

ANIMALS: Tracking down the owner can be difficult

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has to clear legal hurdles to take animals from someone's property. "Sometimes public perception can likely lead them to believe there is an animal being neglected," Rowan said, "but at the same time we have to be very cautious and establish probable cause and take into considerations all the factors that surround a particular animal."

Sometimes, he said, that even means building a case to the point of obtaining a warrant from the court to entrust the care and custody of animals to the sheriff's office. But often, he said, what looks like neglect or abuse is far from it.

He said a couple of years ago the sheriff's office investigated a case north of Pendleton after people reported horses starving on a pasture. Deputies found there was plenty of food and water, and the horses were under the care of a veterinarian. The only problem the horses had, he said, was they were old, and older animals are more difficult to care for.

The sheriff's office tries to respond quickly to reports of animal abuse and neglect, Rowan said, and red flags go up when there is no food or water around, or when there are no droppings to show animals were eating. The sheriff's office then ramps up keeping an eye on those situations, he said.

Tracking down who owns animals also can be a hassle, he said. The owner of a pasture might rent that to someone who boards another person's horses, and the land owner may not have a clue if there is neglect. The *East Oregonian* was not able to determine who owns the horse or the pasture.

Rowan also said the sheriff's office only has about \$7,500 to help livestock, and seizing and care for a couple of horses goes through that pretty fast. The line already is over budget this fiscal year, he said.

Tamara Brogoitti manages the non-profit Buck Brogoitti Animal Rescue, an 800-acre spread outside Pendleton. The sanctuary now cares for 17 horses but has the space to hold hundreds, she said, if it had the funding and facilities.

"We turn down horses every week, probably in a month at least 80," she said. "You can only take as many animals as you can afford to provide proper veterinary care and proper nutrition."

Brogoitti said she gets calls from folks who expect her to seize horses, but she has no authority to do that. "The animal rescue cannot seize anything," she said. "If we seize an animal, we can be convicted of horse theft."

And probably trespassing.

The sheriff's office use the sanctuary for some seized animals. Brogoitti said rescue horses always need veterinary care and have special needs. And they can live at the shelter for months while the courts resolve cases, either returning animals to owners or giving the green light so the shelter can adopt out the horses. The sheriff's office seized five horses last May, she said, and the last two recently left the shelter.

The rescue operation is in the midst of seeking money and materials to rebuild corals and replace barbed wire fencing with horse fencing. Brogoitti said she and volunteers started work this week to replace perimeter fencing on areas of 134 acres and 74 acres, along with installing interior cross fencing. If the project is successful, she said, the center could help more animals.

She also said the agriculturally dominant economy here means people often see horses as commodities. "We just have to convince the community that it's terribly important in a famous rodeo town that we demonstrate an ability to care for the very animals — the horses — that have defined our community," she said.

Changing that attitude, she said, is a hard sell.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

MILTON-FREEWATER: 40 percent of the population is Latino

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potential sites for downtown improvements.

Popular proposals included a parkway that runs alongside the Little Walla Walla River, the planting of trees along Main Street to unite the disparate downtown areas and a rail line that could transport passengers through town or into surrounding vineyards.

With the recent incorporation of The Rocks District viticultural area, expanding Milton-Freewater's wine industry was a frequent topic of discussion.

Although not discussed at the meeting, boosting involvement from Milton-Freewater's Hispanic



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
A bicyclist rides down Main Street on Monday in downtown Freewater.

community has also been a continual talking point. Despite comprising more than 40 percent of the population, Latino involvement in city government and civic

life is virtually nil. Unhappy with the lack of Latino presence at the first community meeting, the alliance held a meeting specifically for Hispanic

community leaders to provide input.

Grant said Latino leaders' concerns were in lock-step with many of their Anglo counterparts, with an overall emphasis on expanding the local economy.

"There's more ownership from our Hispanics than we give them credit for," he said.

Using the ideas generated by the community members that attended the meetings, SERA will return to Milton-Freewater May 11 with a basic plan for Main Street improvements.

Grant said creating a comprehensive plan is key to the city's revitalization, as community members will use it to leverage private in-

vestment from developers for the needed improvements.

To kick off community efforts, the alliance organized a leadership group to create a project that can be built between July 15 and July 19.

The completed project would be used as an example to Milton-Freewater residents of what a revitalization project could do.

Proposals for the kickoff project include creating a community meeting place in a vacant lot by McLoughlin High School where a Dairy Queen used to stand.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.



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