

Board will interview candidates

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin School Board plans to interview five candidates for a vacant board seat in a special meeting Tuesday at the district office.

At the regular monthly meeting Monday, the board discussed how the process would go, including how they can and can't vote since the meeting will be open to the public. As of Monday, the board received application letters from Colleen Rittmann, who works at the feed lot, Gary Fredrickson, dentist, Abby Hissong, who works at Fredrickson Insurance Agency, Doug Brown, rural Decatur County and Jess Randel, a former district employee who lives in Oberlin.

Board Member Barb Olson said one other person talked to her about applying.

The board discussed setting a deadline for applicants to get their letters to the district office, but decided that without being able to get it published officially in *The Oberlin Herald* they would only suggest a date. Board Member Dan Grafel suggested the board tell people that they would like all applications by Friday. That way, he said, the board will know how many people will be interviewed.

With an open meeting, asked Board Member Dan Nedland, how does this work? The board won't actually be able to order the other four (See BOARD on Page 5A)

Banquet set for farmers on Saturday

Entertainment, a hot meal and lots of prizes will mark the third annual Farmers and Ranchers Banquet at The Gateway on Saturday.

The dinner, sponsored by the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, will start at 6:30 p.m., said Kem Bryan, Chamber board president.

The banquet, she said, is targeted at farmers and ranchers in the area, although it is open to anyone who wants to come. Two years ago, said Mrs. Bryan, the Chamber held the first banquet to just say thanks to the people in the agricultural industry here.

Mrs. Bryan said the night will feature a "cream-can" supper, sausage, potatoes and vegetables all cooked together in a cream can.

Entertainment for the event, she said, will be by Joel Shaw and Lonnie McEvoy.

For the past two years the event has drawn around 300 people each year, she said, and this year, the Chamber would like to have a larger crowd.

Throughout the evening, board members will draw names for door prizes. Some of those include two Traeger grills, tools, a "full-spectrum" floor lamp, an outside fire pit, kids' toys, two music players, two family passes for the Oberlin swimming pool, four Decatur County history books and gift cards for businesses.

There is still time to make a reservation, said Mrs. Bryan. Just call the Chamber office at 475-3441 by Thursday. There is no charge.

The expense of the meal will be covered by the Chamber and sponsors.



IN FRONT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, city crewman Willard Perrin cleared off the parking spaces on Commercial Street last Wednesday after the area received about nine inches of snow. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Storm shuts schools, keeps crews busy

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Snow started to fall just before midnight last Monday, and by morning, everything that wasn't moving was covered in white.

Some reports said by last Tuesday morning, there was already eight inches of snow on the ground. In all, Oberlin received nine inches, with most of it coming down the early hours Tuesday and into the day.

There was enough of the white stuff to cancel

school in Oberlin on Tuesday and last Wednesday, making three snow days the school district has used this year.

Superintendent Pat Cullen said the No. 1 factor in determining to close the school is safety for the kids. If the roads might be difficult for the kids to drive on or the buses might have trouble, then the district will cancel school for the day.

Dr. Cullen said usually when the weather looks bad, Brian Simonsson, district trans-

portation director, will go out and evaluate the rural roads and Dr. Cullen will look around town. The two then talk and see if it is safe for kids to be out.

Last Tuesday morning, conditions were bad enough that classes were canceled for the day. By Tuesday afternoon, they had decided that the schools would be closed the next day, too.

Even while the snow continued to fall (See STORM on Page 3A)

Future gloomy for deer population

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The future for Decatur County's deer population looks a little gloomy due to the slow movement of chronic wasting disease, found for the first time in the county this year in three white tailed deer.

Lloyd Fox, a big game project leader with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, said at a meeting last Wednesday that the disease isn't going to affect the population immediately, but 100 years or more from now, the impact could be severe.

The department does surveys on the deer population by units, Mr. Fox said. Decatur County is part of Unit 1, where the most recent survey shows about 2 1/2 deer per square mile. Decatur County has 890 square miles, which means on average in October or November, about 2,300 deer in the county.

The area has a good productive rate, with about 75 to 80 fawns a year per 100 does, he said, and around 160 to 200 deer are killed each year by hunters.

At least that's the number that is reported, Mr. Fox said.

That means hunters take less than 10 percent of the deer population each year, he noted.

Can the department afford to go in and take 25 to 50 more deer for testing? he asked Fox. According to these numbers, the biologist said, it can be done, and the more information the state has, the better. Taking 25 to 50 more deer won't harm the future population, he said.

Last year at this time, he said, deer were concentrated around food

spots because of the deep snow. That isn't really normal, said Mr. Fox, but it is a good time for the deer to transfer chronic wasting disease.

All three of the deer that tested positive for the disease this year weren't yet showing signs of it yet, he noted.

In the next two years, said Mr. Fox, he doesn't think there will be a change in deer numbers, the number of hunters or public attitudes.

