

# Wallowa chicken processor suffers losses due to hailstorm

By **ANDREW CUTLER AND BILL BRADSHAW**  
*Wallowa County Chieftain*

WALLOWA — Mary Hawkins was outside washing crates when she noticed a storm building up on the horizon.

“When the hail started I was like, almost giggly, like ‘Ha ha, it’s hailing. I’m gonna hop inside,’” said Hawkins, who owns Hawkins Sisters Ranch with her sister, Nora.

Within moments her decision proved to be correct as one of the worst hailstorms in modern Wallowa County history descended on her chicken processing facility on Bear Creek Road.

Hawkins said the outside work at the processing facility was over by the time the storm hit and much of her stock of chickens was under cover. Still, she had several hundred chickens outside under the deluge of hail. About 300 of her Cornish Cross chickens were out in a pasture.

The chickens, said Hawkins, tend to sit and wait out inclement weather.

“If anything, they pile up a little bit,” she said.

When the storm passed, Hawkins and her employees immediately went into damage control mode. Hawkins checked her horses and vehicles and equipment and then trotted out to the pasture. What she saw was carnage.



Mary Hawkins, along with sister Nora, manages Hawkins Sisters Ranch in Wallowa. The sisters raise Turkeys and Cornish Cross chickens to butcher and also offer custom butchering for many local hobby farm breeders in the county.

Hundreds of dead chickens littered the field. Many of the chickens were grouped together where they died as the hail hammered them.

“In addition to getting crushed by the ice, they probably got smacked, smothered by one another,” Hawkins said.

As she stared at the field littered with dead chickens she said “my first reaction was to just turn around and walk away.”

Over the next hour, said Hawkins, many other chickens died from the injuries suffered by the hail.

Some, though, she thought might be dead were up and about.

“Half of them is up and fluffy again,” she said.

Still, by the end of the day Hawkins said she composted 150 dead chickens.

As Hawkins and her employees began to clean up — clearing broken glass and other debris — she slowly began to take stock. She realized the hailstorm meant a significant financial loss to her business.

The dead chickens were no longer viable products for

sale, she said.

“Can’t process them. There is just no way to dress them out and get them cold. The body condition would be grotesque, and they were laying out in the field for two hours. They’re not really edible,” Hawkins said.

Most of the chickens, she said, were “nearly finished.”

“I have several thousand dollars into those chicks and their feed. I like to raise them until they dress out at a 4-pound average,” Hawkins said.

The image of a field covered in dead chickens still

lingers for Hawkins.

“It’s just the emotion of like, wow. They just got pummeled to death,” she said.

## County comes together

Wallowa County residents, businesses and officials began working together in the aftermath of the storm to help those in need.

“That’s one good thing we still have in this country,” said Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts, who grew up on a ranch near Wallowa. “We have a lot of people who come together to help.”

Sheriff Joel Fish said numerous individuals and businesses turned out to help their neighbors.

“People jumped in and stepped up to the plate last night to help people who couldn’t board up windows,” Fish said Friday, Aug. 12. “There were so many people helping, I can’t tell you who all helped and did things.”

In a press release Aug. 12, Fish said the sheriff’s office, Enterprise Police, Lostine Fire, medics and the Oregon State Police all responded, as did members of the Wallowa Volunteer Fire Department.

Fish also said, “Private citizens responded with tarps and other items. Citizens went around to their neighbors helping to clean up and board up homes. ... It was a real testa-

ment to the resiliency of the citizens of the city of Wallowa and Wallowa County. I commend you all.”

A meal site also had been set up at the Wallowa Senior Center, said Paul Karvoski, county emergency services director.

Residents were active all over town on Aug. 12, cleaning up the mess the storm created. Leaves and branches littered yards and streets, and people were just trying to get back to normal.

Fish and Mayor Gary Hulse confirmed Aug. 12 that only four minor injuries were suffered when people were struck by the hail, which reports said ranged from the size of ping pong balls to baseballs.

