

'Deervid' not a concern for Oregon, officials say

By ALEX WITTWER
EO Media Group



A group of young deer make their way across a field near Hunter Road in Summerville on Jan. 17, 2022. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife officials are not concerned about the presence of COVID-19 among the white-tailed deer population in Oregon.

Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

LA GRANDE — The presence of COVID-19 among the white-tailed deer population in Oregon isn't known, according to officials with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and it's unlikely to be a concern.

Reports of infections running rampant in the Midwest's white-tailed deer population spurred numerous news outlets to pen articles extolling the dangers of a COVID-19 reservoir in the wildlife population. The presence of COVID-19 in deer has been detected in 15 states, including Iowa, Michigan, Illinois and New York, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Oregon officials aren't too concerned however, and said the probability of infection among the hoofed ruminant population was low, and lower still was the chance the deer could reinfect humans.

"It's a low probability," said Colin Gillin, state wildlife veterinarian for ODFW. "It's not been shown that it's a threat to Oregonians."

Gillin said that due to the relatively low population of white-tailed deer in Oregon, as well as the lack of petting zoos, research facilities or farms meant that human-to-

deer contact is remote.

In fact, most interactions between Oregonians and white-tailed deer generally involve firearms.

If there's a concern among hunters, Gillin said, proper sanitation, vaccinations and mask wearing can mitigate the risk of exposure of COVID-19 to the wildlife

population in Oregon, and to hunters.

The veterinarian also noted that in the case of a disease such as COVID-19, the virus would change due to absorbing DNA from the host.

"When a virus goes into a new host or a new species, it takes on some of the genetic

material of that species or host and it changes the virus a bit," Gillin said.

Gillin also said there's "not a lot of evidence at this point that it easily goes into other species of deer like blacktail deer, mule deer or elk."

"It may," he said, "but so far there's been no evidence

that it causes disease in the deer, and there's no documented evidence that it comes back out of the deer, so it's acting like a zoonotic disease."

Deer aren't the only animals to have been known to suffer COVID-19 infections. Early in the pandemic, mink farms suffered tremen-

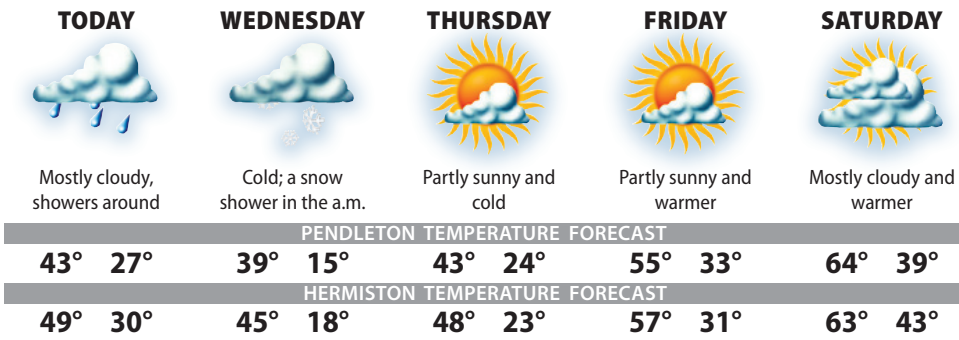
dous losses as farms across the world culled their minks due to the virus running rampant. Denmark culled nearly 17 million minks in November, 2020, after it was found the virus had been transmitted from minks, mutated and was transmitted back to the human handlers, according to reports from NBC news.

But whether or not the virus will be seen in Oregon's deer population remains a mystery. Officials with the ODFW aren't actively testing or researching the virus in Oregon herds. But it's also unlikely infected deer from the Midwest would end up in Eastern Oregon, given that the longest recorded migration path of a white-tailed deer is less than 400 miles.

Still, Gillin said the state is keeping close watch on any new developments regarding COVID-19 in the wildlife population.

