

Investigation turns up dead, malnourished cattle

Sheriff's office recommending animal neglect charges filed

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Staff Writer

Fourteen dead cattle were discovered Saturday at a property on Columbia Lane and South Edwards Road in Hermiston, which the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office is investigating as a possible case of animal neglect.

Another 15 cattle were so malnourished they could not be moved safely, according to Sheriff Terry Rowan. One calf was so weak it could not stand and had to be euthanized, Rowan said. None of the sick animals appeared to have enough food or water.

Authorities are working with a special prosecutor from Benton County who specializes in animal neglect cases, and reports should be turned in to the Umatilla County district attorney early this week. Rowan said they will recommend pressing charges against the cattle owner, 55-year-old Michael Hockensmith of Hermiston.

For now, though the cattle have technically been seized, Rowan said the animals will be left in place due to their numbers and fragile health. Officers will be checking daily to make sure they receive proper care.

"We do not believe they can be transported without further loss," Rowan said. "From this point forward, we're just ensuring continued care."

The incident was first reported Thursday, Jan. 5,

by an anonymous caller who noticed seven dead cows that were clearly visible from across Columbia Lane. A search warrant was served Saturday, and Rowan said they found a total of 14 dead cattle — mostly yearling calves.

Fifteen more cows were badly malnourished, Rowan said, and separated from the rest of the herd where they were treated by veterinarians. During their investigation, officers found that a water trough for the sickest animals was frozen over with six inches of ice.

"They weren't able to get to water for a couple of days," Rowan said.

Some of the cattle were also very skinny, Rowan said, with their backbones and hip bones showing.

"These are Angus cattle that are typically well-rounded animals," he said. "Our evaluation and evidence would point to neglect or inadequate feed."

The bodies of the dead animals had been left outside for several days, Rowan said, though state law requires carcasses be buried or burned within 15 hours.

Hockensmith, was apparently the only one caring for the animals. Rowan said Hockensmith seemed willing to work with the sheriff's office to care for the animals while they remain on his property.

"Hopefully, we can create a partnership there to where he is willing to provide adequate care," Rowan said. "We will just continue to monitor it."

Contact *George Plaven* at 541-966-0825.

Hermiston boy dies of respiratory failure

Hermiston Herald

A four-year-old Hermiston boy died Dec. 29, from what is believed to be a respiratory infection.

Jasper Duree McKenzie had been sick for a few weeks with a respiratory illness but was an otherwise healthy child, according to his aunt Kendra Aylett.

"It was out of nowhere, all of the sudden," she said.

According to a report from the Umatilla Coun-

ty Sheriff's Department, Good Shepherd Medical Center.



Jasper Duree McKenzie

ty Sheriff's Department, Good Shepherd Medical Center. While another child went into the bowling alley to get Hendricks, the boy stopped breathing. A passerby began CPR on the child and an ambulance was called, but life-saving measures failed and the boy was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Hendricks described Jasper as a loving, caring and happy child with a giving spirit. "He had the best smile in the world," she said in a message relayed by Aylett. "He loved his mom and (three) sisters and grandma, and to help do chores." A benefit account has been set up at Bank of Eastern Oregon for Jasper's family under the name Kendra Aylett.

Police ID victim, possible suspect in stabbing

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
Staff Writer

Hermiston police are having a tough time determining what happened Thursday that led to a stabbing.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said there have been no arrests because of conflicting initial statements and people not cooperating with the investigation, including the victim.

"We want to make sure the threshold is there before we arrest somebody," Edmiston said.

Edmiston identified the victim as Troy Curtis Rutherford, 30, and the possible suspect as Marcus Allen Nelson, 32, both of Hermiston.

Hermiston police Thursday morning responded to reports of a stabbing at a trailer at Dun Rollin Trailer Park, 445 E. Jennie Ave., Hermiston. Officers



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Officers from Hermiston Police Department question residents of a trailer park where a stabbing was reported Thursday morning.

found no one involved, then checked at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, where Rutherford received treatment for superficial stab wounds to the head and back of his shoulders, ac-

witnesses are not complying with the investigation, Rutherford has been uncooperative, and initial statements from Rutherford and Nelson conflict. Edmiston also reported police don't yet know Rutherford's "true intention(s)" of going to Nelson's residence.

While police have yet to know just what went down, Edmiston said his department would hand over its findings to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office to consider any charges.

Rutherford has a misdemeanor theft case and a trespassing case pending in Umatilla County Circuit Court, according to court records. And Nelson has hearings Jan. 17 to change his pleas in an identity theft and forgery case and to charges of methamphetamine possession and misdemeanor theft.

Boom rattles windows around Hermiston

I mysterious boom rattled windows, and a few nerves, around Hermiston Friday afternoon.

Residents in various part of the city, and in surrounding areas, reported hearing a booming sound, that shook windows and homes about 2:45 p.m.

The noise resulted in several calls to law enforcement and widespread speculation on at least one social media group forum on Facebook.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said his department received calls about the incident and he also heard whatever it was himself.

"I was in a closed-door meeting in my office and it

rattled my windows," Edmiston said.

