

Neighbors launch llama rescue

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**By Ossie Bladine
Of the News-Register**

Tom Hildahl came home Friday morning from a graveyard shift to see the pasture between his house on Riverside Loop and the Yamhill River completely flooded. Several hundred yards out, he spotted three of his llamas, which had become stranded.

"Last night, it was all dry out there," Hildahl said. "This morning, the water was up to the ankles of the llamas."

By the time Hildahl and neighbor Jared Anderson managed to get out to them in a rowboat, the water had risen up past their bellies. A channel about 50 yards wide had been carved into the flood plain, making it far from an easy rescue.

Anderson rowed Hildahl out to the llamas, fighting another current coming through a grove of trees near the high ground where they had sought refuge, and Hildahl roped each of them. Then he handed the other ends of the ropes to Anderson and began rowing back with the trio of animals in tow.

"He was paddling for all he was worth," Anderson said, but the llamas, notoriously reluctant swimmers, didn't make it easy.

The llamas fought furiously to keep their heads above water as the rowboat dragged them along.

One of the llamas was particularly antsy, and managed to tangle itself and one of its comrades in the rope. That served to drag them down, threatening the entire enterprise.

Eventually, the three llamas reached the point where they could get their feet back on the ground. From there, the men were able to lead them back to dry land.

Earlier, Anderson's wife, Chris, had been walking the neighborhood to make sure all the animals were safe and accounted for. When she ran into Hildahl, and saw that his llamas were stranded, she returned home for rope.

Then they went door to door looking for a boat they could use. Neighbor Paul Kushner not only lent them a rowboat and lifejackets, but loaded them into his truck and delivered them.



Ossie Bladine / News-Register
Rescuers lead llamas from the flooded field.



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