

Disease found in deer in the county

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Three white-tail deer taken along Sappa Creek in central Decatur County in the past hunting season have tested positive for chronic wasting disease, which destroys an animal's brain and eventually kills it.

The disease is similar to mad cow disease in cattle, said Mike Miller, editor of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. Scientists have not shown it can be transmitted to humans, he said, but it still is something people want to be careful of.

With the three confirmed cases in the county, he said, the department will take the first step in its contingency plan, which is holding a public meeting in Decatur County (no date has been announced yet), talking to the landowners where the deer were killed and talking to the hunters. Then, said Mr. Miller, the department will want to do some more sampling to see how widespread the infection is.

Although the disease is still somewhat rare, said Mr. Miller, the department has known about it for some time. Since 1996,

the department has held an annual sampling for deer taken during season and animals killed on the roads.

Each hunting season, hunters are asked to send in samples from the deer they kill so they can be tested for chronic wasting disease. So far, only one other confirmed case has been found in Kansas, in Cheyenne County in 2005. In 2001, there was a confirmed case in a captive elk herd in Harper County, but that animal had been imported from Colorado.

The disease is known to be more wide-

spread in both Colorado and Kansas, he said, so it's not a surprise that it might appear along the borders with Kansas.

Basically, said Mr. Miller, during the hunting season a sample is taken from the deer and sent to the veterinary lab at Kansas State University. When there is a presumptive positive out of those tests, which is what happened with these three cases, said Mr. Miller, the samples are then sent to the National Vet Lab in Iowa. He said those results have shown a confirmed positive for chronic wasting disease.

The department, he said, wasn't surprised to have some positives with the disease close by. Last month, a positive test result was reported by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission from a deer taken just a few miles north of Decatur County in Red Willow County, Neb.

The Kansas department will be doing some more testing, too, said Mr. Miller. He said he wasn't sure of the names of the hunters or if they were local people or people who traveled in to hunt.

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Election will determine new members

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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With the resignation of seven Decatur County Amusement Authority members last August, the board needs 10 new volunteers.

The Amusement Authority runs the games and rides and organizes volunteers for the home-owned carnival in August at the Decatur County Fair.

According to the bylaws, the authority, founded by the Chamber, needs 12 members to run. Kem Bryan, who serves on the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce board, said the bylaws will probably be changed after the election but didn't say if that means that the number of members will change.

Last August, Ward Votapka, president; Kristi Gallentine, secretary/treasurer; and members Lynn Groneweg, Jason Fortin, Ray Ward, Peggy Ream and Kelsey Gallentine resigned, dropping a letter and their keys off at the Chamber office.

The Amusement Authority bylaws say members are supposed to be elected at the annual Chamber banquet.

"Directors consisting of 12 members, one-third of whom shall be elected annually for a term of three years," according to the bylaws.

The authority is supposed to meet no less than quarterly. Within five days of the election, the members are supposed to meet and elect a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.

The bylaws also say that all earnings of the Amusement Authority "shall inure to the benefit of Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce Inc. or to such other regularly organized and qualified charitable, educational, scientific, philanthropic or civic organizations selected by the board of directors, which selections must be concurred in and approved by the ... Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce."

None of the earnings are supposed to go to benefit a private individual or any member of the authority.

As of last week, the Chamber had nine names to go on the ballot at the annual banquet, including Tim Thornton, Candy Ketterl, Stephanie Blau, Jim Wesch, Elden Huff, Kevin Ketterl, Dana Koerperich, Jennifer Schissler and Melinda Grafel.

The Chamber, said Mrs. Bryan, is trying to get people in place to do the job. She said the Chamber board has asked for representatives from the Chamber and the county fair board and commissioners to help with

Dinner set for chamber

The Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce annual banquet will start at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway with dinner, elections and entertainment on the agenda.

The menu features prime rib, baked potato, green beans, a roll and dessert. Entertaining the guests will be Paul Siebert of McCook playing a hammer dulcimer. The banquet will last until 8 p.m.

During the evening, the attendees will elect three chamber board members to take the place of Bryan Loker of KFNH Radio, County Clerk Marilyn Horn and Pam Wilson. On the ballot are Amanda Grafel of the Dresser, Dr. Shannon Addleman of Fair Chiropractic and Dave Olson, a retired teacher.

