

## SUTHERLIN-AREA LIVESTOCK DESTROYED

# Cougar culprit killed

### Big cat that took several sheep, goats in Fair Oaks area in past few weeks is tracked down

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The News-Review

Livestock in the Fair Oaks area east of Sutherlin have been running scared over the past month. And many have not survived.

Steve Bailey said he lost eight ewes in one day a couple weeks ago.

be legal. By the time the incident was reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services office in Roseburg, the cougar's trail was too cold for trapper Jim Godfrey's dogs to follow. He did find hair and tracks, confirming the animal's presence.

Over the next week, a cougar was seen twice by area residents — once during the day when it was spooked

Turn to **COUGAR**, page 9

Bill Briggs said he has lost four goats and six ewes. Another neighbor lost one ewe.

The guilty party was a cougar. A couple of young deer hunters saw the cougar chasing and killing Bailey's sheep and contemplated taking a shot, but decided against it because they weren't sure if the action would

# Cougar: None of the animals had been eaten

Continued from page 1

from a pasture that held goats, and just at dusk another day. Then it struck again at night. It killed five of Briggs' ewes on the night of Oct. 14 and then another ewe the next night. The sheep were just about 100 yards from Briggs' house.

The next morning, Godfrey and his four dogs were back on the case.

"This cat had killed the weekend before and it wasn't going to stop until it was stopped, so I put out the extra effort to go out there Sunday morning," Godfrey said. "The dogs didn't pick up the cat's trail at the dead sheep site, so Godfrey walked them in a wide circle around the sheep. The dogs picked up the scent in an area with Scotch broom and blackberry canes, and then quickly found the cougar. Godfrey said there was a five-minute pursuit of the cat by the dogs before the cat went up a tree. The trapper then disposed of the predator with a rifle shot. The carcass was turned over to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for study.

"There are quite a few flocks of sheep in that area, and once the cougar found some easy meals, it stuck with it," Godfrey said.

Bailey said he valued his loss of eight ewes at \$1,200 and their unborn lambs at \$2,400.

"That's quite a financial loss," said Bailey, whose flock now numbers 51 ewes.

"I've ran sheep out here for three years, and I've never lost one to predators until this," he added.

Briggs' flock of 10 ewes has been depleted to four. He said having the sheep and goats was a hobby for his family. In addition, the animals helped keep the grass down on his property.

"For me this is not a liveliv-

hood issue, but for other folks, more can cause a real financial burden," he said. "I just know lots of farmers are losing lots of livestock, so the fewer predators, the better."

Briggs said that the deaths of seven of the 10 animals he lost in the last few weeks appeared to be the result of sport killing by the cougar. None of the carcasses showed signs of being eaten. He said his other three animals are missing.

"(Predators are) not just killing sheep and other livestock," he said. "Deer and other wildlife are getting hit hard also."

Bailey said he is now patrolling his property more, looking for trails and tracks and any other evidence he might find to alert him to the presence of predators. He also put a guard llama in with his sheep Saturday.

"Our program (Wildlife Services) has seen a spike in cougar-related incidents in the past few weeks from South County to North County," said Michael Burrell, the supervisor for Wildlife Services in Douglas County. "Four cats have been taken in the last month for agricultural damage, two on sheep and two on goats."

The latest incident was Thursday night when a cougar killed a goat in the Dixonville area. The cougar was tracked, treed and disposed of Friday morning by a Wildlife Services trapper and his dogs.

"There's lots of mountain lions, lots of people and lots of livestock out there," he added. "There's going to be conflicts."

To report predator activity, call Burrell at 541-679-1231.

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Courtesy photo by JIM GODFREY

Bill Briggs' stands on the body of the ewe killed on property miles east of Sutherlin. A cougar slaughterer said this ewe and five more on Briggs' property this month