

# Bacteria ravages bighorn lambs

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A bacterial infection continues to wreak havoc on lambs in Baker County's two bighorn sheep herds.

A state wildlife biologist said officials will continue to strive, through annual testing, to identify adult sheep that constantly shed the bacteria, and then euthanize those animals to try to protect the herds.

"They're not faring well at all," said Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office. "But I think there's a very good possibility that with enough effort, and some luck, we will get through this."

The effort could take four to five years, Ratliff said.

Biologists first became aware of the problem in February 2020, when dead bighorns were found near the Snake River Road at the county's eastern edge. Those sheep are part of the Lookout Mountain herd, Oregon's biggest herd of the Rocky Mountain subspecies with about 400 sheep prior to the bacterial outbreak.

Later in 2020 biologists also confirmed the

same strain of Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae bacteria had infected bighorns in the county's other herd, in the Burnt River Canyon between Bridgeport and Durkee.

The Burnt River Canyon bighorns, which previously numbered about 85 animals, are of the California subspecies, which are somewhat smaller than Rocky Mountain bighorns.

Biologists believe all of the 65 to 70 lambs born in the Lookout Mountain herd in the spring of 2020 died from pneumonia, which results from the bacterial infection.

Ratliff estimated at least 75 adult bighorns from the Lookout Mountain herd also died in 2020.

An aerial survey of the herd in late 2020 turned up about 250 sheep, compared with 403 in a 2018 aerial census.

To maintain the herd population requires a minimum of 20 lambs per 100 ewes, Ratliff said. The average ratio for the Lookout Mountain herd is 38 lambs per 100 ewes, and the number ranged from a high of 67 per 100 to a low of 24.

Ratliff said biologists were initially optimistic at the start of this summer that the worst of the outbreak had passed. As of mid June, biologists hadn't found any dead lambs



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

**A group of bighorn sheep, including a lamb, in the Lookout Mountain unit in eastern Baker County on June 20, 2020. A state wildlife biologist said it's likely that no lambs born in 2020 survived an outbreak of pneumonia caused by a bacterial strain. The illness continues to kill most lambs in the herd, and also is affecting the county's other group of bighorns, in the Burnt River Canyon.**

from the 2021 crop, nor any that were coughing or otherwise appeared to be sick.

"We started out really, really good," Ratliff said.

But the situation quickly turned bad.

Once ewes and lambs started to congregate in large groups, as they typically do during summer, due in part to

the scarcity of water sources, people started reporting dead lambs in the Lookout Mountain unit, Ratliff said.

As of Monday, Aug. 30, Ratliff said, ODFW knows of just five lambs from the Lookout Mountain unit that have survived.

Ratliff said biologists haven't found any lambs in

the Burnt River Canyon herd, although he said those sheep are harder to track due to the terrain.

Sheep in the Burnt River Canyon began dying around October 2020, and Ratliff believes sheep from that herd crossed Interstate 84 earlier in the year, mingled with Lookout Mountain bighorns and

became ill, then returned and began spreading the bacteria among Burnt River Canyon sheep.

## Source of bacteria remains mystery

Ratliff said biologists don't know how the Lookout Mountain herd was initially infected with the bacteria.

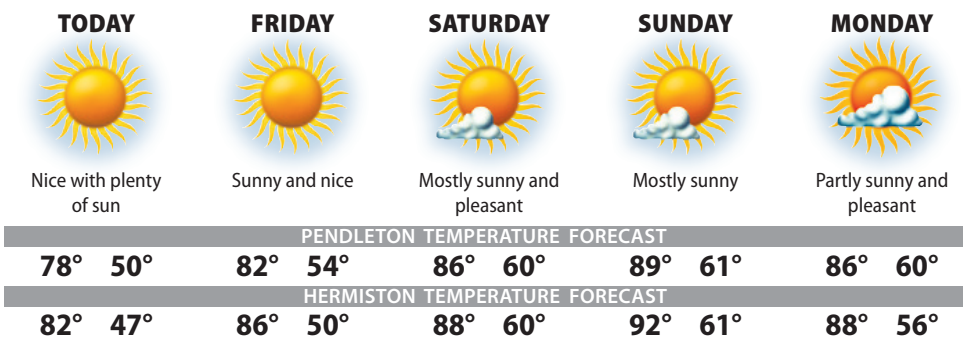
Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae bacteria are not known to be carried by cattle, but domestic sheep can be infected.

Domestic sheep graze on a public land allotment, overseen by the Bureau of Land Management, in the Lookout Mountain unit, Ratliff said. None of the domestic sheep that graze on that allotment has been tested for the bacteria.

