

ALL THUMBZ

New Pendleton resident raises an internet sensation

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — When Charly Hotchkiss moved to Pendleton in early January to take the job as the news clerk for the East Oregonian, she brought along an Instagram celebrity.

Thumbz, her 28-toed cat.
The orange feline has the congenital physical anomaly polydactyly.

Hotchkiss was 15 and living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, when she acquired the cat. Her parents employed a man who had an extra cat, Hotchkiss said, and the man was planning to either give the 1-year-old feline to a new owner or release it to the wild so “the coyotes could have it.”

“He’s not a great guy,” Hotchkiss said.
She heard he killed his ex-girlfriend and himself sometime after letting go of the cat.

For Hotchkiss, Thumbz filled a cat-shaped hole in her heart. Still grieving over the death of her previous cat a couple months earlier, she said she was ready for a new critter. And when her father called her and asked her if she wanted a cat who might “have something wrong with him,” she rushed over to claim him.

When she first spotted him, she noticed his extra toes, hence the name. But there was nothing wrong with him. Polydactyly is not uncommon in cats, Hotchkiss said, but having 28 toes is a world record. The cat has seven digits on each paw.

The Guinness World Records website confirms her claim. It names a 28-toed Canadian cat, Jake, as the world-record holder with the same situation — seven toes on each of its four paws.

“I really wish he had one more,” Hotchkiss said.
When she welcomed the cat into her life, she did not imagine the fame Thumbz would achieve.

Today, the cat has more than 23,000 Instagram followers. More people follow Thumbz than live in either Pendleton or Hermiston.

Instagram fame

When she entered college, Hotchkiss started an Instagram account for Thumbz. She said it was just something for her to share pictures with her friends.

“I really wasn’t taking it very seriously,” she said.
Fame took off thanks to one of her favorite podcasts, “Morbid: A True Crime Podcast.”

Hotchkiss’s sister, who also is a fan of “Morbid,” wrote a letter to the hosts of the show and told them of Thumbz. The letter, “How My Sister Got Her 28-Toed Cat from a Murderer,” was received and read on the podcast last year. Along with telling the story, the podcast shared Thumbz’s Instagram handle @thumbzthecat, and people started following it en masse.

“Overnight, he gained thousands of followers,” Hotchkiss said. “So then I started being more active with it.”

She said she began posting more, which gained the attention of even more followers. In addition, a kitty litter company took notice. PrettyLitter featured Thumbz in an ad last year, she said. The ad appeared on Instagram.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Thumbz has 28 toes — seven on each paw. His owner, Charly Hotchkiss of Pendleton, said that ties the world record for most toes on a cat.

Hotchkiss said she is not getting rich off of Thumbz, though he does net her some cash. Instagram paid Hotchkiss \$75 in January because of her cat’s large following.

A single post on Thumbz’s Instagram can receive hundreds or even thousands of likes. Hotchkiss said she has just more than 2,000 followers on her own account, but she said she is not at all envious of Thumbz’s popularity; rather, she is enjoying it.

She even said she has goals for him. She wants Thumbz to reach 25,000 followers by the end of March.

The life of Thumbz

He often sits on his cat tower and stares out the window, looking for squirrels in the trees.

“He’s an old man now,” Hotchkiss said.
That’s fine with her. The cat has, after all, lived with Hotchkiss in New Mexico, Eugene, California, Hawaii and now Pendleton.

Thumbz weighs 15.7 pounds. Hotchkiss said he might be a Maine coon or an American bobtail; she is not certain which, if either. And while he is not a lap cat, Hotchkiss said, he will climb up on a person’s chest to be petted, but only for people he likes.

Thumbz is not entirely an indoor cat. Hotchkiss takes Thumbz out on a leash. She said he likes to roll around in dirt. “That’s one of his favorite things,” she said. “He gets really dirty.”

Thumbz also does not meow, Hotchkiss said. Instead, he makes a trill. And while he is particular about his cat food, he will eat cream cheese off Hotchkiss’s fingers.

