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Sheep killed by wolf in northern Umatilla County

A May 2 investigation by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) confirmed that four penned sheep (two ewes, two lambs) were killed by a wolf on private land east of Weston, OR in northern Umatilla County.

One additional lamb is missing and believed to have been killed by the wolf.

The incident occurred in an area not known to be frequented by one of Oregon's known wolf packs but by two wolves discovered last August in the northern Mt. Emily wildlife management unit. Based on evidence at the scene, wildlife biologists believe a single wolf was involved in the depredation.

This is the first time ODFW has confirmed a wolf kill of livestock in Umatilla County.

The five dead sheep bring the total number of livestock animals killed by wolves in Oregon to 57 since 2009. The last confirmed wolf kill of livestock occurred March 8, 2012.

In related news, Oregon State Police (OSP) Fish & Wildlife Division, with the assistance of Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), is continuing the investigation into the death of a possible wolf found mid-March in Union County. Genetic tests to confirm if the animal is a wolf are still to be completed and the ongoing investigation confirmed the death is a crime. OSP is seeking public tips to help solve the case.

On March 16, around 8:30 a.m. OSP Fish & Wildlife Senior Trooper Kris Davis received a call regarding the discovery of a possible deceased wolf on private property about six miles north of Cove, OR. Davis and Sergeant Isaac Cyr responded and contacted the property owner and person who reported finding the deceased animal to Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife that morning.

After taking possession of the 97-pound animal, OSP took it to a local veterinarian for x-rays. The initial examination didn't confirm a cause of death. A necropsy confirmed the cause of death was the result of a criminal act. The actual cause is not being released at this time but the investigation indicates the animal had been dead about one week.

A range rider monitors cattle and wolf activity in Wallowa County. Range riders like this one are one of several non-lethal methods the ODFW and ranchers have been using to prevent wolf depredation on livestock, with limited results. *–Photo by Diana Hunter*

Mustang golf goes to state

The Mustang golf team, made up of students from Heppner and Ione, is headed to the state championships after the boys placed first and the girls placed second at district playoffs in Pendleton on Tuesday. The state championship is next week, May 14-15; the boys play at Quail Valley in Banks, OR and the girls play at Eagle Crest in Redmond, OR. Back (L-R): Coach Matt Scrivner, Jesse Boyd, Keenan Helfrecht, Shane Miles, John Propheter, Adam Collin, Jaden Orr, Zach Orem, Kyle Harrison, Earl Propheter, Coach Dale Holland and Coach Greg Grant. Front (L-R): Austin Gutierrez, Paige Grieb, Macy Gibbs, Stacy Halvorsen, Maddie Lindsay, Jordan Peterson, Lauren Garrett, Emily Rea and Luke Jobes. *–Contributed photo*

City sewer rates rise $2 July 1

The city of Heppner will be increasing its base sewer rate by $2 per month beginning July 1, Heppner City Manager Dave DeMayo has reminded residents.

In a news release to the public DeMayo said the increase from $26.10 to $28.10 is due to "increasing prices for goods and services, fuel and electricity."

Ballots mailed for primary election

According to Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers, ballots for the May 15 primary election have been mailed; every registered voter in Morrow County should have received their ballots. Any elector who has not received a ballot and believes they should have should call their local election office or go to oregonvotes.org to see why they have not received it. The last day Morrow County will mail requested ballots is May 10, 2012. Remember, ballots are not forwarded.

As a reminder, Election Day is Tuesday, May 15. All ballots are due by 8 p.m. that day. Ballots must be received, not simply postmarked, on that day. For voter convenience, 24-hour drop boxes are located throughout the county. Locations are as follows:

Heppner: Courthouse parking lot (24 hours) or the Morrow County Clerk's Office, Room 102 inside the courthouse. Open 8 a.m. to noon and 1-5 p.m., M-F and Election Day (May 15) from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Lexington: 365 West Hwy 74 (Public Works Parking lot). Turn off Hwy. 74 onto Tom Street and left into the public works parking lot. Open 24 hours.

Ione: Spring St. (in front of the turn to 3rd Street). Open 24 hours.

Boardman: NW Boardman Ave. (24 hours).

