



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Shane Manke fills a water bin for dogs confiscated from a home near Hermiston over the weekend at PAWS on Monday in Pendleton.

DOGS: People needed to help socialize the dogs

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into fights, so volunteers spread the food out in lines and multiple mounds to separate the dogs.

"The dogs are underweight," Barker said. "A lot of them are unsocialized so they just come up to you and sniff and run off."

The animal rescue workers are trying to gently convince the owner to relinquish the animals so they can get the care they need. So far, they are guarding the person's identity, and law enforcement is not involved.

PAWS welcomed 17 of the dogs this weekend and expects five more by Wednesday.

"None of the animals have been spayed or neutered," said Amy Word, president of the PAWS board. "Most of the females are likely pregnant."

PAWS board member Cindy Spiess said the owner isn't a bad person, just unequipped to deal with the demands of pet owning.

"We're trying to help her," Spiess said. "She can't care for all these animals."

"Sometimes people who are hoarders are collectors," Spiess said. "Initially, they think they are doing good."

Other shelters — Blue Mountain Humane Society in Walla Walla and the Oregon Humane Society — have agreed to take some of the animals.

On Monday morning, PAWS staff member Shane Manke examined each dog for wounds and fleas. He spoke to each animal in a calming voice.

"I'm a big doggie socializer," he said. "I get them out of their shells."

Most of the dogs inside the pens seemed fairly unperturbed, though a few of them trembled. A pit bull terrier, who had been locked in a dark shed, looked out eagerly from one of the pens. Since none of the dogs had names, shelter workers named him Paul.

Such care is expensive. PAWS, which is running on a deficit, hopes for an



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A year old American bull terrier confiscated from a home near Hermiston now resides in a kennel at PAWS in Pendleton.

influx of donations to get through this crisis. In fact, Word said, the shelter is on track for closure in a year if income doesn't increase. Union Pacific Railroad, which owns the property, recently raised the lease amount to \$1,000 per month, up from \$700.

"The railroad apparently reassessed the property," Word said. "That's an extra \$300 per month we don't have."

Monthly income runs about \$14,500 (including \$1,300 from the city of Pendleton, grants and donations). Expenses run about \$17,500 per month. A recent fundraiser at 40 Taps brought in a couple of thousand dollars.

Each dog receives shots, deworming medication, flea medicine, a microchip and spaying or neutering at a total expense of about \$100. That doesn't cover extra staff time necessary to process and care for the dogs, so the \$130 adoption fee doesn't quite cover the cost.

Those wishing to donate can do so

through PAWS Facebook page, the webpage at www.pendletonpaws.org donate or by stopping by during hours of operation. Word and Spiess encouraged anyone wishing to adopt a dog to come in to the shelter at 517 SE 3rd St. and reserve one. They urged people to come down and interact with the dogs to socialize them.

Spiess and Word worry about dogs still stuck in situations of neglect. They say they know of puppy mills in the county that stay under the radar.

"This is not an isolated incident," Spiess said. "There are a bunch of horrific situations out there that we need to address, but we don't have the means to do it."

"This could happen again next week," Word said. "We want these animals taken care of and in good homes. That's why we're here."

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LAB: Has received about 26,500 requests so far this year

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case," she said. "I feel like there needs to be attention brought to what's lacking in how rape cases are handled."

The captain who oversees the Oregon State Police crime lab told *The Oregonian*/OregonLive that the delay is unacceptable.

"In nobody's mind is that OK," said Capt. Alex Gardner.

The sexual assault kit from Simmons' exam was

submitted to the state police crime lab on Dec. 28, 2016.

Oregon's stockpile of thousands of untested sexual assault kits is a longstanding problem that the Legislature tried to address last year with Melissa's Law, named for Portland teen Melissa Bittler, who was killed in 2001 by a serial rapist.

The law is intended to ensure sexual assault evidence is tested in a timely way. The state got \$1.5 million to hire nine

DNA and biology evidence technicians, bringing the total number of staff who analyze the kits and other evidence to 44.