Sheep from two other domestic flocks near Richland, at the north end of the Lookout Mountain unit, were tested in 2020 and none was carrying the bacteria, Ratliff said. A llama owned by a resident along the Snake River Road also was tested and was negative for the bacteria.

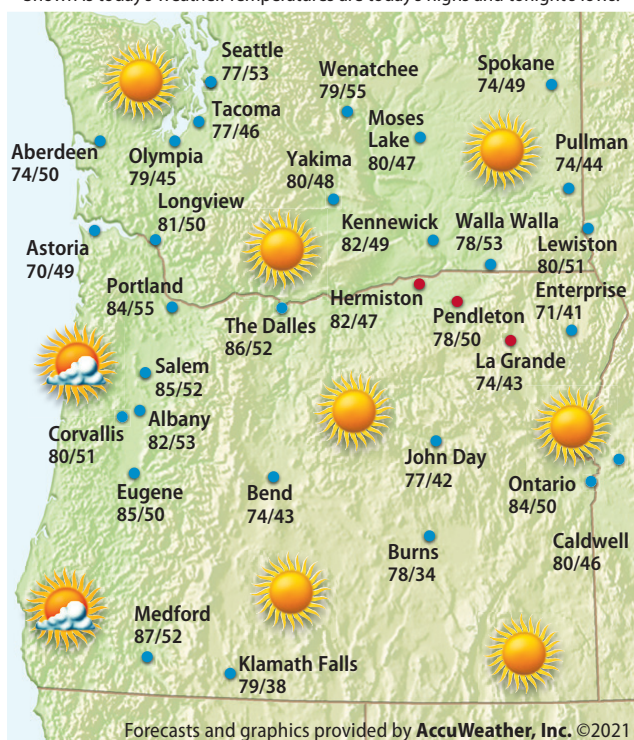
Ratliff said the strain of bacteria in both Lookout Mountain and Burnt River Canyon herds has not been detected in bighorns in Idaho, which can potentially mingle with Oregon bighorns.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

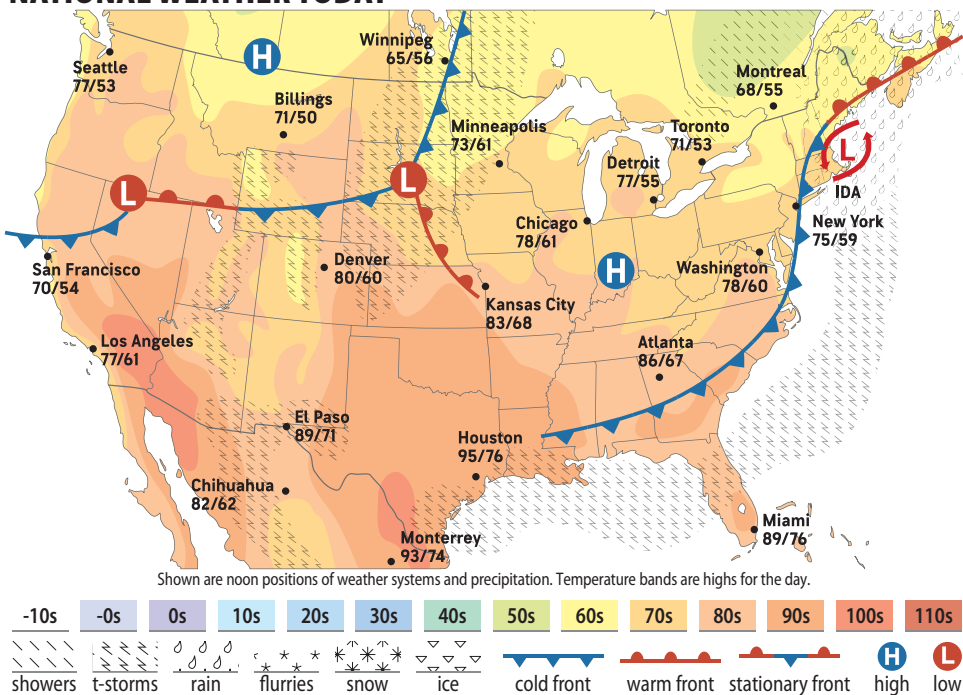
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	72°	40°
Normals	85°	54°
Records	102° (1893)	36° (1905)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.00"	
Normal month to date	0.01"	
Year to date	4.37"	
Last year to date	8.68"	
Normal year to date	8.66"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	75°	42°
Normals	86°	52°
Records	101° (1967)	39° (1965)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.00"	
Normal month to date	0.01"	
Year to date	1.93"	
Last year to date	1.66"	
Normal year to date	5.32"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Fri.	
Boardman	NNE 4-8	
Pendleton	NNW 6-12	
	N 4-8	
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:18 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:31 p.m.	
Moonrise today	1:09 a.m.	
Moonset today	5:37 p.m.	
New	First	Full
Sep 6	Sep 13	Sep 20
		Sep 28

