

Inventive tools for keeping wolves away from livestock

Just about the last thing a visitor to Ted Birdseye's ranch would expect to see is "Tube Man."

You know, one of those inflatable air dancers that flop back and forth and are featured at used car lots across the country.

Birdseye, whose Mill-Mar Ranch is in Southern Oregon, has not one but two of the crazy-looking contraptions. The idea is not to sell 1985 Buicks but to keep wolves away from his livestock.

Wolves in the past year have taken a heavy toll on Birdseye's herd, killing or injuring at least seven calves and one guard dog.

Such attacks would drive a rancher to try just about anything to keep wolves away from livestock.

The idea for the "Tube Man" came from the environmental group Defenders of Wildlife as a non-lethal means of keeping wolves away from the herd.

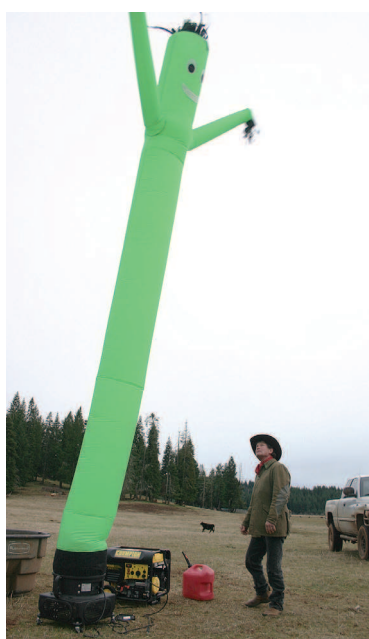
Birdseye has tried other means of keeping wolves away: flashing lights and hanging fladry — tiny flags — on fences. He has even had U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wolf coordinator John Stephenson camp on his ranch.

The "Tube Man" had been used with success on a ranch near La Grande after wolves killed several llamas.

"It's always struck me as something wolves would be particularly skittish of," Suzanne Stone, senior Northwest representative of Defenders of Wildlife, said.

When it comes to keeping wolves away from livestock, any and all means should be tried. Air cannons, special lights called Fox Lights, noisemakers — even drones equipped with lights, pepper spray and noisemakers — can be part of the toolbox for ranchers and others who are pestered by predators. Some ranchers have success training their cattle to stay in herds instead of running.

In Botswana, Africa, researchers have even painted eyes on the rumps of cattle to keep lions away. Called the iCow, it causes the predators to give up their hunt, according to the Australian Geographic mag-



EO Media Group/George Plaven
Southern Oregon rancher Ted Birdseye fires up an inflatable dancing tube man, loaned by the environmental group Defenders of Wildlife, to scare wolves away from the pasture where he grazes cattle.

azine. It does it by tapping into the fact that lions quit hunting if the prey looks at them.

In the experiment, the researcher found that none of the 23 cows with eyes painted on their rears were killed, while 39 others without the eyes were killed.

In another experiment, the magazine reported the Australian researcher is testing whether use of dingo territorial scents might keep predators away from cattle.

Other, less scientific research has involved hooking up a motion sensor to a sprinkler to keep mountain lions away from livestock. According to mountainlion.org, when a predator shows up, it gets a good dousing to let it know it's not welcome. Another idea the website reported on involved using Christmas lights to create "evil" eyes that scare predators away.

One wonders whether other low- and high-tech tools might work. Motion sensors are readily available at hardware stores. In fact, they allow trail cameras to photograph wolfpacks in the wild. Combined with "Tube Man" and other devices, they might just be enough to scare off wolves intent on attacking livestock.

The idea is to keep trying. Wolves are smart, and they are vicious, but there has got to be a way to keep them away from livestock.

And if all else fails, there's always a rifle — when and where it's legal.



Contributed photo

A knife, a fire starter and a light source are essentials for a survival kit.

Shooting the Breeze: Survive it

Once upon a time, I was walking back to the truck after a hunt. Suddenly I noticed a buck facing me at 50 yards. I snapped off a shot, and he was gone. Almost as quickly, so was the light. I stumbled around in the dark for a while but, in the end, had to come back the next day to find him dead 20 yards from where I stopped looking.