Currently, Mrs. Horn serves as the Chamber president; Jo Henderson is the paid manager; and Kari Ketterl, Kem Bryan, Tami Shaw, Kelly Wasson, Mrs. Wilson, Mr. Loker, Beth Harmon and Sid Metcalf serve on the board.

Attendees will also elect members for the Decatur County Amusement Authority. (See amusement story).

Candidates on the ballot include Tim Thornton, Candy Ketterl, Stephanie Blau, Jim Wesch, Elden Huff, Kevin Ketterl, Dana Koerperich, Jennifer Schissler and Melinda Grafel. Current members of the Amusement Authority board are Vicky Ray and Dana Marintzer. The other seven members resigned after the fair last fall.

the authority. Those members are Kari Ketterl for the Chamber, Linda Schroer for the fair board and Stan McEvoy for the commissioners.

Mrs. Bryan said after the election, the bylaws will need to be amended to accommodate those representatives.

Broken steam lines leave mess at school

Steam lines under the stage at the high school that broke and were noticed around Tuesday, Jan. 8 have left a big, expensive job for the Oberlin School Board to tackle.

Superintendent Pat Cullen said the lines under the stage in the auditorium had seven holes, which not only filled the auditorium with steam, but also left water under the stage. The holes were repaired, he said, and then workers found four more in the lines, which disburse the heat from the boilers in the school. The holes have been fixed, said

Dr. Cullen, but once steam lines start fracturing like this, the problem probably won't go away. And that could become an expensive problem for the school district.

Dr. Cullen said he has no idea what it will cost to replace the steam lines in the school. He said he did talk to some energy consultants this week, and they are putting some data together for the district.

This is a common problem, said Dr. Cullen, especially since the steam lines were installed in 1939. (See BOARD on Page 12)



AT THE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT at the high school this weekend, Marty Olson (above) sold tickets while Emma Merrill (below) worked in the concession stand.

They were just two of many volunteers who helped make the basketball tournament run smoothly.

— Herald staff photos by Jim Merriott

Tourney draws crowds

By **JIM MERRIOTT**

An enthusiastic crowd from six area high schools and two schools from Colorado spent Thursday, Friday and the majority of Saturday watching their favorite players at the 39th Annual Oberlin Invitational Basketball Tournament.

Teams from Oakley, Quinter, Hoxie, St. Francis, Atwood and Oberlin, plus Broomfield and Colorado Springs, ran the floors of both Decatur Community High gyms during the three-day event.

The smell of popcorn, chili and hot dogs filled the air. Honor music students sold bake sale items, hot pretzels and pop as a fund raiser for upcoming trips.

This season, the tournament organizers sold chances for a dollar a ticket for an opportunity to sink a three-point shot at half time, with prizes awarded to the winners.

Roughly 16 Oberlin Lions Club members volunteered their time again, working as ticket takers and doormen.

"We have a steady core of about six or seven members who volunteer each game," said Jack Benton, club organizer.

Entertainment was produced by the high school pep band, with solo and duet singers singing the "Star Spangled Banner" before



major games. Excited fans cheered and yelled as each team entered the floor,

with team cheerleaders leading the cheers. "I am not really sure just how old

the tournament really is," said high school Principal Charles Haag. "It (See SCHOOL on Page 12)

City employees will receive raises

After three closed-door sessions of 30 minutes each, the Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to give a 4 percent pay raise to city employees, with the exception of a few who received \$1-an-hour raises and three who recently had a pay hike.

Toward the end of the monthly meeting, the council decided to go into closed session to discuss non-elected personnel, including the council, the mayor, foreman, police

chief, administrator and attorney, for 30 minutes. The session was followed by two more 30-minute sessions.

At the end of an hour and half of closed sessions, the council approved a 2008 salary schedule. City Administrator Gary Shike said the council approved a 4 percent increase across the board, with the exception of raises given for exceptional merit at \$1 an hour, which is

more than 4 percent. Those receiving \$1-an-hour raise include Judy Wenger, billing clerk, David Sporn, water operator, Melvin Martin, with the street department and Nan Stanley, sexton.

The raises will cost the city about \$12,000 a year, he said, but the city isn't really spending that much more money, because it has had employees with seniority leave their positions and new ones have been

hired. The city probably won't actually see total gross increase. All are retroactive to the first of year.

Neither City Foreman Dan Castle or Lineman Ron Beneda received a raise, as both men are on a training schedule and recently received a pay increase. City Clerk Karen Larson, said Mr. Shike, didn't get the raise because she just started a new job, which meant a pay increase.