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 104° in Zapata, Texas Low 27° in Meacham, Ore.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Walla Walla man allegedly found naked inside woman's home

By JEDIDIAH MAYNES  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — A Walla Walla man recently released from prison was allegedly found naked inside a stranger's home and rearrested.

Jon P. Saunders, 37, had his bail set at \$25,000 for the alleged crimes Monday, Aug. 30, by Judge M. Scott Wolfram in Walla Walla County Superior Court.

Prosecutors filed charges this week for residential burglary — a Class B felony — and two counts of sexually motivated indecent exposure — Class C felonies.

According to court documents, Saunders was first spotted naked in the 1000 block of Hobson Street shortly after 5 a.m. Friday, Aug. 27.

A woman described the man to Walla Walla police officers, and as they patrolled the neighborhood they spotted someone matching the description naked inside a home in

the 1200 block of Hobson Street, records showed.

Police knocked on the door, and "about 10 seconds later" heard a woman screaming. She ran out of the house and said there was a strange man naked inside, according to the documents.

Police entered the home and found Saunders attempting to hide himself.

Officers said Saunders appeared "very high" and had scratches on his back. Police arrested him.

The officer said they found evidence that Saunders may have broken in through a dog door. They also found the woman's garden shed had been entered, and they reportedly found pants in the shed containing Saunders' identification card, EBT card and a bag of what they suspected to be methamphetamine, according to the court documents.

Saunders has had several other previous felony convictions, including his most recent conviction in October 2020, when he was sentenced

to two years in prison, according to the Washington Courts database.

However, many of Saunders' previous arrests and felony charges had to do with drug possession, which has been deemed non-criminal because of a ruling earlier this year by the Washington state Supreme Court.

According to the database, at least one of his felony convictions was vacated in April.

Walla Walla County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Michelle Morales said in court that Saunders was recently released from prison and she held some "serious concerns" about his behavior.

"He terrified the woman living at this residence," Morales said in requesting the \$25,000 bail.

Saunders was listed on the online Walla Walla County Jail roster as of Aug. 31.

Saunders is scheduled to be arraigned Sept. 13 for the new charges.

## IN BRIEF

### Work continues on fire in Elkhorns

BAKER CITY — Firefighters continued to work Tuesday, Aug. 31, to douse an 80-acre, human-caused fire reported Aug. 30 in an alpine area of the Elkhorn Mountains about 13 air miles northwest of Baker City.

The exact cause of the fire, which is in the upper Rock Creek canyon about 1-1/4 miles northwest of Rock Creek Lake, hasn't been determined, and the

investigation is continuing, according to the Walla-Whitman National Forest.

The fire is burning mainly in subalpine fir trees, according to Peter Fargo, public affairs officer for the Walla-Whitman National Forest. Fires can move rapidly in subalpine fir forests, as those trees have high concentrations of flammable oil in their needles, and their branches tend to start near the ground, making it easier for fire to spread from the ground to

the trees' crowns.

Because access is difficult in the area, with few roads and steep terrain, the initial attack on the fire Aug. 30 was largely from the air, with air tankers dropping retardant and helicopters dumping water for several hours.

The La Grande Inter-agency Hot Shot 20-person crew, a crew from the Umatilla National Forest and other firefighters from the Walla-Whitman worked on the blaze on Aug. 31.

—EO Media Group

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

# EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211  
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:



East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.

Copyright © 2021, EO Media Group

### Circulation Dept.

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

### Single copy price:

\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

### ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director (Eastside) EO Media Group:

• Karrine Brogionti

541-963-3161 • kbrogionti@eomediagroup.com

### Multimedia Consultants:

541-564-4531

• Audra Workman

541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

### Business Office

• Dayle Stinson

541-966-0824 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

### Classified & Legal Advertising

Classified advertising: 541-564-4538

Legal advertising: 541-966-0824

classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

### NEWS

- To submit news tips and press releases: call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com
- To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email community@eastoregonian.com or call Renee Struthers or Amy Velho at 541-966-0818.
- To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
- To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

### COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska

541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com