



Contributed photo

Matt Frame shoots his sporterized Enfield rifle at the range.

## SHOOTING THE BREEZE Another man's treasure

Converted military rifles used to be a household thing. Before, during and after the Great Depression everybody knew how to wring two cents out of every penny they brought home. When the Civilian Marksmanship Program offered the Springfield 1903, Enfield 1917 or Krag-Jorgensen 1898 surplus rifles for only a few dollars including ammunition, it turned heads.

It wasn't that these people were cheap, it's that they were broke; those are two very different things. Many of the GIs returning from war brought home military rifles of various kinds as trophies, and many of those — even in their metric calibers — were put to use filling the family freezer.

These days the walls in gun and pawn shops are lined with lots of these old sporterized arms, no doubt traded in for something newer somewhere along the line. Though it's true they are a bit more beefy, not quite as polished in finish nor on average as accurate as a factory sporting rifle, many a larder was filled with venison because Grampa, and quite often Grandma, knew how to make every shot count.

Cheap military surplus ammo could be found everywhere, sometimes for only pennies per shot. As the economy improved and bank accounts began to fatten, some were able to adorn their secondhand smoke pole with a custom stock or a telescopic sight.

The country store at Dale prominently displays black and white pictures of successful hunts from days gone by. They represent a time and a people who didn't throw anything away.

My own paternal great-grandfather went to the woods armed with an old military .30-40 Krag. It had been sporterized with a custom stock, and the sights upgraded to the popular

buckhorn style.

According to my research, the serial number places it at 1901. It was his very favorite. One of my cousins treasures it deeply to this day.

If you happen to come into possession of a sporterized old military rifle, treasure it. If you treat it with proper care and respect, you may see an additional century of service in your behalf.

Ammunition, even for some of the more obscure selections, can usually be found relatively easily.

Prvi Partizan (PPU) is one of the most prolific makers of the various standard and metric military calibers of ammunition. Albeit not as cheap as the old surplus ammo of yore, this European-based product is usually only 50-60% of the price of economy line USA-made hunting ammo. For those on a tight budget, this is huge; their brass is boxer-primed and can be reloaded as well.

As a project for my friend Matt who was just getting started as a deer hunter, we shopped around, eventually buying a sporterized Enfield 1917 .30-06. We got it drilled and tapped for scope mounts, replaced a few parts, refinished the stock and installed a recoil pad. All that said, we were still into it for less than the cost of a quality new rifle.

As my friend is a Marine, we dubbed the rifle "Chesty" in honor of the great Gen. Chesty Puller. A pleasure to shoot for being over 100 years old, Matt took his first deer with a 200-yard shot a couple years back. It's far and away his favorite rifle; one man's trash is definitely another man's treasure!

Do you shoot converted military rifles? Write to us at shootingthebreezbe@ gmail.com and check us out on Facebook!

*Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.*



Dale Valade

# CWD found in deer near Oregon

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Hunters and anyone who comes in contact with a dead cervid — deer, elk or moose — are asked to bring in the heads for testing for chronic wasting disease, a neurological disease fatal to those animals.

Bree Furfey, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife district wildlife biologist for Wallowa County, said Thursday, Dec. 9, that hunters harvested two deer in October in Idaho about 30 miles from the Oregon border. The deer has since tested positive for CWD.

"It's never been close to Oregon before," she said, adding that means there has never been a case of CWD in the state.

Furfey encouraged hunters or anyone coming upon a dead cervid to drop off the heads for disease sampling. A barrel is outside the Enterprise ODFW office and the offices in La Grande and Baker City. Information on where the animal came from should be included.

According to an ODFW press release, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has taken immediate steps to increase surveillance to determine the prevalence rate of the disease in the area including via a special hunt. Oregon, too, is ramping up CWD testing of deer and elk, especially in Northeast Oregon, by asking hunters, roadkill salvagers and others to help the department look for any cases of the disease in Oregon deer and elk. There are only a handful of moose in the state and there's no legal hunting of them.

### Alarming news

"The news of an Idaho detection is alarming, but we have been working for years to keep CWD out of Oregon and preparing to respond if it is detected here," said Colin Gillin, ODFW's state wildlife veterinarian.



Terry Kreeger/Wyoming Game and Fish  
This deer has visible signs of chronic wasting disease. Two deer harvested in Idaho in October just 30 miles from Wallowa County tested positive for CWD recently.

Gillin has been active in national efforts to monitor and slow the spread of CWD for decades through participation in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Health Committee. He currently serves in the leadership of the wildlife health committee and as a co-editor for national guidance on AFWA Best Management Practices for surveillance and response of CWD.

Furfey said the positive Idaho test so close to Oregon makes it all the more alarming because once it arrives in Oregon, it may be here to stay.

"There's no effective way to eradicate it once it becomes established," she said.

She said there's also no cure or vaccine for the disease.

The ODFW already has emailed tag holders for ongoing and upcoming deer and elk hunts in select Northeastern Oregon units requesting they provide parts from their deer or elk for testing if they are successful on the hunt. Barrels placed at various locations will make it easier for these hunters to submit a head for sampling by biologists and veterinarians.

Beginning in 2022, it will be mandatory for anyone transporting wildlife car-

cases or parts to stop at a check station if they encounter one and to allow their animal to be tested.

