

Animal census

By **GEORGE PLAVER**
East Oregonian

Umatilla and Morrow counties are home to a variety of animals, including pets, livestock and wildlife. We have things that crawl, things that fly and things that swim; things that provide us food; things that give us friendship; things we ride, things we catch, things we watch and things we'd just as soon avoid.

Taking a census of animals is tricky business. Some populations require estimates and approximations, while others can be pinpointed through surveys and crunching the numbers. The following is an account of just a few species based on available data.



HUMANS
87,892

Taken from the most recent U.S. Census figures, July 1, 2014



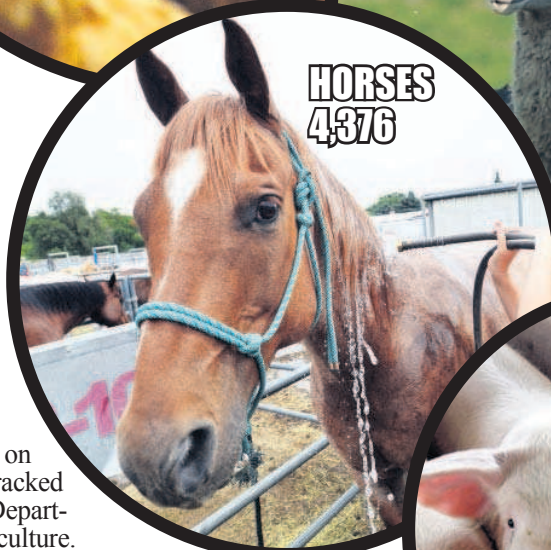
CATTLE
200,186



CHICKENS
30,651



SHEEP
24,900



HORSES
4,376



PIGS
361

Most data on livestock is tracked by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The most recent Census of Agriculture was taken in 2012. Total chickens in Umatilla County recently skyrocketed by 30,000 with the introduction of a commercial egg production facility in Milton-Freewater. Total number of horses includes both livestock as well as an estimated 80 feral horses on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.



DEER
28,900



CATS
19,545



DOGS
17,878

U.S. pet ownership statistics show that 36.5 percent of households own dogs, and 30.4 percent own cats. Census figures show there are 30,615 households in Umatilla and Morrow counties; therefore, by national trends, about 11,174 homes would own dogs and 9,307 homes would own cats. Of those, the average home owns 1.6 dogs and 2.1 cats, arriving at a total estimate of our four-legged companions.

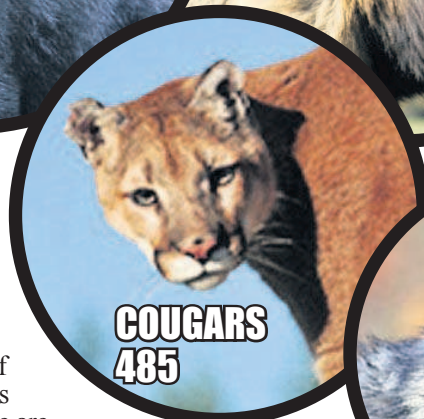
In addition, the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter says it rescued 429 stray cats and 165 stray dogs between the two counties in 2015.



BEARS
1,570



ELK
14,800



COUGARS
485



WOLVES
31



MOOSE
20

Deer and elk populations are tracked by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife in each of 76 management units across the state. There are five units that primarily make up Umatilla and Morrow counties: the Columbia Basin, Heppner, Walla Walla, Mount Emily and Ukiah units.

Bear and cougar numbers are figured by population densities and total habitat in the region. The number of wolves and moose that wander into the area were based on best estimates by ODFW staff.



STEELHEAD
3,600



SALMON
3,000

Migratory fish runs vary from year to year and season to season. The number of salmon and steelhead reflects estimated spring returns to the Umatilla and Walla Walla rivers. Willow Creek no longer supports substantial populations of the fish.

Other river animals, such as beaver and otters, are not closely tracked, though data shows 35 beavers and five otters were harvested in the two counties during the 2014-2015 season.

EAGLES: 28-84

Umatilla and Morrow counties have some of the lowest populations of nesting eagles in the state, according to Frank Isaacs with the Oregon Eagle Foundation. His data shows there are at least 12 golden eagle nesting sites in the region, and another two bald eagle sites at the end of 2007 — though he said the population has increased considerably since then. If each nesting sites contains at least two eagles, that gives 28. But considering migratory and other populations that enter the county, Isaacs said that figure could be double or triple, giving 84. It's not an exact science, Isaacs said, but at least gives some idea.

MOSQUITOES: MILLIONS

A true population density for mosquitoes is too difficult to pinpoint, given the variability region to region. Both the West Umatilla Mosquito Control and North Morrow Vector Control districts said they place traps during mosquito season, and even in areas with mosquito control, they can catch up to 2,000 of the insects in a single night, in a single trap. Multiply that by 50 traps, and that's 100,000 mosquitoes in just one night.