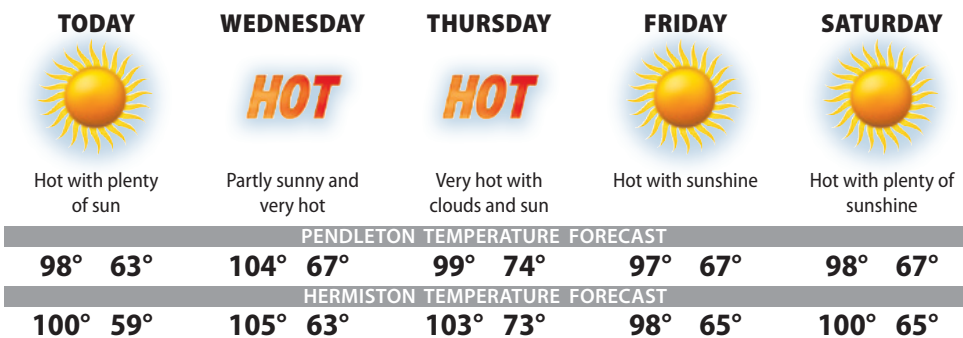
Hulse declared a state of emergency Aug. 12 for the city, which started the process of obtaining federal or state aid. He said the city attorney was working on the declaration.

Roberts said that although the county doesn’t “have a pile of cash” sitting there waiting for such emergencies, the county will help.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Office of Emergency Management are aware of the storm damage.

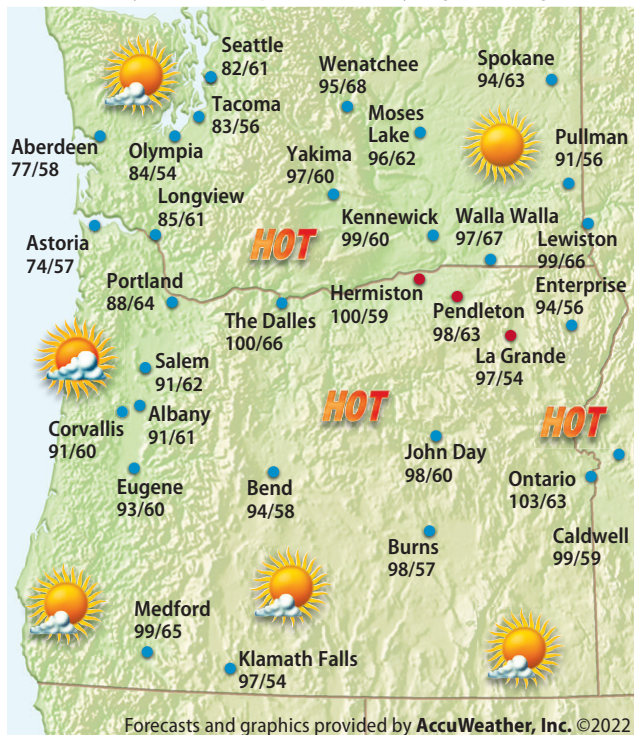
“The state has not received a request for a state declaration from Wallowa at this time,” Brown spokesperson Charles Boyle said Aug. 13.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

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



## ALMANAC

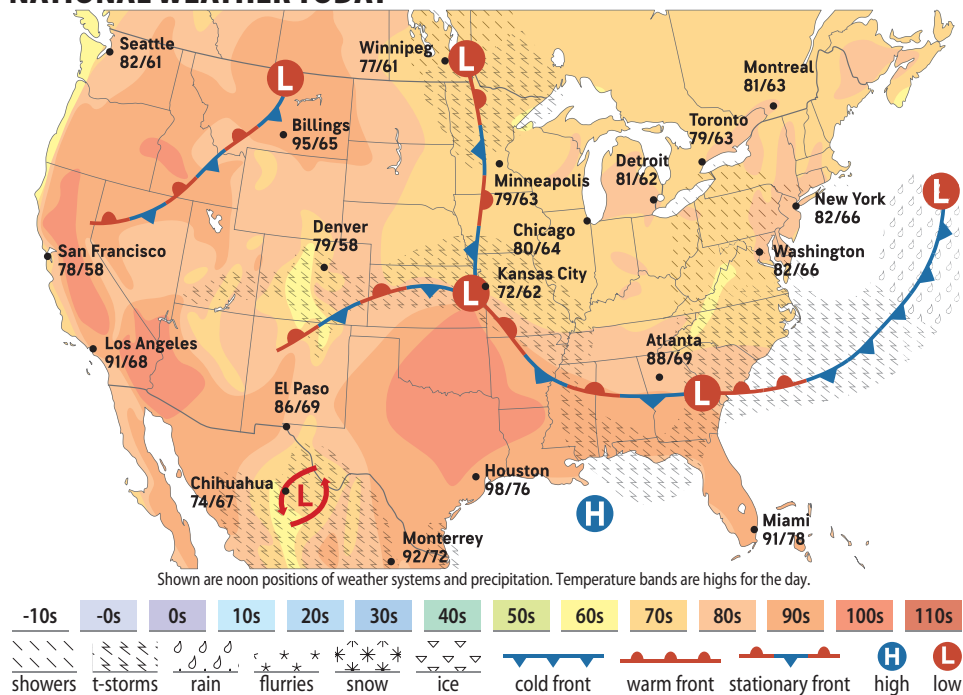
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. Mon.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Monday	95°	54°	
Normals	89°	59°	
Records	109° (1901)	38° (1910)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.04"		
Normal month to date	0.15"		
Year to date	11.17"		
Last year to date	4.35"		
Normal year to date	8.46"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. Mon.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Monday	95°	52°	
Normals	92°	57°	
Records	104° (1933)	40° (1937)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.02"		
Normal month to date	0.08"		
Year to date	7.50"		
Last year to date	2.46"		
Normal year to date	5.22"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	WNW 4-8	Wed. NE 4-8	
Pendleton	NW 6-12	NNE 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:57 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:02 p.m.		
Moonrise today	10:28 p.m.		
Moonset today	11:26 a.m.		
Last	New	First	Full
Aug 18	Aug 27	Sep 3	Sep 10

