

HUB: 'What we do here is amazing and spread across 20 years'

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That's the type of thing many of the company's employees wish people understood when they criticized the massive corporation. Becky Lowrance, who has worked at the DC since it first opened in 1998, said critics often miss all of the community service and donations provided by the company in addition to providing stable employment for so many people.

She pointed to the Walmart Heart Program, in which drivers for the company "adopt" children with chronic or terminal illnesses for a special day focused on lifting their spirits.

"We have a lot of drivers volunteer their time to it," she said. "For me, it has been my baby for a long time. I tear up any time I think about it."

Lowrance was working

as a waitress when the DC was being built, and decided to apply after some of the managers there for the hiring spree started frequenting the restaurant where she worked. She started out in the warehouse and is now the transportation operations manager.

Miguel A. Omelas, another operations manager, said he started at the Distribution Center after graduating from college and figuring he could work for Walmart until he got a "real job." Twenty years later he is happy to still be with the DC, where 80 percent of the management was promoted from within.

"They were so growth-focused on the associates and their development," he said. "They made me feel part of a team."

After speeches, cake and a special recognition by name of each of the 50 employees



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Managers who worked their way up from associates take the stage to be recognized during a 20th anniversary celebration for the Hermiston Walmart Distribution Center on Monday.

who have been with the DC from the beginning, attendees were offered tours of the facility.

The distribution center acts as a hub, taking in shipments of everything from dog food to kayaks from the company's various

suppliers and then sorting them into trucks bound for 106 individual stores across the western United States.

"Say Johnson & Johnson sends us a box with 70 shampoos and a store only needs 12, we can pluck those out of a box and send them

to the store," said HR office manager Kristina Olivas during a tour.

The process is helped along by a combination of 22 miles of conveyor belts winding through the facility and an army of associates who can wrap up individual items on pallets or handle items too large or fragile for the conveyor belts. After boxes are unpacked, flattened and sent back out of the center in loads they will be reused multiple times until they wear out.

At the end of the process are the associates who load the outbound trucks.

"It's not a matter of just loading everything onto trailers, it's actually quite intricate," Olivas said, likening it to "a giant game of Tetris."

The associates must quickly fit a variety of odd-shaped cases and pallets

in as efficiently as possible, keeping labels upright while also taking into account factors like a safe weight distribution for when trailers are turning sharply.

The massive facility is the last of that specific design built before a new design was implemented, but the company is impressed with what the facility's employees have accomplished, and Burns said as general manager he hoped everyone who worked at the Hermiston Walmart Distribution Center was extremely proud of their work.

"I just want to close with one word and that's 'proud,'" he said. "... This team is amazing, what we do here is amazing and spread across 20 years that's amazing."

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WOLVES: Horseback riders chased predators away

Continued from 1A

The rancher's request asked that the state kill all eight wolves in what has recently been dubbed the Pine Creek pack, but the state is using what it calls incremental take — authorizing the lethal removal of two wolves in an attempt to change the wolf pack's behavior.

OR-50 is the breeding male of the pack, a wolf involved in repeated kills in Wallowa County last year when he was a member of the Harl Butte Pack.

According to George Rollins, Oregon Cattlemen's Association wolf committee co-chairman, rancher Chad Delcurto turned out 130 cow and calf pairs into a private pasture Wednesday, April 4. The cattle were held overnight in a corral so the mothers and calves could find each other in a safe enclosure.

On Thursday, the cow/calf

pairs were driven up from the corrals to higher ground. Rollins said the cattle were held to make sure they paired up again. There were no wolf sightings that afternoon, yet the next day an employee of Pine Valley Ranch was scouting for a hunting trip and saw wolves chasing and attacking Delcurto's cattle.

"He (ranch employee) ran to them, video taped them and then contacted everyone he could get in touch with Chad," Rollins said.

Delcurto assembled a crew on horseback to check the cattle. The horseback riders rode into the middle of wolves among the cattle and attempted to chase the predators away.

While checking the herd the horseback crew found two dead calves approximately one mile apart from each other. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff in Baker County as well as Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash and Deputy Rob Adams

performed an investigation.

"A picture was taken of a cow standing over her dead calf with wolves 20 feet away," Rollins said.

Rollins said another crew was assembled April 7 to gather the entire herd and determine if there were any further losses. During the gathering the horseback riders discovered wolves attacking another calf.

"Riders harassed the wolves (five wolves were visible at the site) and drove them over the ridge west of where the attack took place," Rollins said.

The calf had significant bites with visible open wounds on both rear legs. Rollins said it was unable to travel and was left behind with his mother who was also showing lameness. At the corrals, 130 cows were counted and 124 calves, including the pair left on the hillside. Four of those calves showed visible wounds on their rear legs and

hindquarters.

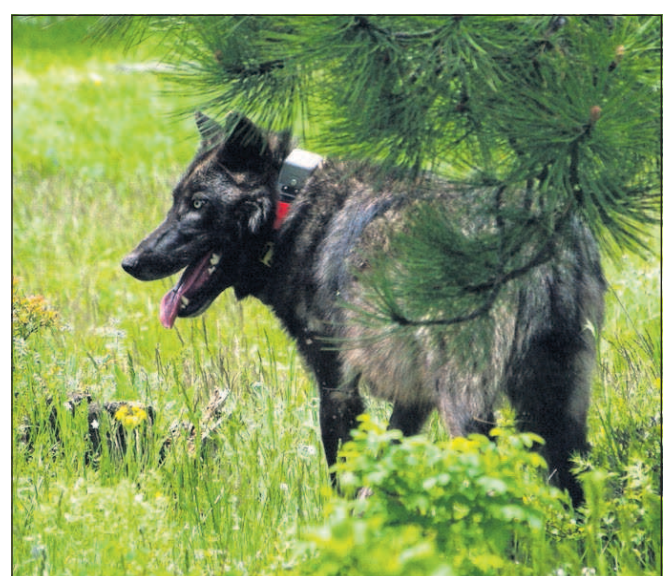
The calf left on the hillside was later euthanized and the carcass investigated. Again, wolves were seen in close proximity during the investigation.

"So at this point Chad had three calves confirmed killed, four confirmed injured and three missing in 48 hours," Rollins said. "If you total that up, sold as 550 pound calves, that's a \$10,000 loss."

According to Michelle Denney of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, OR-50 moved into the Pine Creek Wildlife Unit in Baker County last fall and joined up with a female wolf, OR-36.

Rollins said there have been regular sightings of wolves within 400 yards of the Pine Valley Ranch shop outside of Halfway where he recently retired as manager. Fish and Wildlife biologists have repeatedly hazed wolves away from the ranch headquarters.

"The ODFW guys have



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

This May 2014 photo shows OR-26, a 100-pound adult male, after he was fitted with a GPS tracking collar outside La Grande. Baker County ranchers have asked the state to kill wolves involved in livestock attacks.

done a remarkable job hazing — they were concerned there would be depredations in the spring time," Rollins said. "They ran wolves probably 20 miles with helicopters back into the forest to the Imnaha River again and that lasted about 36 hours."

In the next few days

Rollins said eight more producers are getting set to turn out cattle in the low hills where Delcurto's cattle are grazing. Convinced the wolves will continue attacking livestock, Rollins said he anticipates a decision from the state on the kill request this week.

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