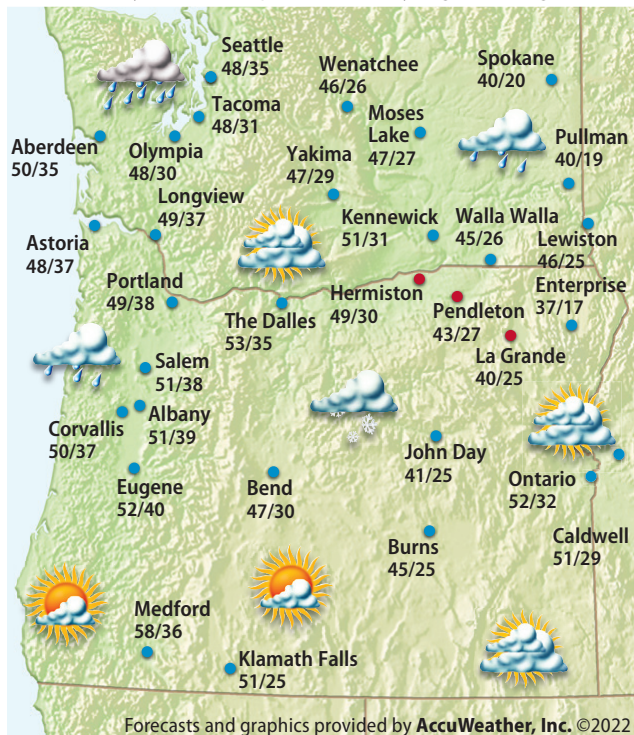
"There's quite a few really good researchers out there working on this in the Midwest. They're putting a lot of resources into it and we're in contact with those individuals," Gillin said. "We have our ear to ground on the topic, but we're not engaged in active research in Oregon because of the low risk."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



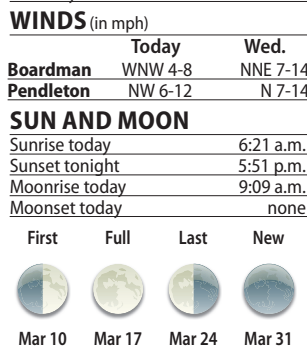
OREGON FORECAST

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



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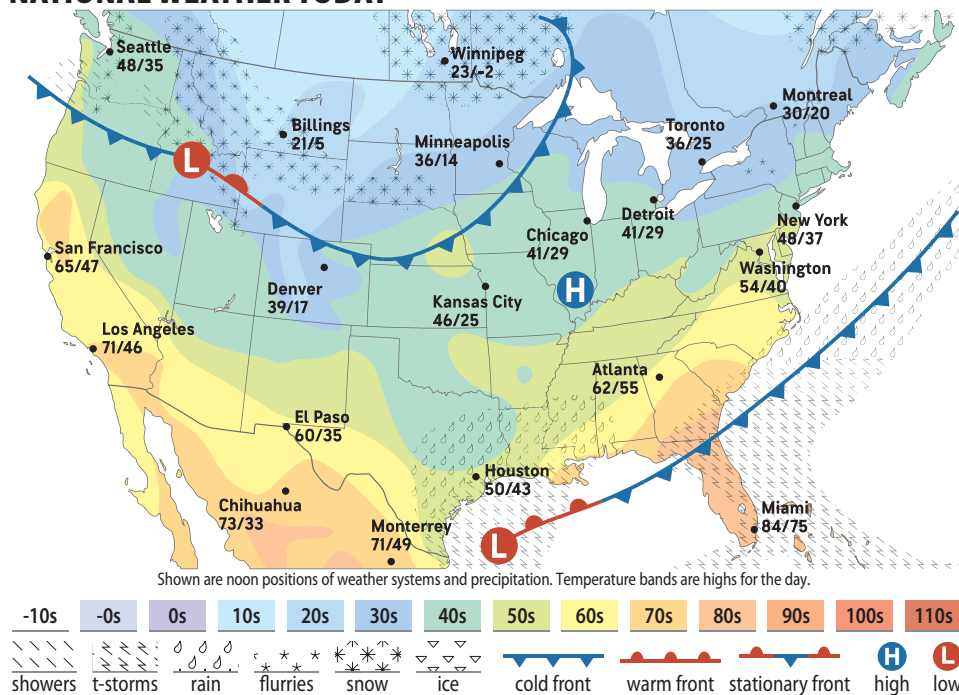
| PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest. | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW |
| Yesterday | 59° | 32° |
| Normals | 54° | 33° |
| Records | 75° (1904) | 19° (1931) |
| PRECIPITATION | | |
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00" | |
| Month to date | 0.36" | |
| Normal month to date | 0.27" | |
| Year to date | 2.80" | |
| Last year to date | 3.06" | |
| Normal year to date | 2.96" | |
| HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest. | | |
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW |
| Yesterday | 64° | 27° |
| Normals | 57° | 32° |
| Records | 75° (1979) | 14° (1931) |
| PRECIPITATION | | |
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00" | |
| Month to date | 0.43" | |
| Normal month to date | 0.16" | |
| Year to date | 1.49" | |
| Last year to date | 1.65" | |
| Normal year to date | 2.16" | |
| WINDS (in mph) | | |
| Today | WNW 4-8 | |
| Wed. | NNE 7-14 | |
| Boardman | WNW 6-12 | |
| Pendleton | NW 6-12 | |
| SUN AND MOON | | |
| Sunrise today | 6:21 a.m. | |
| Sunset tonight | 5:51 p.m. | |
| Moonrise today | 9:09 a.m. | |
| Moonset today | none | |



NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 91° in Plant City, Fla. Low -18° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Skier dies in accident near Anthony Lakes Ski Area

The Observer

NORTH POWDER — A Washington college student died following a skiing accident Saturday, March 5, on the northwest slope of Gunsight Peak, southwest of the Anthony Lakes Ski Area.

Ella Carr, 20, a student at Whitman College in Walla Walla, was seriously injured after losing control and crashing into trees, according to a La Grande Fire and North Powder Rural fire department press release. The search and rescue teams from the Union and Baker county sheriff's offices, plus crews from the La Grande and North Powder Rural fire departments, U.S. Forest Service law enforcement and the Anthony Lakes Ski Patrol

all responded to the accident.

In addition to the responding ground resources, a Life Flight medevac helicopter was ordered, along with a hoist-capable medevac helicopter from the Oregon Army National Guard due to the steep terrain and reported severity of injuries.

About one hour and 20 minutes after the initial call of the accident was received at 11:22 a.m. a ski patrol and Anthony Lakes staff managed to climb up the approximately 38-degree slope and reach Carr. They assessed the situation, and then initiated transport down to the base of the peak where arriving La Grande Fire Department paramedics, search and rescue teams from the Baker and Union

County sheriff's offices, USFS law enforcement and additional ski patrol personnel had begun accessing the area.

Tracked utility vehicles and snowmobiles were used to reach the base of the peak, but the slope of the peak itself was accessible only by foot due to hazards and steepness of the terrain. During this time, an Oregon Army National Guard helicopter was flying to the scene from Salem.

The team of ski patrol and Anthony Lakes staff navigated down the steep slope and met with incoming SAR and medical personnel, at which time it was confirmed by paramedics that Carr had died from injuries sustained in the ski accident.

IN BRIEF

EOU announces plan to lift mask mandate

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University soon will lift its mask mandate, the university announced Friday, March 4.

Beginning March 12, in most indoor EOU settings, masks will be welcomed but will not be required, according to a press release from the school.

State and federal requirements for wearing masks in health care settings, within public transit and in other specialized settings will remain in place at this time. This means masks will have to be worn at EOU's student health center.

EOU's move comes after Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced on Feb. 28 that starting March 12 the states of Oregon, California and Washington collaboratively will no longer require masks to be worn in indoor public places.

"In accordance with the changes in statewide requirements, EOU will repeal its COVID-19 Pandemic Face Covering Policy. Masks continue to be available near building entrances throughout campus," the press release said.

EOU will continue to monitor COVID-19 cases and will remain in contact with local and

state health officials as it moves through changes in other safety and health protocols.

Teen arrested following Prairie City shooting

PRAIRIE CITY — A 16-year-old male has been arrested for the Friday, March 4, shooting of a Prairie City teen, according to the Grant County Sheriff's Office.

In a March 5 press release, Sheriff Todd McKinley said the shooter faces charges of recklessly endangering another person and unlawful use of a firearm.

McKinley said the shooter, who knew the victim and her boyfriend, was at 401 N. Washington St. before a caller reported the shooting a little after 4 p.m. March 4.

According to emergency dispatchers, the person who called 911 stated the girl's boyfriend accidentally shot the girl and then fled; McKinley confirmed March 5 that was not the case.

According to McKinley, Grant County Juvenile Department transported the suspect to a juvenile facility in Bend.

The victim, McKinley said, suffered significant trauma to the head and was flown to another medical facility.

—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.

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