But Gardner said training new staff has taken more than 18 months and required the assistance of current employees, taking them away from analyzing kits themselves.

The agency has chipped away at the backlog even as thousands of new cases stream in, Gardner said.

So far this year, the lab has received about 26,500 requests to analyze a wide variety of evidence, such as firearms, fingerprints and DNA. Of those, 2,123 were for DNA, the majority of them in sex cases.

As of this week, the lab has a total backlog of 1,197 requests for DNA, an estimated 800 or so related to sex crime investigations.

Gardner said 20 "higher priority cases" are ahead of Simmons' case.

WORK: Labor shortage has only worsened over the last decade

Continued from 1A

people to start in June and work through November, but that's becoming more and more rare."

Labor woes are not unique to Smith Frozen Foods — it is an issue that has affected all corners of the agricultural and manufacturing industries, from the farm to the factory. Earlier this year, the *Capital Press* documented workforce worries from cherry growers in Chelan, Washington, all the way down to Linden, California, while the *Oregonian*/OregonLive also spoke to orchards in The Dalles and vineyards in the Willamette Valley.

Locally, both AgriNorthwest and Threemile Canyon Farms declined to speak specifically about experiences at their own operations, though Matthew Vickery, land and government affairs director for AgriNorthwest, did acknowledge that labor

shortage "is a growing problem for everyone in agriculture."

Neither the Oregon Department of Agriculture or Department of Labor and Industries keep statistics on the farm labor. Dallas Fridley, region economist for the Columbia River Gorge and Columbia Basin, provided information from the U.S. Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey, which was last updated in 2013-14.

According to that report, approximately two-thirds of hired farmworkers were born in Mexico, and 80 percent of all farmworkers were Hispanic. Just more than half of farmworkers, or 53 percent, had work authorization, and the vast majority, or 84 percent, were settled in the country.

The reason for the shortage is difficult to prove, Lesko said. Some point to an improved economy in

Mexico, while others may finger the country's failure to adopt a comprehensive immigration policy. For his part, Lesko said he does not see anything happening on a macro-political scale as having much effect on labor at Smith Frozen Foods.

"It is all speculative," he said. "There's no one reason that I think it's a problem."

In fact, Lesko said the problem has only worsened over the last decade. Smith Frozen Foods has taken a number of steps to fill shifts, such as billboards, radio ads, hiring temporary workers from local staffing agencies and providing bonuses to workers who agree to stay through the end of the season. "We're just short," Lesko said. "We're constantly looking."

Labor shortage was a major undertone at the Future Farm Expo earlier this year in Pendleton, where growers met with leaders in

cutting-edge technology and automation for agriculture. The three-day showcase featured a variety of trials using equipment such as drones, smartphone apps and even virtual reality.

Lesko said Smith Frozen Foods is automating where it can, though a lot of that tech may not be available or affordable for the plant.

"I don't see any solution (to labor shortage) on the horizon," he said.

Fortunately, Lesko said the issue did not affect the size or quality of this year's harvest at Smith Frozen Foods. Crews have not been forced to bypass fields, and the company has managed to keep up with its orders.

"We haven't been bypassing fields based on the fact that we can't harvest the product or process the product," he said. "We typically try to harvest to what we think our orders are. That hasn't changed."

Shoppers take to their phones for Cyber Monday deals

By JOSEPH PISANI
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK — Weeks of deals didn't stop people from heading online to shop on the Monday after Thanksgiving.

Cyber Monday is likely to be the biggest U.S. online shopping day ever, according to Adobe Analytics, the research arm of software maker Adobe. Nearly \$6.6 billion in sales were forecast by the end of the day, up about 17 percent from a year ago, Adobe said. And more people are picking up their phones to shop: Web traffic from mobile devices, including tablets, is expected to top desktop computers for the first time this year, Adobe said.

