

Wallowa farmer suffers losses due to hailstorm

Storm leaves 150 chickens dead

By **ANDREW CUTLER**
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 suddenly 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



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.

chickens still 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.

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 sustained 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.

IN BRIEF

Goat wounded by wolves in Wallowa County

WALLOWA COUNTY — An adult female goat was wounded in a wolf attack by members of the Bear Creek Pack in the Allen Canyon area of Wallowa County, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported Friday, Aug. 5.

ODFW’s report stated that the attack occurred the previous evening when the livestock owner had gathered his flock for the evening from a private pasture and noticed one animal was missing.

The missing ewe goat returned the following day with partially healed injuries consistent with wolf attacks. The injuries were on both hind legs, ODFW reported.

Allen Canyon is between Wallowa and Lostine south of Highway 82.

County reports 42 new cases of COVID-19

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority reported 15,716 new cases of COVID-19 from July 24 to Aug. 6 in its biweekly report released on Wednesday, Aug. 10.

The two-week total represents a 15.4% decline from the previous biweekly total of 18,567.

During the two-week period of July 24 to Aug. 6, test positivity was 13%, down slightly from 13.8% in the previous two-week period.

During the same two-week reporting period Wallowa County has reported 42 total cases, with high-water marks of 21 cases on Aug. 3 and 10 cases on Aug. 9 and July 25. Wallowa County has a seven-day average of 4.4 new cases.

Wallowa County did not record any COVID-related deaths during the most recent two-week reporting period.

Since the start of the pandemic, Wallowa County has

recorded 1,401 cases and 17 deaths.

The health authority’s COVID-19 Biweekly Congregate Care Setting Outbreak Report shows 206 active outbreaks in care facilities, senior living communities and congregate care living settings with three or more confirmed COVID-19 cases or one or more COVID-19-related deaths.

Alpenfest seeks volunteers, food and craft vendors

JOSEPH — Back after two pandemic years, Oregon’s Alpenfest is looking for volunteers and asking for food and craft vendors to apply to sell at the West’s only Swiss-Bavarian cultural festival Sept. 29-Oct. 2.

Alpenfest, which is held in Joseph at the Joseph Rodeo Grounds, is asking for volunteers to pour beer and wine, provide kitchen and meal service and perform various logistical and safety duties. Each volunteer gets a free admission ticket and a bratwurst sandwich.

The 42nd edition of the festival will feature The Polkatones dance band, the Tirolean Dancers of Oregon, Swiss yodeler Shelby Imholt, accordionist Toby Hanson and alphorns.

To inquire, contact Chuck Anderson at alpenmeister@mail2oregon.com or call 541-398-1096. Food and craft vendors may apply to Lynn Wolf at lakesidelynn@comi.com or 503-692-5050.

Bike club to make presentation before commissioners

ENTERPRISE — A presentation by the Wallowa Mountains Bicycle Club will be heard Wednesday, Aug. 17, by the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners, according to a press release.

The club has been lobbying for land on which to locate a pump track in Enterprise. However, all potential sites within the city have been

ruled out. On Aug. 17, club President Angela Mart will make a presentation before the commissioners.

Also at the meeting, Peter Ferre of the Friends of Wallowa County Recycling will make a presentation.

The commissioners also are expected to:

- Hire Theresa Spaur as an executive assistant for the grants manager.
- Approve an intrafund transfer from the General Fund to American Rescue Act funds.
- Approve an intrafund transfer to EMS to for a one-time bonus.
- Approve an interfund transfer for public transit to STIF and STIF to STIF.

Joseph council to take applications for planning commission

JOSEPH — The Joseph City Council will review applications for people to serve on a planning commission when it meets Thursday, Aug. 18, at 7 p.m.

The city has no planning commission, an absence that has created controversy in recent months.

Also on the agenda, the council will:

- Consider an application by Adam Saxton to fill a vacant City Council seat.
- Consider a resolution on revenue to be received from

the state.

- Consider a resolution to amend the wastewater project loan amount.
- Hear department and committee reports.

Bike club wins grant for Bikes to Kids

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa Mountains Bicycle Club has secured a grant from the Lewis-Clark Valley Healthcare Foundation to support getting used, donated bikes to underserved kids throughout Wallowa County, according to a press release.

Club volunteers will repair and upgrade donated or discarded bikes and then work with local schools and social service agencies to identify youths who would benefit from having a bike.

“The benefits to bike riding for kids goes way beyond the fun they provide,” said Angela Mart, WMBC board president. “Biking regularly improves cardiovascular health, reduces the risk of diabetes, increases autonomy, builds confidence, strengthens social connections and gets kids outdoors.”

The club aims to have 20 bikes donated in the coming year to deserving youth throughout Wallowa County.

Anyone with an unused bike to donate can reach out to the club at wallowamountainsbicycleclub@gmail.com or call 503-703-2001 or if you’d like to build your skills

in maintaining your own bike and perhaps volunteer to upgrade bikes with the club team, contact the club.

Photo camp plans final show Saturday

JOSEPH — The final show of the National Geographic Photo Camp Oregon will take place at 5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20, at the Culture Center for Arts and Culture, 403 N. Main St., Joseph.

The camp is led by National Geographic Explorers and photographers Sara Hylton and Tailyr Irvine.

The workshop brought together 12 young people from indigenous communities who have called this area home for centuries, with a meaningful introduction to photojournalism as a career and a platform to share their voices.

The theme of the camp focused on ways that the Wallowa River and other waterways connect communities in the region.

For more information, call 240-421-9520 or email jeffadl@ngs.org.

— Wallowa County Chieftain

This week’s featured book

The Bodyguard

by Katherine Center

107 E. Main St. Enterprise OR 541-426-3351
manager@bookloft.org • bookloft.org

STEVE KERBY

ESTATE AND RETIREMENT PLANNING
SOPHISTICATED, UNBIASED SOLUTIONS
SAFE MONEY CHOICES

kerbyofg@AOL.com 503.936.3535

Coming soon to Old Mill Storage in Wallowa

COVERED RV STORAGE!

20 UNITS
12’ wide x 40’ deep x 15’ high

Store your RV, trailer, boat, equipment, etc. in our secure, gated, 24-hour surveillance facility

Phone: 541-886-3141
www.OldMillMinistorage.com

Old Mill Storage, LLC

SAVE THE DATE

LABOR DAY PICNIC
CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

WALLOWA LAKE STATE PARK
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH
12 NOON - 3PM

For more information contact
Chris Geyer at cgeyer@eoni.com

THE HURRICANE FREE CREEK GRANGE COMMUNITY BBQ

EVERYONE WELCOME!

We would like to invite long time residents and new locals to sit and visit together.

Contact Barb McCormack at 541-605-8233 for more info!

SUNDAY AUGUST 21ST
BETWEEN 12:00 AND 3PM

ENJOY HAMBURGERS
HOT DOGS SALAD PIE & ICE CREAM

82930 AIRPORT ROAD, JOSEPH, OR

HONORING OUR COMMUNITY!