

Hunter pays for not tagging

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Contributor

It was a stiff fine for a 43-year-old hunter found with an untagged deer last fall.

An Okotoks judge handed down a \$2,000 fine for a man hunting in the Priddis area, who took home his kill without affixing his tag, which is to be attached to the animal after it is shot.

Cpl. Tiffany McGregor of the Turner Valley RCMP said it is a strong warning to other hunters to make sure they follow the rules.

"We consider this a very large fine," McGregor said.

This case highlights another issue tied to hunting in the foothills, McGregor said.

She said police found the hunter after a concerned property owner, who believed a hunter was trespassing on her land, called them.

By the time officers found a perpetrator they couldn't prove he was trespassing, but found him with an untagged animal, resulting in charges and the resulting fine.

McGregor says hunters trespassing on rural properties is an ongoing problem.

"We get a large amount of calls during hunting season - constantly, constantly," she said. "It is at

least weekly."

Hunters will ignore no trespassing signs and no hunting signs or climb over fences onto property they don't have permission to hunt on, she said.

"Some areas are more problem some than others," she said. "They may border crown land."

McGregor said it is the hunter's responsibility to ensure they are in an area where they have permission to hunt.

"You need written or verbal permission," she said.

Safety is the main concern when it comes to trespassing and hunting.

"People may be out walking their dog, dressed for winter, not dressed like an orange pylon," she said. "Bullets can go a long way in a wooded area and just beyond that can be a residence with people's children or livestock. We don't want anyone's children or livestock hurt because of simple negligence."

Residents also have property rights, she adds, and it can be frustrating when they can't control who is coming on their land.

RCMP and members of MD council are working with a rural crime watch group to try to find a solution to the problem.

MD councilor Suzanne Oel represents the southwest area and said she has

heard the complaints about trespassing hunters and experienced the problem herself.

Oel said the lock on her gate was picked and a truck drove onto her property, but left because she was in the driveway clearing snow.

She said she's heard worse stories from neighbours who have asked hunters to leave and have been met with resistance.

"Guys are looking for an access and signs don't mean anything and gates don't mean anything," she said. "All you can do is get as much information as you can and press charges, but you don't want to put yourself in harm's way."

Although she currently doesn't allow hunting on her property, Oel said she isn't against hunting and believes it necessary to control the animal population in the area.

She said it is a complicated issue because she believes a small group of people who don't follow the rules are ruining it for hunters who are responsible.

"How do we deal with the bad behavior?" she said.

Oel said there could be information provided to gun owners and hunters with their licenses or tags, but said it likely wouldn't change the behavior of those who are already breaking the rules.