

# Gearhart turns to state for elk solutions

R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

The attack on a 12-year-old corgi by an elk in the herd on North Marion Avenue in Gearhart was the topic of discussion at the city’s April 3 City Council meeting.

“The incident is just the most recent in a long series of interactions with these large animals whose populations have exploded and who have no natural predators,” Gearhart Golf Course owner Tim Boyle wrote in an email to Mayor Matt Brown. “The elk population is now at the stage where injuries to humans are inevitable.

Dog-elk encounters are becoming more frequent in Gearhart.

In 2016, a pet whippet was trampled and killed by a herd of elk at the Reserve at Gearhart this month. In another incident reported to Gearhart Police, an elk kicked a dog and broke the dog’s legs.

In 2017, an elk cow protecting its calf by the 10th Street entrance to the beach charged a bicyclist before the elk was tranquilized and brought to safety by police, firefighters and officials from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Reports of aggressive elk were also reported in the Gearhart communities of Surf Pines and Pinehurst.

Drivers and pedestrians alike find themselves surrounded by the herd, pets are threatened and their owners intimidated.

To make it safer for both animals and people, the city adopted new rules prohibiting feeding

of wildlife in March. “This will help cut down elk-human interactions, and prevent the elk from getting too friendly and approaching humans and pets,” said at the council meeting.

Along with the no-feeding rules, Gearhart will post signage throughout the community, City Administrator Chad Sweet said.

Seasonal “elk calving” warning signs will be placed in busy right-of-ways and in pedestrian traffic areas. “Part of the job for the city is to educate the public and visitors on elk safety,” Sweet said.

Gearhart will join the city of Warrenton, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State Police and private landowners to work with Oregon Solutions to find ways to mitigate public health issues with the elk herd in Clatsop County, Brown said at the meeting.

Oregon Solutions is a state organization that helps solve complex problems within multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

The name of their project is Clatsop Plains Elk Collaborative and they are asking Gov. Kate Brown to back the project and select state Mayor Henry Balensifer of Warrenton and Mayor Jay Barber of Seaside to co-convene the committee meetings.

“The elk are beautiful animals and fun to look at from a distance but can be very dangerous to look at,” Brown said. “Please exercise caution with your pets leashed at all times to prevent potentially harmful situations.”

## Dog recovers after trampling by Gearhart elk

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“Sammy” Dreier, a 12-year-old corgi, is one lucky dog.

He survived an encounter with an elk herd outside his home in Gearhart.

The incident occurred on Tuesday, March 26, around 7:30 a.m., at the home of Joanne and Sam Dreier at Ninth Street and North Cottage.

Attuned to the elk population from years of living in Gearhart, Joanne Dreier listened for the herd before going out. She checked all the windows, opened the garage door and Sammy walked ahead.

Suddenly a herd of about 80 elk emerged from the thicket.

Instead of making a turn toward the golf course, the herd stopped and two lead females approached.

“There were several seconds where everybody was just standing still and I was trying to keep Sammy from going further,” she said.

While not usually responsive, the herd will eventually move away.

“But these females were intent on getting rid of this dog,” Joanne Dreier said. “I think it was because there were calves in this group. The two females, one of them in particular, came forward and charged at him.”

When the dog’s short legs got caught in the tall side grass, he leaped in the air and realized he was in big trouble, she said.

The lead female lifted her leg and came down on Sammy with her hoof.

**‘IF I HAD NOT GRABBED HIM, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER FOR HIM. HAD THEY CHARGED ME, I DON’T KNOW WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE.’**

Joanne Dreier, owner of the dog ‘Sammy’, who was attacked by an elk



“I was hysterical by this time and I ran over and grabbed him,” Joanne Dreier said. “I thought his back was broken.”

Holding the dog, she backed away, toward the house.

“The rest of the herd, thank goodness, didn’t really pay any attention,” she said. “Somehow they went to the golf course.”

By this time, two golf course employees heard the commotion and arrived on scene. “They called our vet to tell them that we were on our way.”

Sammy was rushed to Bayshore Animal Hospital in Warrenton, where he was sedated and treated.

“He was really lucky,” Joanne Dreier said. “If I had not grabbed him, it would have been over for him. Had they charged me, I don’t know what I would have done.”







Her advice to dog owners is to keep dogs on a leash when outside, even at home.

“We’re very grateful he wasn’t more badly injured,” she said. “It could have been a very bad day for all of us.”

Sam Dreier said he hopes that the incident will not be seen as an isolated one, but part of a larger effort to provide greater safety for residents and their pets when confronted with the elk population.

Despite broken tibia and cracked ribs, Sammy is “his same jaunty self,” Sam Dreier said. “From his perspective, he’s got a twinge of pain. But that’s going to be gone in a couple of weeks.”



-  **Be aware of your surroundings and avoid walking into the middle of an elk herd.**
-  **Enjoy watching from a distance.**
-  **Keep pets on a leash at all times.**
-  **Elk are most active at dawn and dusk, but avoid human and pet conflicts at all times, especially during September/October (breeding season) and May/June when calves are born.**
-  **Non-native vegetation attracts elk. To move a herd off your property, calmly approach the herd, making your presence obvious. Avoid surprising or being aggressive towards any wildlife.**
-  **Be aware of your surroundings and avoid walking into the middle of an elk herd.**

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