

Law enforcement seizes truck with possible meth

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

On March 1, Wallowa County law enforcement officials seized a Freightliner box truck with alleged stolen items and possible methamphetamine in connection with the multiple arrests that occurred on Feb. 26-27 in Wallowa on charges ranging from meth possession to child neglect.

Officers from both the Wallowa County Sheriff's Department and Enterprise Police Department searched the truck on the morning of March 2 in the parking lot of the Justice Center, located at 104 W. Greenwood St. in Enterprise. At 10 a.m., with police tape around the truck and a good portion of the parking lot, WCSO deputy Kevin McQuade and EPD officer George Koehlhepp began offloading material from the truck under the direction of Sheriff Steve Rogers and EPD Chief Joel Fish.

The process took most of the rest of the day as the truck was firmly packed from front to back with an impossible variety of goods from household items to construction tools and children's toys — think secondhand store. As hours passed more law enforcement personnel stopped in to help and numerous passers by stopped to ogle or pass wide-eyed.

As it happened, not everything unloaded was quite so benign. A number of unloaded wares matched the description of stolen items reported by burglary victims, including a two-wheeled weed eater reported stolen from the Lostine Cemetery. One more item in the load raised the eyebrows of everyone involved.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Wallowa County law enforcement officials going through the contents of a box truck on March 2. Police seized the truck the day before. By the time the search ended numerous allegedly stolen items were found as well as possible methamphetamine. L to R: Enterprise police officer George Koehlhepp, Wallowa County sheriff's deputy Kevin McQuade and Sheriff Steve Rogers.

While going through a safe, Koehlhepp and McQuade found a metal container containing an amount of grainy white powder.

"What do you think?" Koehlhepp asked McQuade.

"Only one way to find out," McQuade replied. The two men took out a preliminary drug testing kit. The testing process included taking a minuscule amount of the substance and mixing it with other chemicals.

As the concoction color indicated a positive for possible methamphetamine the two officers cautioned that the test was only an indication that the substance was meth. Further testing would provide more precise results.

By the end of the day the



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Enterprise police chief Joel Fish helps unload goods from the box truck seized by police on March 1 because of alleged contraband inside.

officers had a pickup bed full of items that directly matched reported stolen goods while the rest was restacked back into the confiscated truck.

Before driving off in the vehicles Koehlhepp expressed concerns about other possible burglaries.

"We'd like to let anyone know who is coming back from a long vacation to check their storage buildings and their homes for possible rob-

beries. We have a lot of stuff here that could have been stolen while people were away," he said.

McQuade issued a warning before driving off.

"If you're a criminal and you're thinking of breaking into someone's property, don't do it. We take this type of crime very seriously and we will find you," he said.

The case remains under investigation.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Mt. Joseph showing the effects of this year's long, cold winter. Animals feel the effects too.

Winter takes its toll on the animals, too

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'This is reality — it's what I grew up with.'

Goat rancher
Wendy McCullough

Wallowa County citizens are aware of the devastating impact of the winter on power bills, buildings and roof collapses from excess snow, frozen pipes, buckling and unplowed roads and other cold weather problems. One thing that may not immediately spring to mind is the fate of wildlife.

While farm animals may have a tough time during the winter, wild animals don't have the luxury of regular meals. Pat Matthews of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said that some wildlife is suffering, while others will prosper.

"It's certainly going to benefit fish, and depending on the spring, it could be beneficial for forage growth and that sort of thing," Matthews said.

The deer population is already severely affected by the weather according to Matthews. "We're certainly losing deer; and we're going to continue losing deer. Both white tail and mule deer populations will be dropping some this winter, but for those who survive it might be positive anyway," he said.

The ODFW has radio collared mule deer populations. "We're doing movement studies on them, and we've lost some of those deer as well. It's one of those things, but it also gives us good information about the rate of mortality and that sort of thing. It's all a part of population management."

It's too early to tell to make any generalizations about water supply for the upcoming spring and summer, Matthews

added. But he suspects that some deer will be in such poor shape by the end of winter that they will never recover from its effects.

The winter has led to an increase of calls about deer in county towns as well as ranchers' calls about deer in their haystacks.

Out on the farm

"It's affected my attitude," local goat rancher Wendy McCullough said of the winter. McCullough ranches in the shelter of Mt. Joseph, which protects her livestock and home from the worst of inclement weather.

She normally feeds her goats about 20 tons of hay per year and doesn't expect to exceed that amount by an appreciable margin. She also went through the birthing season in the mildest part of the month of January. "I was lucky. I won't say it was planned parenthood," McCullough said with a laugh.

McCullough, who grew up in Wallowa County, said this reminded her of winters from the 1960s. "We were like this every winter. I remember one December it was below zero for the whole month. This is a little extreme compared to what we've been spoiled with, but it's just like it used to be. This is reality — it's what I grew up with," she said.

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