

# California gets wolf experience

California is privileged to host a new wolf pack. Two adult gray wolves and five pups have taken up residence in Northern California's Siskiyou County.

## EDITORIAL

The voice of the Chieftain

While California environmentalists and wildlife advocates are happy to see gray wolves in their midst after a long absence, pardon Northwest ranchers if they don't join the celebration.

Livestock producers have intently watched the wolf experiment in the Northwest. Since 66 wolves were released in Idaho and Yellowstone National Park in 1995 and 1996, some of them have plagued ranchers around the region. Though the federal Endangered Species Act demanded that they be protected like some dainty butterfly, wolves are aggressive predators that reproduce far more rapidly than anyone anticipated. More than 1,000 now roam in Idaho, Montana, Washington state and Oregon.

ESA protections have been lifted in some areas, and state wildlife managers are allowed to do a better job of taking care of problem wolves, but in other areas wolves are still protected.

Wildlife managers have a difficult time with wolves. Mainly, they don't know where some of them are. A female wolf magically appeared in southwestern Oregon to mate with OR-7, a wolf that had gone on a walkabout from Wallowa County's Imnaha pack into California and then met his dream date back in Oregon. They now have pups, so ranchers in that part of the state are getting ready for the excitement to begin.

Another wolf that managers didn't know about was hit by a truck on Interstate 90 east of Seattle. Other wolves regularly cross the Canadian border into Washington state.

When it comes right down to it, the estimate of the number of wolves in the Northwest can best be categorized as an educated guess. State wildlife managers always couch their population estimates by saying they are minimum numbers.

Yet ranch families — many who have raised cattle and sheep in the region for up to five generations — are supposed to stand back and allow the wolves to do their thing, which on many occasions means attacking their cattle and sheep.

They're also supposed to pay for range riders, flashing lights, flags and other equipment that may or may not keep wolves away from their livestock.

The states and other groups do pitch in with the nonlethal preventive costs, but to put it bluntly, wolves have done little more for the ecosystem of the Northwest than to create a big, whopping pain in the ... neck.

Though some packs do stay away from livestock because other food is plentiful, others have helped themselves to whatever livestock is around. Though the number of livestock depredations is relatively small, they do not reflect the cattle and sheep deaths that wildlife managers could not identify as wolf attacks or the losses in livestock weight caused when wolves continuously chase the herd.

Wolves have proven to be lousy neighbors everywhere they've moved in. The California pack will probably bring more of the same heartburn — cattle and sheep depredations and attacks on wildlife.

California is coming up with a wolf management plan. Our suggestion: Don't worry about the wolves; they obviously can take care of themselves. It's the ranchers who will need protection.



## A 50,000-dollar slip-up



### OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

across me — luckily without stepping on me. Things happen fast sometimes.

I worked for a ranch in the California foothills and ran the commercial herd for Tim Coleman. His herd ran in the higher part of the ranch where the oak trees were and his dad, Jim Coleman, owner of Vintage Angus, ran about 500 top-notch purebred cattle on the lower ranch. We had finished processing cattle and needed to load a single bull to transport to another ranch.

I had a couple of cowboys drive the bull to the loading alley and since it was the end of the day they tended to hurry and made the bull mad. He got on the fight and with my help we soon had him tearing things up. Kenneth, who worked for the purebred end, was watching and finally said, "If you cowboys will get in the other corral I will load that bull for you before he tears the rest of this corral down." We scoffed and told him to give it his best shot. Kenneth went to the barn and returned with a halter and calmly walked out and haltered the bull and led him into the trailer. He had shown the bull at Denver and other big purebred shows. You couldn't wipe the grin off his face for days.

I got even with Kenneth later that fall. We had just about finished branding Tim's commercial calves with the exception of

about 10 that had gotten under a gate and were scattered in the several pens that made up the corrals and processing facility that Tim and his dad shared. Danny Pritchard and I went to collect the escapees and when one ran behind the squeeze lead-up, I spooked him back from the other side and noticed a lone calf in a pen next to the barn. I pointed him out to Danny and he gathered him along with the rest. We dropped this bunch into the branding pen and were looking forward to BBQ and beer.

This bunch was processed like the others with an earmark, brand, shots and castration. We were just finishing and as we let the last one up, Kenneth got a horrified look on his face as he walked up to help.