A cervid parts import ban also remains in effect: Oregon residents or those traveling through who are returning from hunting out of state may not bring in certain cervid parts that contain brain or spinal cord tissues as these are known to be tissues of CWD concentration in infected animals. Several hunters have been cited for violating this regulation, most recently in Klamath County. Oregonians who hunt in other states also need to be aware of and follow that state's regulations for CWD.

Furfey said that ODFW has been closely watching for CWD since the late 1990s and has tested more than 23,000 samples since then. No tests have returned positive, she said.

She said it is not believed that CWD can be transmitted to humans, pets or livestock, but it is always fatal to cervids. She said it comes from a protein that lives in the environment and can for several years while passing between animals.

She said if an animal tests positive, it is recommended to not eat the meat.

### Symptoms

As for symptoms of CWD, a cervid may have the disease for months or years before it becomes apparent.

"You can harvest a perfectly looking animal and not be able to tell," Furfey said.

Symptoms include staggering, poor posture, a wide stance, apparent disorientation, lowered ears, an emaciated appearance, consuming lots of water and drooling.

"But again, it could take months or years for those symptoms to show up," she said.

Furfey said anyone with questions may call the ODFW's Enterprise office at 541-426-3279 and talk to a wildlife biologist. ODFW also has offices in La Grande and Baker City.

# Elk arrive right on schedule

By JAYSON JACOBY  
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BAKER CITY — Elk don't need calendars.

Dan Marvin is convinced of that.

He can't vouch for the animals' ability to recognize, say, Christmas or Independence Day or any other holiday observed by humans.

But elk certainly know when December arrives.

Some elk, anyway. Marvin can attest only to the chronological acumen of the elk that congregate each year at the Elkhorn Wildlife Area.

That's the series of 10 elk-feeding stations, ranging from Old Auburn Lane in the south to Shaw Mountain in Union County, operated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Marvin is starting his fourth winter as the Elkhorn Wildlife Area manager. The publicly owned portions of the Wildlife Area (some stations are on private land for which ODFW has leases) closed to public entry on Dec. 1, and remain closed through April 10.

Marvin said elk start to show up at some of the feed sites — most notably the meadow along Anthony Creek, west of North Powder — on Dec. 1.

And the animals stroll into the meadow even in years, such as the current one, when the fall has been mild, snow is scarce and the elk have no particular need for handouts of alfalfa hay.

"These elk, they know where that feed is," Marvin said on Friday morning, Dec. 10. "They have a phenomenal memory of where they've wintered in the past, and they can



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald, File  
Rocky Mountain elk munch on alfalfa hay during a previous winter at the Elkhorn Wildlife Area feeding site along Anthony Creek west of North Powder.

migrate for many miles overnight to be here at the feed site the next morning."

To be clear, Marvin and his crew distribute several hundred tons of alfalfa to elk each winter not because the animals wouldn't survive without the supplemental feed.

Elk are tough and hardy, capable of digging through deep snow to get at the meager winter forage.

Even a nasty winter, the sort that can kill hundreds of mule deer across Northeastern Oregon, typically takes only a minor toll on elk.

ODFW started the Elkhorn Wildlife Area in 1971 for a very different purpose — to stop elk from marauding cattle ranchers' haystacks in the Baker, North Powder and Bowen valleys.

The idea, which has proven largely effective over the past half century, is to set up feeding stations where daily distributions of alfalfa will, in effect, intercept the elk, satisfying their hunger and discouraging them from migrating into the valleys.

During the ensuing decades, Marvin said, the elk have become habituated to these sea-

sonal offerings, their instincts so keen that their arrival, as the calendar turns from November to December, is quite reliable.

"The cows every year bring their calves here, and they learn, and then they bring their calves," Marvin said.

Although the elk know when December comes, they don't always wait until then, Marvin said.

In years when snow comes early — 2020 was an example, with a couple feet of snow accumulating in the mountains the first half of November — elk will wander into some of the feed sites.

"Acting like they're going to starve to death," Marvin said with a chuckle during a 2020 interview.

But ODFW doesn't start bucking hay bales before Dec. 1, early snow or no.

The reason, Marvin said, is that the Elkhorn Wildlife Area remains open to the public, including hunters, through Nov. 30, and he doesn't want to, in effect, set up bait stations where elk would congregate.

Typically, as was the case last year, early snow melts and

the elk return to the mountains, waiting for Dec. 1.

This fall was quite different, with little snow until this past weekend.

Nonetheless, about 150 to 170 elk arrived at the Anthony Creek feeding site Dec. 1, and they've been showing up daily since, Marvin said.

Elk numbers have been much lower at the other sites, however.

That's pretty typical, Marvin said, even though the Wildlife Area crew set out hay at each of the sites on Dec. 1.

The elk that congregate at Anthony Creek tend to be the most consistent when it comes to the Dec. 1 arrival, Marvin said.

"They're very habituated elk," he said.

Elk that migrate to the other feeding sites, by contrast, often don't show up in large numbers until snow begins to pile up.

With the first major winter storm of the season bringing heavy snow to the Elkhorns this past weekend, Marvin said he expects the elk numbers will rise at all the sites soon.

"Peak numbers are usually in January when it's the coldest and the snow tends to get the deepest," Marvin said.

During mid-winter, the Wildlife Area crew feeds more than 1,000 elk, including about 500 at the Old Auburn Lane site and 250 or so at Anthony Creek.

A few of the feed sites also attract deer.

The Auburn and Anthony Creek sites are the two publicly accessible properties with maintained roads where people can park and watch the big herds of elk, which usually include multiple mature, branch-antlered bulls.

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