

# WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Umatilla County Fair is a familiar destination for Steve Higgs and his exotic animals.

The Canby-based organization Walk on the Wild Side rescues animals who were either abandoned or unwanted by previous owners. Currently 175 animals are housed on the non-profit's rural property. Clackamas County land use policy prevents Walk on the Wild Side from opening their property for public tours, except during month of October.

Instead, the organization makes most of its money from fairs and festivals, traveling as far as Indio, California, to the south and Yakima to the north.

Walk on the Wild Side has visited Umatilla County Fair seven times, according to Higgs. This will be its third consecutive year at the fair, but Higgs said spectators should expect to see plenty of new species this year.

Walk on the Wild Side's biggest draw

this year will be an adult tiger, Higgs said. A lemur and Canadian lynx could make an appearance, too.

The only hesitation about bringing those exotic animals to Umatilla County is the climate. The sweltering Eastern Oregon heat in August is much different than the Canadian lynx's native cool climate.

"It gets pretty hot there, so we have to be selective about which animals we bring," Higgs said.

To combat the heat, Higgs said his exhibit on Vendors Row next to the rodeo grounds will have swamp coolers near animals. The younger animals in particular struggle with the heat, according to Higgs.

Whether or not you've seen the exhibit before, Walk on the Wild Side's 40-foot viewing area at the fairgrounds figures to have a wide variety of reptiles, felines and farm animals.



EO file photo

**A six-month-old Bengal tiger named Titan plays with a water jug in an enclosure at the Walk on the Wild Side animal exhibit at the 2014 Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.**

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