Irrigon: 205 NE 3rd St. (Irrigon Annex). Open 24 hours.

NOAA issues April climate summary for Heppner

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures in Heppner averaged slightly warmer than normal during the month of April.

The average temperature was 50.3 degrees, which was 1.3 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 62.1 degrees, which was 1.2 degrees above normal. The highest was 86 degrees on the 24th. Low temperatures averaged 38.5 degrees, which was 1.3 degrees above normal. The lowest was 28 degrees, on the 4th.

There were three days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 2.95 inches during April, which was 1.44 inches above normal. Measurable precipitation of at least .01 inch was received on 14 days, with the heaviest, 1.10 inches, reported on the 24th.

Precipitation this year has reached 6.68 inches, which is 1.06 inches above normal. Since October, the water-year precipitation in Heppner has been 8.48 inches, which is 1.20 inches below normal.

The outlook for May from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for near-normal temperatures and near- to below-normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 64 degrees at the start of May to 73 degrees at the end of May. Normal lows rise from 40 degrees to 47 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.66 inches.

This was the fourth wettest April on record. The wettest was 4.65 inches in 1988.

The National Weather Service is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department.

Plans on track for Heppner's first Relay For Life

If there is any truth to the old saying that "Nothing succeeds like success," then the first few months of planning for this summer's American Cancer Society Heppner Relay For Life bodes well for the event.

According to Becky Sparks, chair of the first annual Heppner Relay For Life, planning for the event is well underway and on track to be ready for the opening ceremonies. The Heppner Relay For Life is set for Saturday and Sunday, June 30–July 1, from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. at the Morrow County Fairgrounds in Heppner.

Relay For Life is the American Cancer Society's signature fundraising event and is comprised of teams made up of friends, family members, cancer survivors, students, coworkers and active seniors. Once the teams are registered, the members go out into their communities to secure contributions for their efforts.

"So far, we have teams representing the entire community, but we know there are many more county residents who would like to get involved," says Sparks. "All they have to do is call me or one of the other committee members to find out how to register."

The day of the event, the teams arrive to pitch their campsites. Then, following the opening ceremonies and traditional cancer survivors lap, each team is introduced. The teams are then asked to have one member walking the track throughout the event. When they aren't walking, team members can usually be found visiting other campsites, participating in the variety of games and activities, or enjoying the many food venues.

While organizing the Relay For Life is going well, Sparks says there are still a few spots open on the planning committee. She says that volunteering to help plan the Relay takes only a couple hours each month up through the June 30 event.

"It's more fun than work," she says. "Plus, you get the feeling that you're working to help fund the research that will one day find a cure for this terrible disease."

The survivorship sub-committee is also looking to register area cancer survivors to walk the opening lap of the Relay. Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer is considered to be a survivor. Survivors are not only encouraged to walk the ceremonial first lap of the Relay, but they, along with their caregivers, will be invited to attend a free reception following the lap.

Sparks explains that every dollar raised by the teams is used by the American Cancer Society to continue its funding of research, its legislative advocacy, and its many educational and patient service programs. To continue that funding, corporate sponsors are being recruited to donate money or in-kind items and services to the event.

"Corporate sponsors help fund the infrastructure of every Relay," says Sparks, "ranging from the cost of securing the site, to the rental of the tents, recruitment of participants, and buying the hundreds of t-shirts worn by the participants and cancer survivors."

Anyone wishing to form or join a team, sign up as a cancer survivor, caregiver, volunteer or corporate sponsor, can call Becky Sparks at 541-676-5131.

Same driver, new car

Residents on Heppner's Rural Route 1 may notice a new car pulling up to their mailboxes. There's no need to be alarmed when the driver starts reaching in mailboxes, though...it's only mail carrier Shari Ober (pictured) in her new, red Ford Festivo. Ober says the car is the same make and model as her old car, just a different year and color. Mail customers were familiar with the sight of the aquamarine Ford but, after 16 years and 628,000 miles on the route, Ober said it was time to retire her old friend. She bought her new car for only $300. She said one man teased her about the price, saying he spent more on two batteries for his golf cart than she did on her car. At 40 miles to the gallon, though, she's happy with her deal. *–Photo by Andrea Di Salvo*

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