It turns out that the calf we included from the pen by the barn was one of the purebreds. He was being doctored for a bad eye and was in the sick pen. He was an embryo transplant and was the last son of Lass and Pinedrive who were both deceased. The little bull calf was worth \$50,000 the day he was born and was now a steer with the wrong brand worth 91 cents a pound. I wondered if a testicle implant would work and if we could fix the earmark and vent the brand to make things right.

I told Kenneth I would take full blame but he was inconsolable. Colemans were great and just shook their heads. I thought it would be my last day, but they never said a word. I really shouldn't tell stories like this on myself. I am sure I will regret it.

Columnist Barrie Qualle is a working cowboy in Wallowa County.

## Reopening of trail appreciated

### To the Editor:

I would like to thank you, Ken Corson, and acknowledge your decision to open the trail to the Wallowa Falls again. I was very pleased to hear from Gail Swart, and also saw in your Chieftain article, that you stated the closure was only temporary. I am very sorry for any misunderstanding between us. Had I known that your organization, "Creating Memories for Disabled Children," was only closing the trail for a short period of time, I would have honored it.

I am looking forward to the reopening of the trail. If you could let the public know an approximate time when the trail will reopen, it would be appreciated. I know we are all looking forward to that date.

Thank you again.

Forrest Wilson  
Joseph

### Forest preservation meanings

#### To the Editor:

One of the many excuses to restrict use of our public lands by the Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur National Forests is that we need to "preserve" our forest for the next generation, the only problem is, the forest service isn't doing that. The Forest Service, with assistance from their partners in the local environmental community, allow our forest to degenerate into fuel dense stands waiting to take our homes and property with it.

To preserve has many definitions — "To save from decomposition", "To keep safe from injury", or "To reserve for personal or special use."

The only preserving I see is the third, to reserve for personal or special use, to which those special uses seem to be geared only to those that mean to use public lands for their personal enjoyment of "recreational use" which comes from

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

the local environmental groups. That preservation comes at the expense of our friends and families homes and future generations needs of the natural resources that are now gone forever.

I'm not sure who, or if anyone reads these letters, but in the west we are well schooled in preserving our summer fruits and vegetables. Would anyone that takes part in canning to preserve those resources, go thru that work and then open up the cupboard doors and bust every jar with a hammer, and then close the doors and let the mess set?

But yet this is the mentality we are watching unfold in our mountains.

It's time it ends and I hope that this summer brings the people of Eastern Oregon and the west together to call for sane, active, vegetative management to both the Forest Service and elected county officials who are responsible for protecting the safety, health, and welfare of our local rural communities.

John D. George  
Bates

### More on active forest management

#### To the Editor:

I believe your editorial in September 2nd's paper was right on, and I think Jon Rombach's piece, in the same paper, was making the identical point.

It is my understanding that the following write-up by David Powell was an op-ed in the East Oregonian Pendleton newspaper recently. I think this piece supports the case for active Forest Management. You may not want to print the entire piece, but use portions of it to continue the discussion of the role of active

forest management vis-à-vis forest fires.

From that Powell op-ed: "It now seems as if the entire Northwest is on fire, with homes being destroyed and air quality at unhealthy levels. Although there are many reasons for fires, warm weather and drought are certainly important ones..."

"...Obviously we can't control the weather. But we can take actions to better prepare our forests for increasing levels of wildfire, insects, and diseases, all of which are related to changing climate conditions. It is important to take these actions soon because fires are predicted to burn up to six times more area, each year, in the Blue Mountains by the middle of this century than was burned annually between 1950 and 2003..."

"...What can be done to prepare our forests for more wildfire in the future? Perhaps our best hope lies with thinning; it can be used to mimic presettlement fire by removing the small trees that fire would have killed. This avoids severe fires by eliminating 'ladder fuel' — small understory trees that act like a ladder by carrying fire from the ground up to the tree tops, where it then races from one tree to another as a crown fire.

"After thinning an area, it could then be treated with prescribed fire. It is important to apply prescribed fire, in a safe and controlled manner, because it recycles nutrients and removes the fine fuels (needles, twigs, etc.) that contribute to severe wildfires. Many of our forests now contain so much fuel that a late-summer wildfire is not a safe experience, either for the forest or the firefighters tasked with suppressing it..."

David C. Powell, a member of the Umatilla County climate change focus group, presented a discussion about climate change and forestry at an EO Forum held Feb. 10 at Blue Mountain Community College.

John Nesbitt  
Enterprise

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