

Trim deer herd carefully to preserve a major asset

State Rep. Ward Cassidy says he hopes to do something about the number of car-deer accidents in our area, noting that several bills introduced this year in the Legislature attempt to deal with the problem.

A committee substitute for House Bill 2295 would establish an early antlerless deer season, before the annual fall run, where hunters could take more does, or female deer. That could help cut the population. The bill also would allow for an antlerless or antlered deer permit and expand the use of crossbows in hunting.

The bill was introduced last year, but did not move. The Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism opposed provisions allowing out-of-state relatives of landowners to hunt on family land without a deer permit, which the department said would cost the state money.

Another provision would have established a \$2 mandatory contribution to something called the Kansas Hunters Fight Hunger fund. The department said this could be considered a diversion of license funds which would cost the state federal contributions.

The amended version of the bill passed out of committee and then passed the House 101-22 with two members present but not voting. The bill's future in the Senate is uncertain.

We get concerned, however, when legislators try to dictate game-management policy to the professionals at the wildlife agency. Lawmakers ought to be very careful not to undo the miracle of modern game management, which brought us a herd of deer worth hunting.

Many people remember the Kansas plains in the days when spotting a deer was Page

1 news. Hunters in the 19th century all but wiped out our deer herd. It took half a century of careful management to bring these graceful creatures back to the plains in huntable numbers.

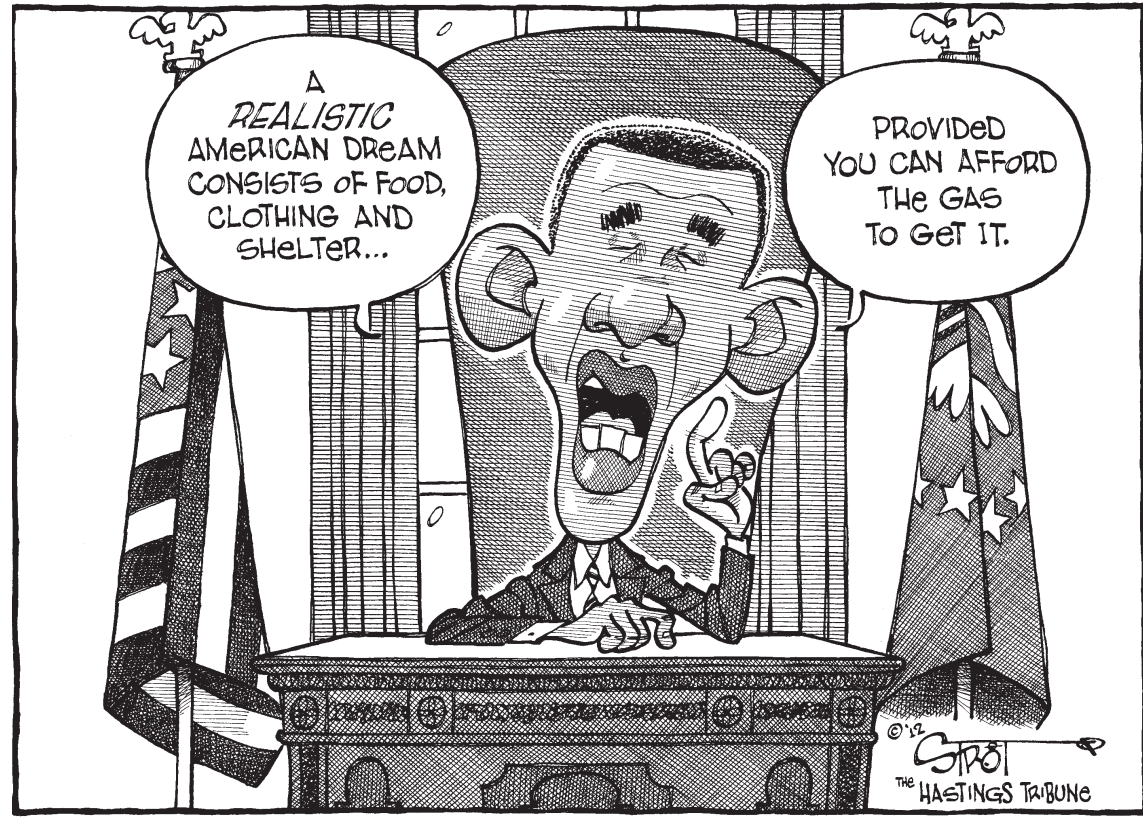
It's true, they cause a lot of damage and the herd could be thinned. However, most farmers probably would like to see fewer hunters, at least the irresponsible kind that open rifle hunting often brings. They don't want any more damage to buildings, crops and stock. They'd like to see better enforcement of our game laws.

