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Punxsutawney Phil Predicts 6 More Weeks of Winter

FEBRUARY 02ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Punxsutawney Phil Predicts 6 More Weeks of Winter

The Groundhog has spoken! 6 more weeks of winter weather! Every February 2, all eyes turn to Gobbler's knob, a small Pennsylvania town as winter-weary Northeasterners await weather guidance from the predictive rodent.

It's a 132-year-old tradition that is held every year and conducted by top hat-donning members of the Inner Circle of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, according to the official Pennsylvania tourism website. The idea is, the groundhog wakes up from hibernation on the 2nd, and if it sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't, warmer weather is just around the corner.

This tradition started in Europe as Candlemas Day, an early Christian holiday involving candles. Germans who settled in Pennsylvania in the 1700s brought the custom to America.

Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil is the most well known, but more than a dozen states celebrate with their own groundhogs, such as Georgia's General Beauregard Lee and Buckeye Chuck in Ohio.

Our own 69 year old box turtle, Murtle the Turtle, said it was still too cold to come out, but predicted that winter has not left Stoddard County just yet.

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MDC and Partners Eliminate More than 6,500 Feral Hogs

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MDC and partners eliminate more than 6,500 feral hogs from Missouri's landscape in 2017

Increased partnerships and a public awareness campaign led to increased success.

Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) feral hog strike team has tallied up elimination numbers for 2017. The year yielded a total of 6,567 feral hogs removed by MDC, partner agencies and private landowners. In 2016, 5,358

feral hogs were removed from the landscape.

Crews in southeast Missouri removed 2,858 feral hogs, which is where the highest density of feral hogs occurs. The Ozark region removed 2,576 and the Southwest region removed 932 feral hogs. Other regions across Missouri had around 100 or fewer feral hogs removed.

“We’re seeing positive impacts in areas with smaller feral hog populations, such as on the western side of the state,” said Mark McLain, MDC’s feral hog elimination team leader. “Our overall success for 2017 can be attributed to our strategic approach to eliminating populations of feral hogs.”

McLain said it’s essential that the public understand why feral hogs must be eliminated.

“These are a destructive, invasive species that doesn’t belong here; they’re not a native species,” McLain said. “They out-compete native wildlife for habitat and food. For example, places with a lot of feral hogs will see their wild turkey and deer population diminish.”

McLain said feral hogs present potential for diseases to spread to humans, pets and livestock and that he hopes the message that hunting is not an effective method for eliminating feral hog populations is starting to catch on.

“For over 20 years, unregulated take of feral hogs was allowed in Missouri, during which time our feral hog population expanded from a few counties to over 30 counties,” he said.

In 2017, MDC, the Corps of Engineers and the LAD Foundation established regulations against feral hog hunting on lands owned and managed by these three organizations.

“A persistent piece of this story is continued illegal releases of feral hogs, which establishes populations and further spreads the problem,” McLain said. “This is illegal and when caught, those who release feral hogs face hefty fines.”

McLain said MDC and its many partners are committed to eliminating feral hogs from Missouri. Organizations that have partnered against feral hogs in Missouri include:

Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Corn Growers Association
Missouri Soybean Association

Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
MFA
Missouri Pork Association
Missouri Agribusiness Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
Quality Deer Management Association
Quail Forever
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation
Missouri Rural Water Association
Kansas City Agribusiness Club
Saint Louis Agribusiness Club
Missouri Farmers Care
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Missouri Department of Agriculture
Conservation Federation of Missouri Charitable Trust
AgriServices of Brunswick
Missouri Forest Products Association
Honey Creek Media
Association of Missouri Electrical Cooperatives (AMEC)
LAD Foundation
USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
USDA Forest Service, Mark Twain National Forest
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Ozark National Scenic Riverways (OSNR/NPS)
Fort Leonard Wood

Other attributing factors in the success of the feral hog elimination effort include MDC's "Report, don't shoot" message to encourage trapping, prohibiting the take of feral hogs on conservation areas, and a strong public awareness campaign.

"Landowners and the public are a crucial element of this effort, especially since most land in Missouri is privately owned," McLain said. "We must continue to educate on the dangers of feral hogs and engage landowners in elimination efforts."