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 106° in Redding, Calif. Low 32° in Truckee, Calif.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# EOU professor takes on sunscreen project in memory of late sister

By **DICK MASON**  
*The Observer*

LA GRANDE — Amy Yielding, a mathematics professor at Eastern Oregon University, wishes that everyone could have known her sister, Rose, who lived in Arizona and died of skin cancer in 2018.

“She was always volunteering and involved in outreach,” said Yielding, who described Rose as the most generous of her 10 brothers and sisters.

Few people in La Grande knew Rose, who was a microbiologist at Phoenix Children’s Hospital, but today her presence is being felt throughout La Grande thanks to Yielding, who is installing sunscreen dispensary stations throughout La Grande in memory of her sister.

“I feel like I am planting little Rosies,” said Yielding, noting doing this is helping ease her sense of loss.

“Rose died six months after she was diagnosed. It was devastating,” she said.

Yielding said she believes her sister, who was 35, developed skin cancer because of



Dick Mason/The Observer

**The La Grande area now has four sunscreen stations, including this one at Birnie Park, shown on Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2022.**

too much unprotected sun exposure when she was growing up in Arizona.

To date, Yielding and her husband, Jason, and daughter, Josephine, have installed sunscreen stations at Candy Cane, Birnie and Riverside parks and the trailhead of the Mount Emily Recreation Area’s Red Apple area. The sunscreen stations at Birnie and Riverside parks were installed in May and the other

two were put in during 2021.

Yielding has installed all of them to make it easier for people to protect themselves from the sun’s damaging rays so they and their loved ones do not experience what her family did.

The project has been funded with help from Grande Ronde Hospital through a small community events and projects donation account that is managed by the hospital and its public relations department. The account helps support, through small, one-time donations, those unique and local community efforts that otherwise may not have access to a traditional funding stream or subsidy source.

Yielding credited Casey Nichols, a dermatology board certified nurse practitioner at the hospital, with providing guidance on the project.

Yielding also said Stu Spence, director of the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department, and Sean Chambers, who earlier served as the director of MERA, also provided major help in securing the city and county approval needed to install the sunscreen stations.

## IN BRIEF

### La Grande police identify victim of deadly hit-and-run

LA GRANDE — A La Grande man died in a hit-and-run collision Friday night, Aug. 12, on 16th Street in La Grande, according to a press release from the La Grande Police Department.

Police identified the victim as Maison Andrew, 24.

“We all have heartfelt sorrow for Maison Andrew’s family and friends,” Lt. Jason Hays said in a statement to the media.

The investigation began after La Grande police responded to a report at 5:30 a.m. Aug. 13, of a dead male on the side of 16th Street. La Grande police officers responded and immediately confirmed the individual had died.

The investigation revealed that a vehicle traveling south on 16th Street struck Andrew as he was walking on the street sometime

during the night, according to Hays. The driver fled without contacting emergency services.

The area where Andrew was found was immediately secured and La Grande Police Department investigators were dispatched to the scene. During the course of the day, 20 personnel were assigned to the case, which included volunteers.

More than 60 items of evidence were collected at the scene and will be sent to the Oregon State Police Forensic Laboratory for analysis, according to Hays. Residents were interviewed and individuals came forward with information. Investigators are following up on leads and are working to identify the vehicle and driver.

The investigation is ongoing and La Grande police urge anyone with information to contact Sgt. Ryan Miller at 541-963-1017.

—EO Media Group

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