Selling more deer permits without angering farm groups will take some doing. Just slaughtering deer, or looking the other way at poachers, as some have suggested, would not help. Poachers steal game, damage property and laugh at the law, not traits we want to encourage.

We wish Rep. Cassidy luck in finding a way to reduce the herd more without endangering a valuable resource and a growing impetus to tourism. Attracting more out-of-state hunters, the kind who carefully plan their hunts and respect landowners and the law, would be a great idea. Expanding the drawings for regular and antlerless licenses might do this.

Just selling more permits for open hunts tends to bring the bad hunters, the ones who drink, trespass and poach. We'd be against that. Kansas landowners won't put up with those hunters, and shouldn't have to.

As long as the health of the overall deer herd is preserved and we have deer to hunt and watch, however, then by all means, let's limit the population. — *Steve Haynes*



Rancher decries shooting

To the Editor:

When I read the recent article (Page 1A, Wednesday, Feb. 22, *Oberlin Herald*) about a rancher losing a newborn baby calf to a gunshot by a police officer, I have to say I was quite concerned.

As my husband and I prepare to move our Red Angus replacement heifers to our farm on the outskirts of Oberlin, we wonder how safe they will be.

It sickens and saddens me every time I think about that horrific death of a poor calf. When a momma cow has a baby, it is natural for her to leave the herd to give birth. After she has cleaned the baby off and nudges it to suck, she often hides her baby. She will put that baby where she feels it will be safe.

That momma cow knows that she can go and eat without worrying about her baby being stepped on or injured. It is not unusual for us to find a newborn on the other side of the fence.

It is so hard for me to think about this newborn being shot. The article

Letters to the Editor

indicated the officer thought it was hurt. Why would you shoot a baby calf?

Was there some sign of trauma that indicated the calf was hurt? Baby calves shiver and shake to keep themselves warm. Was there any effort to locate and contact the owner before a defenseless animal was shot? A phone call to dispatch, maybe?

The Decatur County dispatch office has all of my phone numbers and they do an excellent job of contacting me when cattle are out. It is not unusual for me to get a call from them at any and all hours of the day. I am so thankful for the call. More times than not they are not my cattle. I can, however, tell them whom they might contact and thank them for the call.

So with all of this on my mind, I cannot help but worry that if an eighty-pound calf gets shot, what

about an 800-pound heifer? What if for some reason we have some heifers out and the police see them? I hope and pray that if they do get out, someone will pick up the phone and not a gun.

We live in a farming community, and for the most part I feel safe. I can honestly say I am worried about my cattle now, however. It is always a worry knowing they could get out and get hit by a vehicle. I never thought I had to worry about them being shot.

Torrey Morford is a great farmer and rancher. He takes great pride in the cattle he raises. I hope that everyone will think twice next time they see an animal outside of a fence and make a phone call to someone. Please take care of it, and all of the farmers and ranchers in this community trying to bring food to you and your family.

Diana L. Steinmetz, Oberlin

Group thanks Knights of Columbus

To the Editor:

Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas would like to congratulate all of the area Knights of Columbus organizations for another successful Tootsie Roll Drive.

For many years, Developmental

Services has benefited from the generosity and hard work of the Knights. We appreciate their kindness and support, and feel extremely fortunate to have these extraordinary men in northwest Kansas supporting our efforts.

All the money donated to our

organization from the Knights of Columbus goes directly to support the people we serve who have developmental disabilities.

Steve Keil, Hays
director of development
Developmental Services
of Northwest Kansas

Not all that smart, are we?

It's official. The news is out. We're not as smart as we think we are. There! I've said it. Now, how to live with the shame.

When Jim and I were invited to be on a team to compete against others in a Bible trivia contest as a fund raiser for Relay for Life, we jumped at the chance. Actually, I jumped and "volun-told" Jim what we were doing.

There's no way to really prep for a Bible trivia contest — you either know it or you don't. And, it's not like you can take "the" reference book along or phone a friend. No electronic devices were allowed either, so there went the Kindle. But we weren't worried; we had two really smart teammates.

How were we to know there would be an entire section on "The Chronicles of Narnia" or a huge number of questions on Disney movies? There were a couple of disputed questions. Was Solomon's temple or Herod's temple the most ornate. And what country was the apostle Paul a citizen of, Rome or Cilicia? We swept the general knowledge category.