In the next decade, though, he said, people will see the disease spread south and east. There will be a slow shift in the negative attitude toward deer from the public. Also, said Mr. Fox, people will see an increase in car-deer accidents because the disease affects the animals' awareness. People will also see fewer trophy bucks, since it will kill many males off.

Fifty years down the road, he said, unless some form of treatment is found, the disease will be established across the state.

There aren't any good solutions, said Mr. Fox. Game managers are grasping at straws.

Some things that might help slow the spread of the disease are possible population controls, reducing or eliminating artificial feeding spots and not transporting deer carcasses.

To dispose of carcasses, said Mr. Fox, the department recommends burying them. The prions which cause the disease cling to organic material. The department also suggested that hunters clean knives and tools used to skin and cut up the animals, using a 50/50 mix of water and chlorine bleach.



AT A MEETING at The Gateway last Wednesday, Lloyd Fox, big game coordinator for the state Department of Wildlife and Parks, talked to a group of 60 plus people about the future of the deer population in Decatur County. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Department plans to shoot 25 to 50 deer

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Anywhere from 25 to 50 deer will be shot over the next couple of nights so the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks can test them for chronic wasting disease, since three deer taken in the fall hunting season tested positive for the fatal disease.

Lloyd Fox, a big-game biologist for the department, told a room full of just over 60 people at a meeting last Wednesday about the department's plan to kill more deer to test them for the disease. He said biologists hoped to start on Tuesday, taking the deer in the evening hours.

The district biologist has already talked to landowners to get permission for the hunt, he said. Right now, it looks like the county might have a high percentage of chronic wasting disease, said Mr. Fox, because there were three positives out of the 11 deer tested for this season.

The biologists, he said, will mainly work north of U.S. 36, where the three positives were taken along Sappa Creek.

After the animals are killed, said Mr. Fox, the biologists will take them to the Kansas Department of Transportation building and take tissue samples to be sent in.

The plan includes boning out the meat for donation, he said, if it is in good shape. The biologists, said

Hunters ask for stations

Hunters, landowners and others at a meeting on chronic wasting disease last Wednesday asked state officials why the Department of Wildlife and Parks no longer runs mandatory check stations to get samples from deer during the hunting season.

Joe DeJmal, co-owner of Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, asked what happened to the stations.

You would think that when three deer have tested positive in the county, he said, the department would have mandatory check stations.

If check stations are the best way to check deer, asked landowner and former high school Principal Buzz Matson, why

(See MEN on Page 5A)

Mr. Fox, will bag up the meat and if people want to put their name on a list for some meat, the department will be giving it out.

The list is in the county clerk's office, he said. Anyone who wants

(See MEAT on Page 5A)

Crowd learns about disease found in deer

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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More than 60 people learned last Wednesday that there isn't any proof that chronic wasting disease can be spread to humans or cattle during an informational meeting sponsored by state wildlife managers at The Gateway.

The group, mostly men, packed the upstairs meeting room, leaving standing room only for those showing up late.

The hunters talked with officials from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and other health officials about the disease and its history.

Ruby Mosher, wildlife disease coordinator for the department from Emporia, started the meeting talking about what experts know about the fatal disease.

In the 1980s, she said, the disease was first spotted in Colorado. Chronic wasting disease is a "spongy brain disease that can be transmitted among deer, moose and elk," she said. Experts think it can be transmitted by direct contact between the animals or indirectly from the environment.

Normally, said Ms. Mosher, it takes a year and a half to two years before a deer starts showing any symptoms, which include progressive weight loss, a droopy head, drooling and other signs.

The animal's brain, she said, stops working normally and the animal has decreased awareness.

No one knows when a deer is ill, she said, if it is really caused by chronic wasting disease until the animal is tested.

This is only the third time chronic wasting disease has been found in Kansas, she said, despite hundreds of tests done on animals taken during the fall season over more than a dozen years. In 2001, a captive elk in Harper County tested positive, but it had just come from Colorado.

In 2005, one whitetail was found with a positive test in Cheyenne County and then the three in Decatur County, near the Nebraska

line, this year. The disease has long been found in Colorado and more recently in Nebraska, so finding an infected animal near the state line is no surprise.

The department, she said, has been testing in Kansas for the disease since 1996.

Chronic wasting disease, said Ms. Mosher, is two to three more times prevalent in male deer than females, and the probability of infection increases with age.

"There are a lot of things that we don't know about chronic wasting disease," she said, "but with surveillance work, we are finding out more."

The department didn't get a lot of brain samples from Decatur County, she said. There were 19 total this fall and 11 of those came from north of U.S. 36. Of those, three tested positive. Does this show that one in four deer in the county might have the disease? she asked, adding that more tests would help answer that question.

If there is a sick deer, asked someone in the audience, should we shoot it? The department officials agreed that the best thing to do is contact the department and let them know where the deer is.

The department can get samples from the taxidermist, meat lockers or road kill, she said, people can send them in or in the county they can call Patrick Inman, who gathers samples for the department, at 475-2839.

