooped up.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Decoys designed to look like coyotes will soon be deployed around the Gearhart Golf Links to try and deter a herd of elk that have been passing through the course for years.

## Beware of elk

While attracting sightseers, Gearhart's Roosevelt elk — the largest of America's largest subspecies — can endanger people and their pets. What you don't know can hurt you.

"The residents are pretty much savvy to them," Goodling said. "They know to stay away from them. It's all the visitors that come and stop. They love to watch them and gawk and take pictures. Last year, when the herd was on the 18th fairway, people came out of the hotel to look at the elk. One guy let his little boy run down to the elk. I yelled, 'You've got to get your boy away from there!' These are wild animals. If something scares them, they'll start stampeding."

At Gearhart Golf Links, staff received a hazing permit from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife allowing use of blowhorns and water cannons — neither of which staff tried.

"They say you can deter the elk with paintball guns," Bangild said. "They get used to that real quick. They're such big animals it doesn't do anything."

Another option was fencing, which would prove costly and ineffective. "I don't think



Submitted Photo Notice sent to Gearhart homeowners this week.

anybody in the town of Gearhart wants that — nor do we," Bangild said.

More drastic measures like culling the herd "can become a huge political nightmare," Goodling said.

"We don't want to eliminate all the elk, we just want them controlled," he said. "Twenty-five, 30 head is fine. But when it's more than that is where we really see our damage. The elk find strength in numbers and they become less afraid of everything."

Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown, the PGA golf pro at the neighboring Highlands course, said he's received suggestions for keeping his course clear of the herd. He's been advised to

change his plantings, erect elk-proof fencing and spread predator animal scents like those being tried at the Gearhart links. "We've tried different sprays to see if it discourages the elk," Brown said. "Nothing's worked."

## Kulongoski's concept

The idea for plastic coyotes came from former Gov. Ted Kulongoski in a conversation with Gearhart Golf Links owner Tim Boyle, Bangild said.

"I Googled 'fake coyotes,' and there are lots of them," Bangild said.

Four small ones arrived Wednesday and four larger ones are scheduled to arrive today.

Bangild and Goodling plan to sprinkle the ground around the decoys with coyote urine. If that doesn't work, they'll up the dosage with bobcat urine.

The decoys will be placed around the perimeter and moved every couple of days, Bangild said. Depending on precipitation, the urine will be replaced as needed.

If the Gearhart Golf Links coyote decoy plan works, "Pretty soon everybody will have a coyote on their lawn," Bangild said.

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