On another hunt, we didn't have enough horses so a friend and I walked up the trail while the others finished packing the horses and caught up to us. First the snow really started coming down, and then it got dark. We were getting worried because the pack train should have caught up long ago. We stopped under a tree to wait, and I was able to surprise my friend by building a fire in the blizzard like conditions.

Years ago I took the time to develop a survival pack so that when adventures like these happen I would be prepared. I'm not going to bore you with a list of everything I carry. You can



Rod Carpenter

find lists in every outdoor publication and media site you visit. I recommend you look over several and then develop a kit that is personalized to you.

For example, most suggest carrying some kind of fishing gear. I usually hunt high with limited fishing opportunities so I don't. Keep in mind that, whatever kit you come up with, it isn't going to do you any good if you don't carry it with you.

I had my pack when the first story happened but left it in the truck because I reasoned I was only going on a short hunt. Because I didn't have the flashlight from my pack, I lost half of the meat on that deer where the blood pooled.

There are three things that I believe you should always carry when you head outdoors. The first and most important is a knife. In fact, you should consider your knife as an article of clothing as important as your

pants. You shouldn't even leave your bedroom without it.

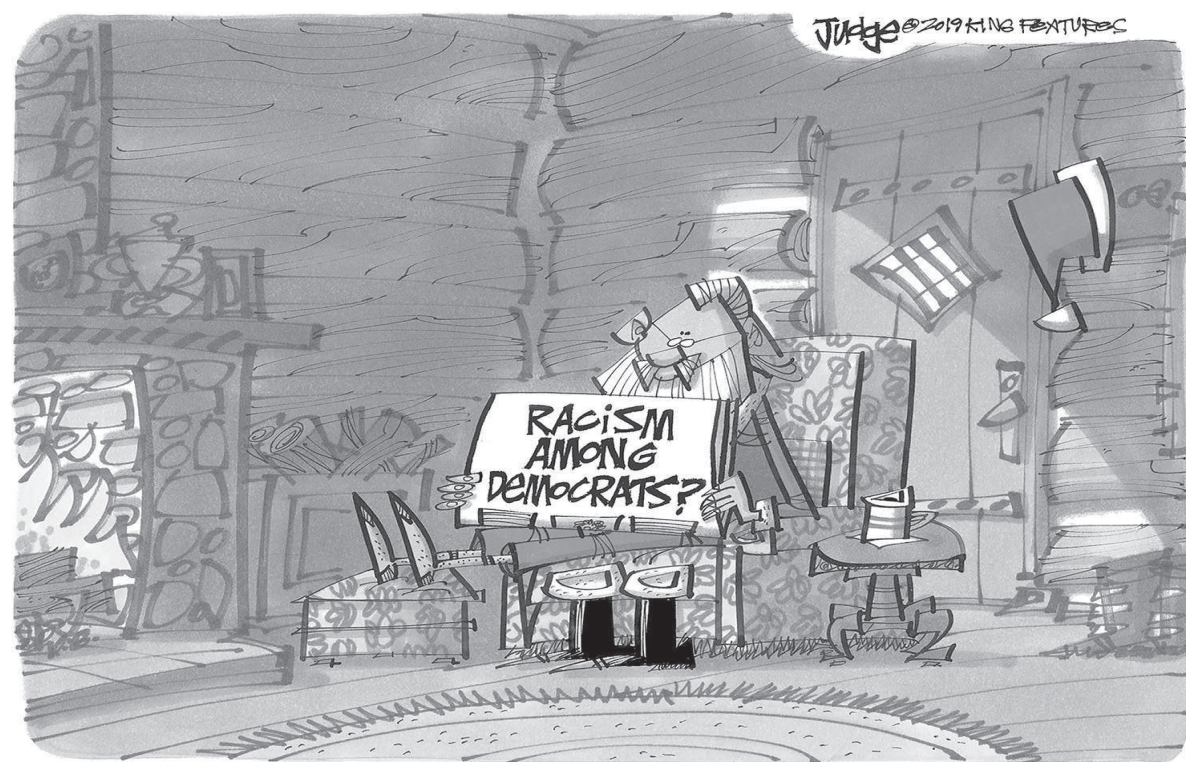
The second is a source of fire, matches or lighter. I prefer a lighter and always drop it in my pants pocket so, if I get separated from or have a stupid moment and leave my pack, I still have it. Those windproof/waterproof matches are pretty cool too. They are like mini sparklers, but don't carry as well in a pocket.