Dr. Lyle Noordheok, a human pathologist from Hays, said he works for a medical lab that deals with about 60 hospitals, so he gets the chance to see a lot of diseases from all over the country.

In Colorado, where chronic wasting disease has been around longer, he said, investigators collected death certificates over five years to see if there is a relationship between the disease and human deaths, but there doesn't seem to be one.

The bad news, he said, is that it will take some time to get definitive results because there aren't a lot of people in the part of Colorado where the disease is common.

Dr. Noordheok said the medical community is watching chronic wasting disease, but there hasn't been any evidence of transfer to humans.

How many people in the room hunt and skin their own deer? he asked. An array of hands went up. How many people wear gloves when skinning those deer? he asked. There weren't any hands.

You might want to start, advised Dr. Noordheok.

While no evidence has been established between eating venison and the disease, said Ms. Mosher, people should use common sense and when a deer has tested positive for the disease, they might not want to eat the meat.

"You don't want to be the first case," she said, advising that people should error on the side of caution.

Dr. Hallie Hasel, a veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said there is no evidence the disease has crossed over into domestic livestock, though similar diseases do infect sheep, cattle and humans.

She said scientists have tried several ways and many times to infect cattle from deer. So far, chronic wasting disease hasn't been transmittable from an infected environment or animal.

Dr. Hasel said she can say for sure that they do know that chronic wasting disease hasn't been transmitted to cattle.

A winning face



IN ATWOOD, Tyler Bruggeman of Oberlin was surprised when he won a prize during the 24th annual banquet for the Rawlins County Sportsman's Association on Saturday. — Herald staff photo by Jim Merriott

*Board seeking member

(Continued from Page 1A) applicants out of the room while one is being interviewed, he noted.

No, said President Dewayne Jackson, but the board can ask them to leave.

What about voting? asked Mr. Nedland, saying there has to be a way to narrow down the field, or with six board members and five applicants, there might never be an outcome. There needs to be a way to narrow the field down to two, he said.

Mr. Jackson said in the past he thinks someone said the name of a person and then all of the board members wrote yes or no on a piece of paper.

Mrs. Olson said with it being an open meeting, she didn't think they could vote by secret ballot, so their names have to be written on the piece of paper. Kimberly Davis, managing editor of *The Oberlin Herald*, said those pieces of paper would be public record and anyone could request copies of them.

Mrs. Olson asked Superintendent Pat Cullen and Vickie Lippelmann, board clerk, to check with the legal department at the Kansas Association of School Boards about the voting.

The meeting will start at 5 p.m. Tuesday with the interviews, then the board will take a break and come back to discuss the heating at the high school. They will make a decision at the meeting.

Because the board is selecting someone to fill an elected office, and not an employee, all discussion and voting will be open. The personnel exemption to the state Open Meetings Law applies only to employees.

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*Men ask about stations

(Continued from Page 1A)

aren't the stations still offered? The department has done check stations, said Lloyd Fox, big game coordinator for the department. They are great, he said, but the department received a lot of complaints and a lot of letters complaining about delays to the traveling public.

The community support wasn't there, he said, and the stations were closed.

Don't you think there would be community support now that the disease has been found here? asked Mr. Matson. Can the check stations be mandatory?

They were mandatory during the two years the area had the check stations, said Mr. Fox. Nebraska is still using them.

It isn't that we can't bring the check stations back into the discussion, said Ruby Mosher, wildlife disease coordinator for the department. However, if everyone in this room guaranteed that they would take their deer to Patrick Inman, a volunteer, for testing, she said, then the department would have a good sample from the county.

*Meat to be given away

(Continued from Page 1A) to put their name on it can call 475-8102.

The lab reports will take about 10 days or less, said Mr. Fox. The department is asking people who take meat to wait until the tests are back before doing anything with it, he said, but it is your decision what to do.

The department, said Mr. Fox, is making arrangements for a landfill in Cheyenne County to put deer carcasses in the ground. The prions, or abnormal protein molecules that cause the disease, will attach to things like clay, he said, but for

whatever reason they don't attach to water. The prions, once buried, will stay in the ground around organic material.

What about the local landfill? asked one of the men at the meeting. Mr. Fox said the department would love to use the landfill here, but the county said no. He said he would take part of the blame for not notifying county officials quickly enough after the positive tests came back and for not getting information to the commissioners.

Will the department sample between the Beaver and Sappa creeks, where the mule deer are? asked

Dave Bose. So far, said Mr. Fox, they haven't seen any mule deer with the disease here, although the breed can get it. Most of the samples will be whitetail deer.

Matt Bain, district wildlife biologist, said they plan to be on the creek around 80 percent of the time, but they do have permission from landowners with mainly mule deer, so some of them will be taken. Mr. Bain said the biologists won't be shooting trophy bucks unless the deer are hurt or show signs of the disease.

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