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Animal shooters sentenced

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

An Oakley man has been sentenced for killing a Scott City man's buffalo in February.

Shawn J. Beagley was sentenced Thursday in Logan County District Court for shooting one of Richard Duff's buffalo Feb. 15 as it grazed in a pasture in Logan County.

District Magistrate Judge Mark TEMAAT ordered Beagley to repay Duff \$800 for the animal and pay court costs amounting to \$128.

As part of a plea agreement between Beagley's attorney, Charles Stewart of Oakley and Logan County Attorney Andrea Wyrick, Beagley is allowed to stay out of jail as long as he stays employed. TEMAAT placed Beagley on a six-month unsupervised probation in lieu of a six-month jail sentence. A motive for the shooting was unknown.

Beagley, along with Jaycee R. Crow of Marienthal, were charged with the shooting. Charges against Crow were later dropped, but he was charged and sentenced Thursday for killing three cattle owned by Cameron Edwards of Russell Springs.

Crow in September pleaded guilty to criminal damage to property for shooting and killing three cattle May 3 owned by Cameron Edwards.

Crow, represented by Doug Spencer of Oakley, was sentenced to an underlying prison term of eight months and placed on probation for one year. District Judge Glenn Schiffner told Crow he would have to serve a post-release period of another year and pay Edwards \$3,400 in restitution.

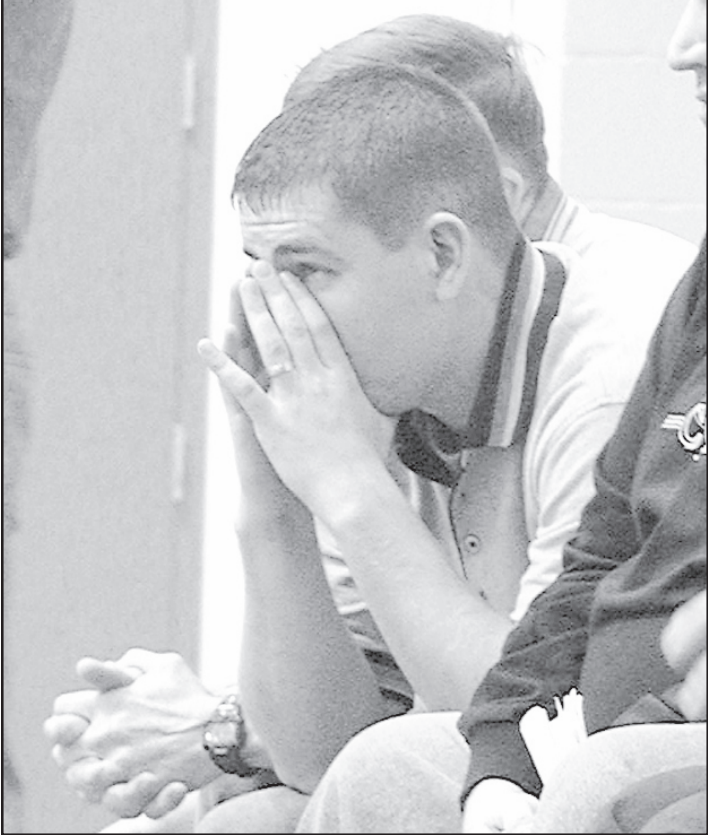
As part of a plea agreement, Wyrick had asked Schiffner to dismiss one charge of criminal damage to property for Crow's alleged shooting and killing a buffalo owned by Duff of Scott City. The buffalo was pastured in Logan County at the time of the alleged shooting.

Motive for the shooting was unknown.



Plenty to
cheer about

ABOVE: Colby High School cheerleaders gave their support to Eagle wrestlers during the Eagle Invitational wrestling tournament Saturday at the Colby High School gym. RIGHT: First year Colby wrestling coach Matt Sims yelled some words of encouragement to one of his wrestlers during a match. Colby placed fourth in the tournament. For more about the tournament and other weekend sports, turn to page 8.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Show him the money

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The director of the Thomas County Community Foundation has a goal for the foundation.

Eric Eicher wants to grow the endowment of the foundation so it can give more, and bigger, grants. The foundation was formed about five years ago to provide grants for the betterment of Thomas County.