Edmiston, one of his captains and another officer drove around the city to investigation, but nothing was found to explain the noise.

"It would not surprise me if it turned out to be something at a high altitude," he said, like a meteor or a sonic boom from an aircraft.

Some people described the incident as sounding like an earthquake.

The U.S. Geological Survey has not recorded any earthquakes in either Oregon or Washington state during the 24 hours prior to the reports.

— Gary L. West

Pair in jail after fleeing police

EO Media Group

A Walla Walla officer fired Sunday at suspects who were ramming his patrol car with their pickup.

The Walla Walla Police Department in a written statement reported officer Paul Green was not injured, nor did his gunshots hit suspects Jason Gene Nathaniel Barnes, 32, of Walla Walla, and Jessica Dawn Grigsby, 35, of Hermiston.

At about 9:30 p.m., Green saw a Chevrolet pickup with no lights pulling a utility trailer on West Sumach Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues near downtown Walla Walla. Green drove east on Sumach from Fifth, according to the statement, and saw the vehicle drive toward him from the intersection of Fourth Avenue.

The pickup drew closer, according to the statement, and the suspect ac-

celerated and rammed into the front of the police car, forcing it back and off to the side of the road.

Green drew his gun, Walla Walla police reported, and fired at the pickup while it was ramming his car.

The driver fled south in the vehicle, leaving the city on Third Avenue. The chase continued into Oregon. Members of the Washington State Patrol, the sheriff's offices of Walla Walla and Umatilla counties and Milton-Freewater police joined the pursuit, which ended at 9:41 p.m. when the pickup crashed into a ditch in the area of Elliot and Birch Creek roads, a couple miles east of Milton-Freewater.

Barnes was the driver, according to Walla Walla police. Officers caught him as he tried to run. Grigsby was the passenger and did not try to escape.

IN BRIEF

Agape House hosts indoor/outdoor sale

A sale benefiting Agape House is planned this weekend.

The regular parking lot sale, which includes indoor shopping for clothes, is Saturday from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. It features adult attire at three items for a dollar. People can pick up the first five articles of children's clothing free of charge, with additional selections at three for \$1.

Depending on the weather, other items will be available — including bikes, books and furniture, which will be priced as marked. People can name their own price for knick-knacks.

Agape House serves individuals and families in need. For more information, call 541-567-8774.

Linfield professor to share at writers' series

Joe Wilkins, author of "The Mountain and the Fathers: Growing Up on the Big Dry," will read during the upcoming First Draft Writers' Series.

A memoir, the publication is winner of a 2014 GLCA New Writers Award. Also, his most recent full-length collection of poetry, "When We Were Birds," was selected by Billy Collins for the

Miller Williams Poetry Prize Series. Wilkins also teaches writing at Linfield College in McMinnville.

The event is Thursday, Jan. 19 at 7 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St. There is no admission charge.

After Wilkins' presentation, audience members are invited to read short excerpts from their own works.

First Draft meets the third Thursday of each month. For more information, call 541-278-9201 or visit www.pendletonarts.org.

Healthy Fridays offer free services

Free health screenings, including blood pressure check, weigh-ins, body mass index, cholesterol and glucose testing is offered during Healthy Fridays.

The event is presented the first and third Friday of the month from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in Conference Room No. 7 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. The next one is Friday, Jan. 20.

Those planning to have their cholesterol checked need to fast for 8-10 hours prior to the blood draw. The event also provides free flu shots.

For more information, contact 541-667-3509 or healthinfo@gshealth.org.

UEC keeping the heat on during extreme cold

EO Media Group

The recent cold snap might make residents cringe when they get their electricity bill for the month, but cranking up the heat isn't overloading Umatilla Electric Cooperative's system.

Most utilities are at their peak in the winter, member services administrator Steve Meyers said, but UEC's system reaches its peak loads during agriculture irrigation season June through August.

Despite an unusually cold, snowy winter, Meyers said the system hasn't experienced any widespread outages.

He said over the last three years UEC has worked to re-

build portions of its Weston Mountain distribution system to better withstand snow, wind and other weather.

The Red Cross recommends everyone take steps to make sure that if there is a power outage during extremely cold weather, they are prepared. Recommendations include keeping non-perishable food and water (a gallon per person per day) for everyone in the house to survive on for three days, plus flashlights, extra batteries, heavy blankets, a radio and extra cell phone battery. If the power is out for long residents should run water through their pipes to keep them from freezing.

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STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Austin Rice (Senior)
IRRIGON HIGH SCHOOL

Austin Rice is a dedicated student, outstanding athlete, and all-around nice guy. He is a shining example of a positive attitude that has led him to success in many areas. Austin has been a varsity letter-winner in football, basketball, and baseball all four years of high school, and currently holds a GPA of 3.7. He is considering attending either George Fox University or OIT next year where he plans to pursue studies in the healthcare field, and play baseball. Austin was selected 1st team all-state in baseball last year as a pitcher, leading the knights to the 2A state semi-finals. He has been a starter for the Knights basketball team the past two years, and was the starting quarterback this past football season.

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