When Frank Yanover browsed Amazon's Cyber Monday deals through his phone, he wasn't looking for anything in particular. But he spent \$300 on a Vitamix blender that he had eyed before, which he said was a \$200 discount.

"I never bought it because it was so expensive," said Yanover, who is retired and lives in Hollywood, Florida.

Over the holiday weekend, he bought an iPad from Best Buy through his phone and then picked it up at a store. And using his voice-activated Echo, he bought Amazon's \$30 Echo Dot for his bedroom, which was \$20 off.

Others seem to be doing the same. The Echo Dot was the top-selling electronic item on Amazon, followed

by the Fire TV. Board games, Fingerlings and Legos were best-sellers in Amazon's toy section.

Over at eBay, one \$745 Apple MacBook Air was sold every five seconds, the company said. And J.C. Penney said its top-selling items on its website were towels, \$25 diamond stud earrings and a Liz Claiborne bag that has a built-in phone charger.

Target and Toys R Us offered 15 percent off most items. Walmart.com tripled the amount of items available on its site from last year. But Amazon is expected to be the big winner over the holiday season, with Bain & Co. expecting the online retailer to capture 50 percent of all online sales growth this year.

C. Britt Beemer, the chairman of the consumer-focused America's Research Group, says computers and smaller electronics were the top-sellers this Cyber Monday, followed by clothing. "It's easier to ship," he says about apparel.

The shift to online shopping has been noticeable even before Cyber Monday. At a Toys R Us in Toledo, Ohio, on Friday, the parking lot was about half full. Melissa Wetzels, who said she would also do some shopping online, said her Black Friday in-store shopping had been relaxing since she didn't have to fight the crowds.

"It's been pretty easy," she said. "I guess most are shopping online."



L'Osservatore Romano/Pool Photo via AP

Pope Francis is welcomed by Cardinal Charles Maung Bo upon his arrival at the airport in Yangon, Myanmar, Monday.

Pope meeting Suu Kyi on Myanmar refugee crisis amid outcry

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Pope Francis begins his first full day in Myanmar traveling to the country's capital Tuesday to meet with the civilian leader, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, a day after hosting the military general in charge of the crackdown on the country's Muslim Rohingya minority.

Francis' speech to Suu Kyi, other Myanmar authorities and the diplomatic corps in Naypyitaw is the most anticipated of his visit, given the outcry over the crackdown, which the U.S. and U.N. have described as a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" to drive out the Rohingya from northern Rakhine state.

The operation, launched in August after Rohingya militants attacked security posts, has sent more than 620,000 Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh, where they have reported entire villages were burned and looted, and women and girls were raped.

Myanmar's Catholic leaders have stressed that Suu Kyi has no voice to speak out against the military over the operation, and have urged continued support for her efforts to move Myanmar toward a more democratic future that includes all its religious minorities, Christians in particular. How Francis bridges the local Catholic concerns with his legacy of speaking out for oppressed minorities is the key to watch in his speech in Naypyitaw.

Francis dove into the crisis hours after arriving on Monday by meeting with

the commander responsible for the crackdown, Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, and three members of the bureau of special operations. The Vatican didn't provide details of the contents of the 15-minute "courtesy visit," only to say that "They spoke of the great responsibility of the authorities of the country in this moment of transition."

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing's office said in a statement on Facebook that he is willing to have "interfaith peace, unity and justice." The general added that there was no religious or ethnic persecution or discrimination in Myanmar, and that the government allowed different faith groups to have freedom of worship. Rohingya Muslims have long faced state-supported discrimination in the predominantly Buddhist country and were stripped of citizenship in 1982, denying them almost all rights and rendering them stateless. They cannot travel freely, practice their religion, or work as teachers or doctors, and they have little access to medical care, food or education.

Myanmar's Catholic Church has publicly urged Francis to avoid saying "Rohingya," a term shunned by many here because the ethnic group is not a recognized minority in the country. And they have urged him to toe a delicate line in condemning the violence, given the potential for blowback against Myanmar's tiny Catholic community.