

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE



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## COVID-19 claims another Grant County life

64-year-old woman marks eighth death in county

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

COVID-19 has now claimed eight lives in Grant County.

The Grant County Health Department reported that a 64-year-old Grant County woman with no known medical conditions died on COVID-19 Aug. 28 at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend.

The health department said it encourages people to be respectful as a family in the community grieves.

Since Aug. 16, Grant County has

reported 106 cases of COVID-19.

According to the press release, the health department continues to encourage people to take the following precautions:

- Wear a mask indoors and wear a mask outdoors if 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you feel ill.

The health department said after someone contracts COVID-19 if they

develop symptoms, they will usually appear within 14 days. Symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The health department said they encouraged people with these symptoms to call 211 or the Grant County Health Department at 541-575-0429.



Eagle file photo



Eagle file photo

From left, Grant School District board members Jake Taylor, Aaron Lieuallen, Haley Walker and Superintendent Bret Uptmor listen to community feedback during an Aug. 3 board meeting.

## School board faces backlash for meeting, letter

Questionable closed-door session, 'letter of attack' criticized by parents

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Tensions boiled over during the Grant School Board's Aug. 25 meeting after the board appeared to violate Oregon public meetings law in a closed-door executive session and the district superintendent sent a letter warning parents that students refusing to wear masks would be referred to online learning.

A frustrated congregation of parents asked the board why they shut the public out of the Aug. 19 meeting that parents had requested by holding an executive session instead of an open meeting.

School board chair Haley Walker told the parents the board was not prepared to discuss Gov. Kate Brown's then-recent order that all educators, school staff and volunteers get vaccinated.

She said parents also wanted an answer about whether the district would follow the mask mandate, but

after consulting with the district's legal counsel, Walker said, the board came to the conclusion they did not have a decision to make.

"There wasn't a decision to be made," she said, "because we took an oath to uphold the law."

Parents said, had they known the district intended to comply with the mask mandate, they would have pulled their children out of in-person classes and home-schooled them.

"It's like you're locked up behind closed doors, and you don't want us to know what's going on," one parent told the board members. "And that's awful as a parent."

During the closed-door meeting, the board discussed local staffing and state policies and made a final decision to send a statement to parents and press regarding opening school, which are typically not allowed in executive session. The Eagle attended the session but is currently withholding the details of what was discussed at the behest of Superintendent Bret Uptmor.

### Uptmor's letter

In addition to the executive session, the audience said Uptmor's Aug. 20 letter to parents was, in their opinion, "a letter of attack." (Uptmor's letter was separate from a statement released by the board that was published in the Aug. 25 edition.)

In the letter, Uptmor writes that following Brown's mask mandate would allow schools to remain open for in-person learning.

He said students who do not want to wear a mask, or refuse to wear one because their parents told them not to wear one, would be referred to online learning.

He said students unwilling to wear a mask would have their parents contacted, and the district would make arrangements to enroll the student into an online school. The online component, Uptmor states, is a requirement as part of the

# MUTILATIONS CONTINUE

Mysterious circumstances surround deaths of multiple cattle in Eastern Oregon



Contributed photo/Deputy Jeremiah Holmes

This bull, in Wheeler County, was found this August with its nose, tongue, left cheek, ear, eye, reproductive system and part of its tail removed.

**"IT'S KIND OF A STRANGE THING. IT'S UNFORTUNATE, BUT I THINK THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE SAME SPOT I'M IN."**

—Tanner Brown, bull owner

By Sierra Dawn McClain  
EO Media Group

Oregon authorities are investigating the mysterious death and mutilation of two bulls whose carcasses were found this summer: one in Harney County, the other in nearby Wheeler County.

In the most recent case, a Black Angus bull, out of the Thomas Angus Ranch purebred line and worth about \$4,500, was found dead and mutilated Aug. 14 at Greenbar Ranch in Wheeler County.

Bodie Brown, whose brother Tanner owned the bull, and a friend were the first to find the carcass near a watering hole. Its nose, tongue, left cheek, ear, eye, reproductive organs and part of its tail were removed with clean cuts.

The cause of death is unknown.

The bull, when found, had likely been dead a few days and was already decomposing. The 24-hour window during which a necropsy could have been performed on the body had passed.

Deputy Jeremiah Holmes of the Wheeler County Sheriff's Office is on the case.

"It's kind of a strange thing," said Tanner Brown, who owned the bull and runs about 300 acres on 9,000 acres. "It's unfortunate, but I think there are other people in the same spot I'm in."

Brown was right; he isn't alone.



Contributed photo/Clancy Roth

A cow was found dead and mutilated at Bar DR Land and Cattle, a Deschutes County ranch in Hampton in early 2020.

## A cow, a missing tongue and a mystery

Baker County livestock death confounds investigators

By Jayson Jacoby  
EO Media Group

Brian Ratliff has sliced open and probed the innards of quite a number of cows, but he's never come across a case as confounding as the missing tongue.

"This is a stumper," Ratliff said on Thursday. "I don't have an answer."

The mystery started the day before for Ratliff, the district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office.

A ranch manager found the carcass of a 3-year-old cow that morning on a public grazing allotment near the head of Fox Creek. That's near Lookout Mountain, about 14 miles north of Huntington.

Ratliff investigated the case as a possible wolf attack.

Wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack have killed three head of cattle, and injured three others, this summer several miles to the west.

Wolves didn't kill the cow at Fox Creek — Ratliff is sure about that.

He's also confident in his



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