She also said she likes to think about the jobs of which he might be capable. Perhaps, she said, laughing, he could be a rodeo clown at Round-Up or even find a company ready for the cat to give it “two thumbs up.”

Timber and enviro groups back accord

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Environmental advocates presented a united front with the timber industry while recently pitching new forestry regulations to Oregon lawmakers.

The Legislature is considering whether to enshrine a compromise deal on logging rules — the Private Forest Accord — into law, expanding no-harvest buffers and making other management changes.

For the timber industry, the passage of Senate Bill 1501 would ensure decades of regulatory predictability for forestland owners and sawmills, said Diane Meyers, vice president and assistant general counsel at the Weyerhaeuser timber company.

“The stability makes Oregon an attractive place for the forest product industry’s continued investment,” Meyers said Feb. 1 before the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery Committee.

Aside from expanding logging buffers, the Private Forest Accord would strengthen rules for roads to ensure they don’t obstruct fish passage and don’t increase sediment in streams, she said.

“Frankly these conversations have been difficult on both sides,” Meyers said.

Small streams that currently lack no-harvest buffers would receive protections under the deal, which is significant because they affect the temperatures of larger waterways, said Bob Van Dyk, Oregon and California policy director for the Wild Salmon Center nonprofit.

The agreement calls for a “habitat conservation plan” for protected species in private forests within five years, which could prove challenging due to Endangered Species Act processes, he said.

“That’s a federal decision, and given federal timelines, that may be ambitious,” Van Dyk said.

The Private Forest Accord would track the removal of beavers from forestland and prioritize non-lethal approaches to resolving conflicts between the species and timber operators, said Sean Stevens, executive director of the

Oregon Wild nonprofit.

The Oregon Department of Forestry’s enforcement abilities would be enhanced and civil penalties for repeat violators would be increased tenfold, from \$5,000 to \$50,000, he said.

“We don’t want to see those people breaking the law with impunity,” Stevens said.

Small forestland owners typically harvest a third less timber from their properties than commercial operators, which is recognized with more flexible rules in the agreement, said Jim James, executive director of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association.

However, small landowners who meet the more rigorous standards would be rewarded with a tax credit that compensates them for the unharvested timber, James said. Those tax provisions would be enacted under a companion bill, SB 1502.

The deal is aimed at preventing small forestland owners from being pressured to convert their properties to other uses, which would be environmentally detrimental, he said.

“I hope it finds its way across the finish line,” James said of the deal.

Apart from the Private Forest Accord, lawmakers will be considering other landmark timber legislation this year: A new management regime from the Elliott State Forest.

The state forest has long been controversial because the logging revenues it generates are obligated to provide funding for schools and because it was considered for privatization.

Under Senate Bill 1546, the forest would remain in state ownership and its revenues would be “decoupled” from the Common School Fund after generating \$121 million for it.

The vast majority of future logging would occur on tree plantations younger than 65 years and more than a third of the 90,000-acre property would be set aside in a reserve for older forests.

The forest would be dedicated to public use and research, with Oregon State University taking a key role in its management.



GOT INVASIVE ANNUAL GRASSES? Grant SWCD Weed Control Dept. Working for You in 2022

Thanks to the Grant County Court and Northeast Oregon Forests Resource Advisory Committee, Grant Weed Control is able to offer a 25% Cost share program for Invasive Annual Grass Control on Private Grazing Lands, through a Title II funded Grant Project. This program will provide a maximum \$10,000 of invasive annual grass control services with a \$2,500 maximum landowner contribution to qualifying participants. To be eligible for participation, the treatment property must not be actively irrigated and must be primarily managed for livestock grazing, minimum of 20 acres in size, located within Grant County, and must contain invasive annual grass species. Applications for this limited weed control assistance opportunity will be ranked and funded on a first come first serve basis.

Contact: Grant Soil and Water Conservation District Office at (541) 575-1554 or visit 721 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845 for applications and additional information.

The application deadline for this program is March 11th, 2022.