McLain said landowners are responding to an increased public education campaign, centered on the knowledge that hunting feral hogs is not an effective way to eliminate

them. He said more landowners are starting to understand, and are seeing, that hunting feral hogs pushes them onto neighboring property, which causes problems for their neighbors. When neighboring landowners try to control feral hogs through hunting, the hogs simply travel back and forth between the properties, escape and cause more damage. Trapping with no hunting interference is the best method to eliminate them.

“They’re [landowners] reporting feral hog signs and coming to us for help, which is exactly what we hoped would happen,” he said. “We help by providing technical advice, on-site visits, loaning equipment and training of the trapping and removal process.”

Feral hogs are not wildlife and are a serious threat to fish, forests and wildlife as well as agricultural resources. Economic loss estimates from 10 years ago in the U.S. were at greater than \$1.5 billion in damage from feral hogs per year. Since there are more hogs today, this total is likely higher now. Feral hogs damage property, agriculture, and natural resources by their aggressive rooting of soil in addition to their trampling and consumption of crops as part of their daily search for food.

Feral hogs have expanded their range in the U.S. from 17 to 38 states over the past 30 years. Their populations grow rapidly because feral hogs can breed any time of year and produce two litters of one to seven piglets every 12 to 15 months. Feral hogs are also known to carry diseases such as swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, trichinosis and leptospirosis, which are a threat to Missouri agriculture and human health.

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MO Army National Guard 1221st Meeting on Saturday

JANUARY 26TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

MO Army National Guard 1221st Meeting on Saturday

Dexter, Missouri - The Missouri Army National Guard 1221st Transportation Unit "Reunion Crew" will hold their bi-monthly meeting on Saturday, January 27, 2018.

Location is Dexter BBQ and the time is 6 p.m.

Be sure to make a quick plan to attend.

Contact Don "Daddy Jack" Mathis with any questions about the meeting at (573) 624-2936.

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Hepatitis A Case Identified in Poplar Bluff, Missouri

JANUARY 25TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Hepatitis A Case Identified in Poplar Bluff, Missouri

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and Butler County Health Department are investigating a case of Hepatitis A identified in a food handler that worked while potentially contagious at a Poplar Bluff restaurant.

Anyone who ate at the Huddle House in Poplar Bluff between January 3, 2018 and January 17, 2018, should watch for symptoms of Hepatitis A.

According to the release from the department, they are taking necessary measures to decrease the spread of the illness.

Customers who ate at the restaurant during the time frame should seek medical care if they have symptoms.

Symptoms develop between two and seven weeks after exposure and can include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored stools
- Joint pain

Jaundice (yellow skin and eyes)

Members of the public or providers with patients who are concerned about a potential exposure can call Butler County Health Department at 573-785-8478 or the Stoddard County Health Center at 573-568-4593.

Anyone can get vaccinated especially those working in the food industry. Again it is not a requirement or state law in Missouri that food handler/preparation employees receive the vaccination.

Ways to get the vaccine:

- 1. Contact your Insurance Company and see if the vaccination is covered.
- 2. Contact your provider/doctor and see if they carry the vaccination.
- 3. Contact the local health department and see if they carry the vaccination.

The Stoddard County Public Health Department does have the Hepatitis A vaccination available and it is a series of two shots six months apart. The cost is \$80 for both a vaccination and booster.

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Caller ID Spoofing Hits Dexter - Beware of Scams

JANUARY 25TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Caller ID Spoofing Hits Dexter - Beware of Scams

Dexter, Missouri - Have you received a strange call on your cell phone from a local number? Do they want credit card information.

"It has come to our attention that there have been numerous cases of Caller ID Spoofing occurring in town over the past few days. They are using software to disguise their actual phone number by showing a name and number you may be familiar with."

The caller may ask if you wish to set up a credit card account with them, however the caller is not affiliated with that business and is attempting to get your credit card information.

Please be wary of any solicitations from a number that appears to be of a local business, or a business that you frequent. If you're in doubt about the legitimacy of a caller, hang up the phone and initiate a call yourself by calling the business directly.

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