And finally a light source. Cellphone lights work great but don't have the battery life of flashlights. They make small flashlights that fit well in a pants pocket if you don't want to carry a pack, but a headlamp is the way to go if you have the room. Hands free is really handy (Ha!) when you are working in the dark.

There are lots of other things you could add to your kit to make bad situations better, but a knife, fire and light will make bad situations survivable.

Drop us a line at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com.

Rod Carpenter is a husband, father and hunting fool.



YES, SANTA CLAUS, THERE IS A VIRGINIA.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Loan not in spirit of measure 5 and 50

To the Editor:

Today I would like to expound upon the current property tax system. In the 1990s, we the people voted in property tax limitations. This was accomplished by passing measures 5 and 50. Measure 50 was passed in 1997 to further restrict taxing districts and close some of the loopholes that these districts were skirting in Measure 5. If these measures were not passed, property taxes per capita in Oregon would be well over 10 percent. At the most recent rural

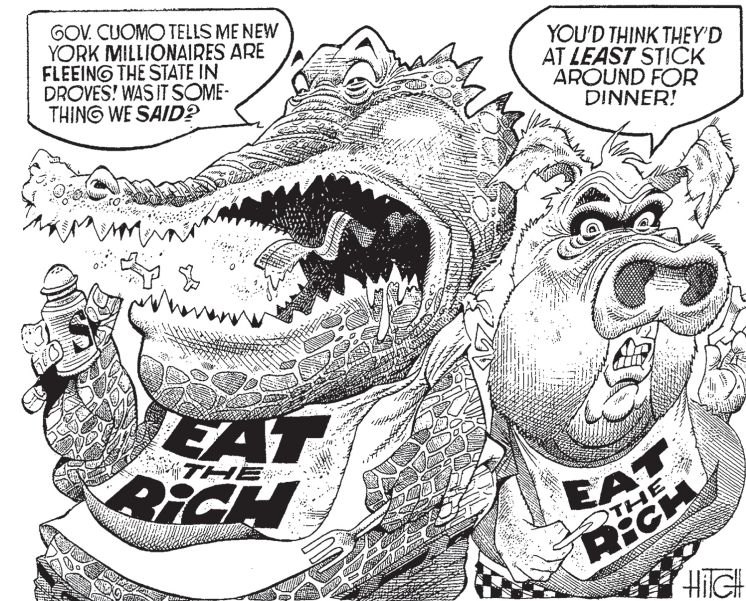
fire district board meeting, I was criticized for my letter to the editor in the Jan. 16 edition of this newspaper.

For the record, I have had way more positive feedback than critics. Note also the past fire chief's letter in a later edition of the Eagle. While I try not to make my views personal, I also cannot help but allude to one person or another, and I will not apologize for it. My point being, the loan the RFD inherited was not necessary. This loan was created by bad decisions involving all parties. People make these decisions and must be held accountable. It appeared to me that at this meeting they were

insinuating that, if not for measures 5 and 50, they could balance their budget easier. While on the surface this is true, our citizens today would be paying more property taxes than state and federal income taxes combined (after deductions). This \$168,000 loan, brought on by the cost overruns with the city of John Day totally complicit, was not done in the spirit of measures 5 and 50. To put it into context, I will use a quote I used in another article: These "intergovernmental exchanges of funds ... would put a drug cartel to shame."

Bob Pereira
John Day

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