One of our teammates knew there are four subspecies of wild sheep. We all agreed on the correct guess that the tortoise has the longest life span of any animals in America. And somehow my husband knew that the bristlecone pine are the oldest trees in North America. He also knew that caliber and first year



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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of manufacture is the reasoning behind calling some ammunition "thirty-ought-six" (30-06).

At the end of competition, our team came in third, a semi-respectable showing, but I really wanted to take home that grand prize: Milky Ways are my favorite.

Just wait 'til next year. Our team starts spring training next month, and we'll be ready.

-ob-

Spring reminds me that tax season is upon us. And with another Mexico mission trip fast approaching, I need to have our taxes done before we leave. Ay-yi-yi!

Where will I find the time to do that? Probably the same place I find time to spend on Facebook or doing research on HGTV and the Food Network. It's going to be a priority for the next week.

-ob-

My preacher stepped on my toes Sunday during his sermon. He was talking about change and somehow brought up the subject of reality shows. Then he started naming

names and included "Gold Rush."

Now, stop right there. You've gone too far. I know it's a total waste of my time and it plays on people's deep-seated natural greed. Lots of the language has to be "bleeped," but there is just something about rooting for Jack and his crew to find their glory hole, or young Parker to save the family's mine.

Jim won't watch and always finds something else to do if I am. All I can say is, the season is over. Mother Nature has sent them home with thousands of dollars in gold.

Its lure will bring them back when the ground thaws, and I'll probably be back, too.

From the Bible

And there was a cloud that overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

— Mark 9:7

Speaker pleads to save towns

The speaker at the recent Farmer and Rancher Appreciation Banquet had an important message for all of us, both farmers and ranchers and the business people who supported the banquet.

If we want to preserve our small-town, rural way of life, said Dr. Welden Slight, dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, we need to act now before it's too late. He talked about his hometown in Idaho, where no one acted, and today, it's nearly too late to save a business community.

He asked Ryan May to come up and represent our youth. Rural America needs to bring its young people back home to take over or start businesses, he said. If no one does that, soon there will be no businesses and no farmers and ranchers to support them.

"We've gotta keep Oberlin alive," Dr. Slight said, "and the best way to do that is to bring Ryan (now a high school junior) back."

Every business owner and professional, he said, should ask a young person they know and feel is capable to consider coming back to take over their business. And while a graduate just out of college might not be able to buy out a large farming operation, he or she could start with, say, 100 cows, and build up a ranch.

The key, he said, pointing to population trends in both Kansas and Nebraska, is we've got to start asking, or pretty soon, everyone will be living in Johnson County, Omaha and Lincoln.

Interestingly, state Rep. Ward Cassidy echoed these thoughts just a few days later. At a "town hall" meeting in Oberlin, he stressed that rural towns need to find ways to



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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bring their young people back.

Those who aren't in business can do their part by supporting businesses here. Dr. Slight said, and not spending their money in other towns. He was especially critical of Walmart, which he said contributes nothing to towns like Oberlin, Atwood and St. Francis.

"A hundred dollars spent at Walmart brings \$15 back to McCook," he said, "and nothing back to Oberlin. A hundred dollars spent in Oberlin puts \$45 back into Oberlin."

"Is it worth saving a few dollars for that?"

(And we might add, the benefits of shopping in locally owned stores in Colby and Goodland are similar.)

People shop out of town mostly for clothes, groceries and household products, Dr. Slight said, even when those products may be available at home.

"Why?" he asked. One of the big reasons people give is "the store at home isn't open."

"I'll bet we could go to the Walmart parking lot right now and find Kansas cars with Decatur County plates," he said. "We've got to change that."

He said his college is pushing programs to allow graduates to get into business or start farm op-

erations, because only those with experience and some capital built up will be able to take over larger operations later.

But the rest of us, farmers, ranchers, business owners, government workers and educators, the whole town, need to pull together for each other and the future of Oberlin, of rural America.

Instead of just sending our kids off to college, he said, we need to ask them to plan on coming home, and then help make that possible.

Today, too often, rural people think it's enough to raise money to send our kids off to college. Before World War II, that might have worked. Since 1950, though, the shift to the city has become more pronounced with each census. While most of us value our rural lifestyle — low crime, no traffic, clean air, lots of countryside and outdoor opportunities — we're not doing much to save it except wringing our hands.

But if each of us would make an effort to ask just one student to come back, to buy just a few more things in town, to do a little more business here, things might change. If every business did just a little to encourage more shopping here — not just complain that people go to other towns — we might just make it.

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