

Commercial Gamebird Farms

by *Dave Featherly*

For those of us who may have thought that the wily bird hunters were lucky enough to happen onto a covey or flock or whatever a bunch of pheasants are called, may have another think coming.

It seems that farm-raised salmon have a kin with feathers.

They are farm-raised pheasants.

And just like netting the farm-raised salmon isn't exactly the challenge of landing even a small Minnesota lake musky, shooting pheasants raised in captivity probably isn't like bringing home an elk.

A Cheyenne businessman has gained a license to establish a pheasant game farm on his land north of the city - in an area known as Monterey Heights Ranchettes.

Is this another example of how zoning provides zero protection to neighbors, with the county commissioners considering whether to allow this commercial use of land smack in the middle of a residential area? Rezoning has not been requested or approved at presstime.

Those who hunt pheasants can attest to the level of noise they make. They've probably heard one or a few in one place at one time. But, who except a gamebird farmer knows how much noise 500 of these birds make? Or what the potential for disease, odor, or other offensiveness to neighbors might be?

Having neither pheasant hunted nor pheasant eaten, this writer can't offer much firsthand knowledge on the subject. But there is a great deal available on the subject on the Internet.

A hunter, relating a hunting story, wrote that "there was a LOT of pheasant smell ..." He wrote that he knew it was a pheasant smell because "two times a day we (he and his dog) go for a walk on the hill next to our yard where a BIG rooster pheasant lives and some times he flies up ..."

It then seems fair to opine that if a single pheasant provides a smell, that 500 would emit a LOT of smell.

Oh, by the way, 500 is the number of pheasants that the Cheyenne bird farmer intends to have in his flyway.

A lawsuit which has already been filed in District Court, seeking a temporary restraining order and permanent injunction against this use of land in violation of long-standing covenants, indicates that the 50' x 150' screened area will not remove the waste but allow it to accumulate and fertilize the vegetation needed for these birds to best survive.

At optimum, 7500 sq. ft. would house 500 pheasants. At optimum. But, if the area does not have adequate foliage (ground

vegetation), that number could half. In other words 15 sq. ft. per bird is sufficient with the ground-cover heavy, but 30 sq. ft. is recommended if it is not.

Other rules of thumb provided by the North Dakota State University Extension Service is that there should be (if intending to breed, which this farmer is), no more than one rooster per ten hens - again optimum. No more than one per eight hens is suggested.

The same website (<http://ndsuxt.nodak.edu/extpubs/alt-ag/pheasan.htm>) and others on the subject dwell extensively on cannibalism among birds of this type. It seems they tend to pick on one another and ... more.

Pheasant hens may typically lay about 15 fertile eggs each - if gathered daily and proper attention is paid to the process. Of those eggs, on average, eighty percent (80%) will hatch to live chicks.

If this Cheyenne bird farmer has 450 hens (with 50 roosters, for his total of 500), he would have as many as 5400 live chicks per year. These chicks should be housed in some type of building until "5 to 6 weeks of age" according to NDSU. They should have "4 to 5 square feet per chick." The "plan" presented to Wyoming Game and Fish to gain a license shows only about 700 sq. ft. for a brooder house - about 1400 sq. ft. total for shelter, incubation, brooder house, etc. At 5 sq. ft. per chick, only 140 chicks should be present at a time. Even selling day old chicks, with 450 hens laying eggs, it would require rapid turnover to consider 700 sq. ft. as adequate.

The NDSU Extension Service provides a model business plan. Housing 1200 hens, with 120 males, would be done in four (FOUR!!) 50' x 150' flyways - the same size the Cheyenne farmer plans. But, the local plan is for one. ONE!! For 500.

Predators and disease are great foes to raising pheasants. Small predators such as rats (which eat chicks and eggs), and larger ones like skunks, feral cats and dogs, weasels, foxes, raccoons, owls, etc., that frighten or snatch the birds are often a problem. Frightening pheasants into hurting themselves increases cannibalism problems.

The business plan for 1200 pheasants would provide for 14.4-00 day-old chicks hatched - 12,002 day-old chicks born and sold, with 2,398 chicks to be fed for 16 weeks and sold, and 575 sold as processed meat. With factors for further losses until sold and all costs to operate considered, the NDSU business plan projected a \$10,400.00 profit on a 1,200-head flock of pheasant hens - less than \$8.75 each. With a flock of 450 pheasant hens then, the local pheasant farmer might expect a profit of about \$4,000. Based on economy of scale, it could be far less. And probably would be.

Inexperience could result in losses.

In the next issue of the

CHEYENNE HERALD

Coroner Bill Ryan Goes Hollywood!

The Laramie County official sought validation for his act of curbing a female Cheyenne driver - by using his coroner's vehicle emergency lights. Renowned Florida attorney Roy Black will help decide: Was Bill Ryan acting properly, wanting to be Wyatt Earp ... or was he wrong? The Cheyenne Herald will let you know the verdict! In the next issue of the local advocacy journal!!

Several Cheyenne residents, including Bill Ryan and the woman driver he pulled over, went to southern California to film a segment of the new NBC reality series, The Law Firm. The David E. Kelley entry will begin to air eight segments in June.

If our very own coroner's incident last Christmas Eve didn't hit the cutting room floor, Cheyenne viewers will see the trial and the verdict. Was Bill Ryan right to act like a cop? Or, was he wrong? Jon Forwood said he was right. Roy Black?

We just love ya, Gov Dave!



Veterans Commission tries to save face.

In an all-too-obvious attempt to curry favor with the governor, the disgraced veterans commission tried to plant a big wet one on the governor's posterior with an "award" as the best ever. For vets.

The group might have considered their relationship with this governor before they conducted an illegal secret vote in support of returning the beleaguered Bells of Balangiga to the Philippines.

No sooner was their desperate attempt at one-upmanship of the VFW made known to the governor than he issued an appropriate, "Not on my watch," rejection of their appeasement offer.

Why, in the face of that humiliation by the governor, did the veterans commission decide to issue a proclamation - in the middle of the governor's four year term - that they found him oh so irresistible?

Well, let us count the reasons.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

In the last session of the Wyoming Legislature, HB33 was approved and will become law on July 1, 2005. That measure calls for staggered terms for the twelve (12) members of the Veterans Commission - all of the terms to commence on July 1, 2005.

Four will be appointed to three year terms, four to two year terms and four to a one year term.

So, every single member of the current commission faces expulsion. Was the award to the governor for his "support of Wyoming veterans" sincere or a sop at gaining forgiveness from the governor for their boneheaded Bells return plan?

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