

Oregon ranchers face tough choice

Cattle ranchers in Oregon's wolf country face a dilemma when a calf or cow turns up dead: Report it to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and time the response with a calendar, or ignore it and eat the cost of the animal.

That's not much of a choice, particularly because wolves have been in Oregon for 14 years now. That's plenty of time for the state's wildlife managers to come up with a better system for determining how a cow or calf died.

Fewer ranchers are even bothering to report wolf attacks on their cattle. The state's own statistics show that.

Nearby sheriff's offices say they are ready, willing and able to inspect the carcasses and determine a cause of death. Even the state's top carnivore biologist says a wolf attack looks like a "bomb went off." It doesn't sound like it takes a Ph.D. in wildlife management to determine whether a calf was killed by a wolf.

Environmentalists, who side with state biologists, say, in so many words, that sheriff's deputies can't be trusted to investigate a depredation because ranchers will pressure them.

That, of course, is nonsense. Sheriff's deputies are trained to investigate all sorts of crime scenes, including murders. If they can do that, they can surely check out a dead calf.

Yet the state insists only its biologists can do the inspections.

The only problem with that is the delay in getting a state biologist to the scene of a depredation. It can take days, which allows scavengers to strip the carcass and destroy

the evidence.

The state faces two challenges.

The first: ODFW is understaffed. The department has just hired three people who will be spread across the entire state. And once the reality of budget cuts brought on by the COVID-19 shutdowns take hold, the odds of adding more staff — or even keeping staff — will likely shrink.

The second: Most depredations take place in the back country. Getting there is often not quick or easy. That's why a local sheriff's deputy could just do the inspection and take pictures. If state biologists feel the need to follow up, they could do that on their own schedule.

We realize the state biologists are excited about having their very own wolves to manage, but it seems to us that they spend more time trying to manage ranchers than the wolves.

Especially in the eastern one-third of the state where the federal Endangered Species Act no longer forces everyone to put up with wolves that repeatedly kill cattle, the state needs to step up its activities. The department comes across as wolf apologists instead of managers.

As the wolf population continues to increase in Oregon — at least 158 are in the state, mainly in the northeastern corner — we urge ODFW to allow sheriff's deputies to help them investigate depredations. It's not difficult, and some of the deputies have more experience with wolves and livestock than the state's biologists. Others can be trained.

For ranchers, a lot of money is at stake in the form of dead cattle. For the state's biologists, their credibility is at stake.



FARMER'S FATE

Mud and mascara

I AM ALL FOR NATURAL BEAUTY — BUT A LITTLE MASCARA NEVER HURT ANYONE.



Brianna Walker

I dumped out the few meager items in my makeup bag, looking for more bobby pins — a search that most women know all too well. I grew up sharing a bathroom with two sisters,

and you'd have thought we would have had bobby pins to spare — but they disappear with such rapid and frequent occurrence that would nearly make one believe they were raptured. For it's not as if they just get lost and then eventually reappear — no, they disappear never to be seen again.

Perhaps bobby pins become reincarnated into those odd herbal pills that no one can remember buying that fill up the medicine cabinet and the pony fasteners become that shelf of strange smelling lotions that no one wants to use. I checked each crease of my little makeup bag for stray bobby pins, finding just enough to finish putting my hair up.

I'd barely finished, when my small eyeliner pencil went rolling across the vanity. I sandwiched it with my hip before it could hit the floor. I am all for natural beauty (a.k.a. too lazy to actually buy or

apply) — but a little mascara and eyeliner never hurt anyone. I was thinking that perhaps it wouldn't hurt to wear a little more makeup — it was our anniversary trip after all. Maybe my husband would like it if I spent a little more time getting pretty, and didn't rely on dirt to shade my eyelids and mud to rouge my cheeks.

Since my makeup case literally has no makeup other than eyeliner and mascara, I didn't have a lot to work with — but I did have a little time. My husband was around the corner, on the phone with Les Schwab looking to find a replacement wheel for one of our old semi trucks.

"Is that aluminum?" I heard him ask, as I carefully drew a charcoal black line across my eyelid.

"I don't want a steel one," he laughed. "See if you can find me an aluminum one — I wanna put as much lipstick on that old pig as possible!"

I finished the rest of eyeliner to even out my other eye, but as I put the pencil back in my bag, I decided I am totally fine being a mud and mascara kind of girl.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



WHERE TO WRITE

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Wearing a mask is 'loving my neighbor'

To the Editor:

Let's get something straight at the outset. I don't like wearing a mask anytime. They are uncomfortable, they make my glasses steam up and I feel like an idiot with one on. I also don't think that wearing a mask will protect me from the coronavirus. The data do not support that.

Does the virus scare me? No more than the fact that I'm going to die soon anyway. I can live with that, and I can live wearing a mask.

What scares me more is the idea that I might get sick and spread the disease to someone else and they die or are injured for life by it. I don't want that on my conscience.

So I will reluctantly wear the mask. It's not a big deal. I wear a seatbelt. I don't drink and drive. I follow my doctor's advice (mostly), and I care about my neighbors. That is what wearing a mask comes down to. It's not a

matter of defending my constitutional rights. It is a matter of loving my neighbor. And that is the second highest commandment of the Lord. So when I am forced to put that mask on, I think of the sacrifice he made for me and say amen!

Jef Bryant
Prairie City

'Restore our parks and vote for this bill'

To the Editor:

For over 40 years, I worked for the National Park Service, 18 of which was as superintendent of John Day Fossil Beds. I know the challenges of maintaining critical site infrastructure like roads, visitor centers, water and electrical systems, and more in the face of limited funds from Congress and an ever-growing list of postponed but necessary repairs.

I wrote a letter to this paper in 2017 when the deferred maintenance backlog at the Fossil Beds was roughly \$1.5 million. Fiscal year 2018 numbers now show a

more than \$2.1 million backlog, and system wide, NPS is facing a nearly \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog.

A solution, long overdue, may be on the horizon. Bipartisan legislation, the Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422/H.R. 7092), has passed the Senate and is now before the House. The bill would direct up to \$9.5 billion in non-taxpayer monies over five years to address priority repairs in national parks and on other public lands.

Those dollars represent an investment not only in our national parks but in local economies. NPS data show that 197,000 park visitors spent an estimated \$9.6 million in our local communities when visiting the Fossil Beds in 2019. Ensuring that NPS sites are able to meet the needs of their visitors is good for parks, good for local economies and good for businesses looking to get back on their feet. Our Oregon congressional leaders should do what they can to restore our parks and vote for this bill.

Jim Hammett
John Day

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