

Ranchers grapple with wolf attacks

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — It has been another challenging summer for Oregon ranchers working to protect their livestock from wolves.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed 50 wolf attacks so far in 2022, killing or injuring 39 cattle, eight sheep, four goats and three guard dogs. Of those incidents, 38 have been reported since July 6, primarily in northeast and south-central Oregon.

That is already one more confirmed depredation than was tallied by ODFW for all of last year, though with fewer animals harmed — 95 in 2021, versus 54 as of Oct. 20.

But for every carcass found in rugged, mountainous terrain, there could be as many as six or seven more that aren't found, said John Williams, a retired Oregon State University Extension agent in Wallowa County who is wolf committee co-chairman of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

Many producers also opt not to report their livestock losses

to ODFW, Williams said, having long been frustrated with the agency's management of wolves.

"We need to get much more aggressive," he said. "We should be acting on the management of these wolves without having to wait for disaster to strike."

'Lethal take' permits

ODFW recently issued "lethal take" permits for two wolf packs that continue to prey on livestock in neighboring Union and Umatilla counties.

One of those permits allows the affected rancher to kill up to two wolves from the Horseshoe pack. It was approved Sept. 6 after wolves attacked cattle twice in three weeks on a 4,000-acre private pasture in the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton.

The permit was due to expire Oct. 7, but was extended until Oct. 28 after the pack killed another calf on Sept. 26.

Since then, two more depredations were confirmed and attributed to the Horseshoe



ODFW/Contributed Photo

Permits have been issued allowing two wolves to be culled in response to continued attacks on livestock.

pack on Oct. 17.

Michelle Dennehy, ODFW spokeswoman, said trapping has been added as a tool to catch wolves in the pasture, with USDA Wildlife Services now acting as the producer's agent.

A second kill permit was also granted Oct. 6 for up to two wolves from the Balloon Tree pack after ODFW confirmed four attacks on sheep Sept. 8-26 near Elgin. That permit expired Oct. 15, with no

wolves killed.

Ranchers face difficulties

Williams said it is difficult for ranchers to catch and shoot wolves under restrictions written into ODFW's permits.

First, they can only be killed on pastures where livestock depredations have already occurred. Williams said a wolf can easily traverse a 1,000-acre pasture in just minutes.

Second, the agency may

specify only a certain type of wolf may be shot to preserve certain members of a pack, such as the alpha male, female or any wolf fitted with a tracking collar. Not to mention, ranchers are already working full-time jobs, Williams said.

"It really limits the success of going ahead and getting those wolves killed," he said. "Once a wolf pack gets into a 'chronic depredation' issue like these packs are, really the only out is to reduce that pack's size."

Oregon's wolf plan currently defines "chronic depredation" as two attacks in nine months for wolves east of highways 395, 78 and 95, after which ODFW may consider lethal control. Wolves in Western Oregon remain protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Amaroq Weiss, senior wolf advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity, said evidence shows that in places such as Eastern Oregon, where government agencies can readily kill wolves, illegal poaching also increases.

Four wolves have been poached in the region this year, most recently OR88, a radio-collared adult female member of the Lookout Mountain pack in Baker County.

"It's a sad cycle that keeps repeating itself in Oregon," Weiss said. None of the poachers have been caught.

However, Williams said that while OCA doesn't condone poaching, he believes there would be greater tolerance of the predators locally if the state were more proactive in managing populations, and not simply reacting to livestock depredations.

Cattlemen want ODFW to adopt management zones for wolves, with population targets to prevent what Williams described as "saturation" of the animals in some areas.

"Here, you can expect to see a wolf on any ridge in Wallowa County, at any time," he said. "You can't really run them off. You're just moving them to another batch of livestock. You aren't really solving the problem."

Republicans eye District 5 race

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — When the Democratic-dominated Oregon Legislature voted on political redistricting last September, Republicans were apoplectic about maps they said were designed to lock in Democratic advantages in the Legislature and Congress.

Even a few Democrats blanched at the outcome.

"It was supposed to be bipartisan or nothing," said Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, who announced he would not run for re-election. "The change in the process is more than I can stomach. ... This is not OK, and I just can't dignify it with my vote."

Drawing the most fire were congressional maps that required adding a sixth district the state received because of its

rapid population growth over the prior decade.

The final maps were slammed by GOP lawmakers as drawn to ensure a 5-to-1 Democratic advantage in the congressional delegation.

It included a radically redrawn 5th Congressional District, snaking from southern Portland, over the Cascades to scoop up the growing Democratic voter numbers in northern Deschutes County east of the mountain range.

Republicans saw two Democratic voter pools that could only be joined by the bottleneck at the Santiam Pass, 4,817 feet in the Cascades. The route gets snow from early fall to late spring.

"You have the largest geographical barrier in our state dividing a district that is united only because of political desire," said Cheri Helt, a former GOP lawmaker who is running to



Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer, left, and Democrat Jamie McLeod-Skinner

be commissioner of the state Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Helt suggested the new member of Congress would need a satellite phone and avalanche beacon to navigate the two ends of the district from autumn to spring.

A year later, Republican complaints have been replaced by bullish opinions that they can



Submitted Photos

win some of the districts — with the most optimism aimed at flipping he 5th. It's the district with the smallest Democratic voting history tilt, and features candidates from opposite ends of the map and political spectrum.

With Democrats holding a narrow 221-212 majority, with two vacancies, even a handful of seats flipping to Republicans

could give the GOP control of the House when it convenes in 2023.

The election forecasting website FiveThirtyEight puts Oregon's 5th District on that shortest of short lists.

Closed primaries in which only party members could vote helped progressive Democrats rally around Terrebonne attorney Jamie McLeod-Skinner in her upset win over moderate U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby.

McLeod-Skinner has been cross-nominated by the Independent Party and Working Families Party.

Republicans chose former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer, who has received political and financial backing from GOP leaders aligned with former President Donald Trump. Some of the earliest support came from Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-NY, chair of

the House Republican Conference after the dismissal of Rep. Liz Cheney, R-WY, who voted to impeach Trump.

A win by either candidate in the 5th District would be historic.

McLeod-Skinner would be the first open lesbian from Oregon in Congress.

Chavez-DeRemer would be the first Latina elected to Congress from the state, though Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, is the Democratic candidate for the new — and wide-open — 6th District seat, centered around Salem.

In a constitutional quirk also in play for the 6th district, Chavez-DeRemer and McLeod-Skinner each live just outside the boundaries of the 5th District. The U.S. Constitution requires U.S. House members live in the states they represent, but residency in the districts is not required.

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