In the beginning, the foundation received a \$300,000 grant from the Kansas Health Foundation — all earmarked to help form and run the foundation. The foundation has an endowment of \$275,000.

Eicher's goal now is to help build the foundation's endowment. There are two sources of funds for grants.

Grants are made from the interest on the \$275,000 endowment, plus the county's drug forfeiture fund which is valued at \$2 million which police chief Randy Jones gives some of the interest.

"That creates the pool of money we go grant-making with," Eicher said. "We don't control the principle. That is why the endowment needs to be built up."

Colby's funds are smaller than some other Northwest Kansas endowments. The Scott Community Foundation has a \$4 million endowment. Bird City has \$10-\$11 million.

"That allows those foundations to do many more grants," Eicher said. "The foundation here needs \$5 to \$7 million to generate the interest needed to make a successful, self-sustaining foundation."

This year, the foundation gave grants to Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival, Brewster elementary



Eicher

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Western Kansas gains leaders

TOPEKA (AP) — Most counties in the state's western half have been losing people over the past 15 years, and the region has lost legislative seats as a result, in theory shifting power to the east, particularly Johnson County.

Yet when the 2007 Legislature convenes on Jan. 8, western Kansas will have significant clout, thanks to the longevity of some of its lawmakers and House leadership elections this month.

Three of the its most powerful leaders will live west of U.S. Highway 281 — Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton; incoming House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls; and House Minority Leader Dennis McKinney, D-Greensburg.

And while Johnson County's population is far greater than the combined numbers in the state's western-most 54 counties, it can claim only one of the six leaders, House Majority Leader Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell.

It's not clear exactly what western Kansas' leadership dominance means for policy in the new year, with lawmakers from all regions suggesting the west won't be trying to ram an agenda past the east. But it does have implications for debates about issues such as education funding and energy policy.

"How it will play out is how they want it to play out, to make sure western Kansas doesn't sort of get forgotten," said Bob Beatty, a Washburn University political scientist.

The other two leaders at the top of the Legislature's hierarchy are

Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence, and Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka.

In the Senate, the president and majority leader share control of the agenda; in the House, power rests with the speaker, though the majority leader retains informal but potent influence. Minority leaders are the chief opposition spokesmen and strategists.

Merrick and Schmidt are the least senior of the six leaders, having both won their first terms in 2000. Morris and McKinney won their seats in 1992, while Hensley is the Legislature's senior member, having been elected to the House in 1976 and to the Senate in 1992. Neufeld won his first term in 1984, lost his 1988 re-election race but recaptured his seat two years later.

The western Kansans leaders now have relatively safe seats. Morris had no opponent in his last race, in 2004, and neither Neufeld nor McKinney were challenged this year.

That fact gives them some freedom to broker deals.

"It may be easier to spend more time doing legislative work than worrying about getting re-elected," said Burdett Loomis, a University of Kansas political scientist who formerly served on Gov. Kathleen Sebelius's staff. "There may be a little less to attend to in terms of having to quiet the waters."

The western Kansas leaders also said they're more used to building coalitions, coming from a less populated region. To get selected

speaker, Neufeld had to get support from easterners, and as a rural lawmaker, McKinney had to win over representatives of Democrats' core urban constituencies.

McKinney and Neufeld said westerners do such coalition-building in their personal and professional lives.

"I help my neighbor work his cattle. I help him sometimes with field work, and there's a bunch of times I've depended on him to help me — because we have to," McKinney said. "Our culture requires us to be of a cooperative mindset."

The ascendancy of western Kansas leaders is important to the region because changing demographics are against it.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the western-most 15 Kansas counties lost about 14,000 residents from 2000 through 2005, dropping their population to about 365,000. While the population did rise between 1990 and 2000, that was largely because of a few isolated trends, such as an influx of Hispanic residents in southwest Kansas.

Meanwhile, in 2000-2005, the Census Bureau estimates, Johnson County gained more than 55,000 residents, bringing its total population to more than 506,000.

There's also been pressure to see that small, rural schools receive a lesser share of the state's K-12 education dollars, largely because of a now-resolved lawsuit that claimed districts with poor and minority students were being shorted.

Filled with generosity



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Shirley Bremenkamp, left, helped Doug and Brandon Johnson fill holiday baskets for Genesis of Thomas County Friday at the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Christmas baskets for 194 families were filled by volunteers and distributed Saturday.